AI-resistant assignment ideas

Process Over Product

- scaffolded assignments
- frequent low-stakes assessments
- open-book, open-note tests
- portfolios that track growth
- live problem-solving sessions
- shared revision histories
- workshop upcoming papers in class

Personal/Contemporary Connections

- prompts based on class discussions or current events
- scenario-based tasks
- fieldwork and interviews
- service learning
- analysis of ethical dilemmas
- analysis of local or campus issues
- connect concepts to personal experiences and observations

Reflection

- reflection papers
- peer review
- student-created questions and answers with rationales
- critique/improve AI-generated answers

Alternate Forms

- oral assessments
- oral presentations
- incorporate visual or interactive elements in the assignment
- annotation
- audio or video assignments
- collaborative projects
- simulations and role play
- debates
- student-led teaching
- assess by replicating the workplace

Process Over Product

Prompt: Examine the role of nature imagery in at least three poems from our course anthology. Argue for how these poets use natural imagery to explore human emotions, social issues, or philosophical questions. Your essay should demonstrate close reading skills and make connections between the different texts.

Scaffolding Requirements - All components must be completed:

Step 1: Thesis Statement Submission Due: [Date - 2 weeks before final essay]
Submit a one-paragraph proposal that includes your working thesis statement
Identify the three poems you will analyze and briefly explain your main argument
Instructor will provide feedback within 48 hours

Step 2: Concept Map/Visual Organizer Due: [Date - 10 days before final essay]
Create a visual concept map showing the three poems, their key nature imagery, and thematic connections
Include specific examples of imagery from each poem
Use arrows, colors, or other visual elements to show relationships between poems and themes
Submit as PDF or hand-drawn diagram (photographed clearly)

Step 3: Rough Draft Due: [Date - 1 week before final essay]
Complete rough draft (3-4 pages minimum) with introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion
Include at least 3 direct quotations (final essay requires 4+)
Bring printed copies to peer review workshop in class
Peer feedback forms must be completed and turned in with final essay

Step 4: Final Essay Due: [Final date]
4-5 pages, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font
MLA format with Works Cited page
At least 4 direct quotations from primary sources, properly integrated and analyzed
Clear introduction with revised thesis statement
Body paragraphs with topic sentences and supporting evidence
Thoughtful conclusion that extends rather than merely summarizes your argument
Include all scaffolding materials (thesis submission, concept map, rough draft with peer feedback) as appendices

Grading Breakdown:
Thesis Statement: 10%
Concept Map: 15%
Rough Draft & Peer Review Participation: 20%
Final Essay: 55%
Note: Failure to complete any scaffolding step will result in a letter grade reduction on the final essay.

Process Over Product

This course emphasizes frequent, low-stakes assessment to support your learning throughout the semester. You will have regular quizzes, chapter tests, and major exams as outlined below.

Assessment Schedule:
- Weekly Quizzes: Every Friday (12 total, lowest 2 dropped)
- Chapter Tests: 6 tests throughout semester (see schedule below)
- Midterm Exam: [Date] - Chapters 1-8
- Final Exam: [Date, Time, Location] - Comprehensive (Chapters 1-15)

Chapter Test Schedule:
- Test 1: [Date] - Chapters 1-2
- Test 2: [Date] - Chapters 3-4
- Test 3: [Date] - Chapters 5-6
- Test 4: [Date] - Chapters 7-8
- Test 5: [Date] - Chapters 9-11
- Test 6: [Date] - Chapters 12-13

Assessment Policies:
- Weekly quizzes cover material from the previous week's lectures and readings
- Chapter tests consist of multiple choice and short answer questions
- Midterm and final exams include multiple choice, short answer, and problem-solving questions
- All assessments are closed-book and closed-note unless otherwise specified
- You may bring one 3"x5" index card with formulas/equations (handwritten only) to chapter tests and major exams
- Scientific calculators are permitted; graphing calculators and cell phones are not allowed
- Make-up assessments will only be given for documented emergencies, serious illness, or university-approved absences and must be arranged within 48 hours

Grading Weight:
- Weekly Quizzes: 20% (lowest 2 dropped)
- Chapter Tests (6): 30% (5% each)
- Midterm Exam: 20%
- Final Exam: 20%
- Laboratory: 10%

This frequent assessment approach allows you to gauge your understanding regularly and reduces the pressure of high-stakes testing. If you're struggling with quiz or test performance, please see me during office hours early in the semester.

Personal or Contemporary Connections

Statistical Design Project, *from an introductory statistics course*

AI -resistant policy: build the project around a campus issue

Part I: Survey Creation (Due: [Date])
Design a 3-4 question survey that investigates an issue you have personally encountered or observed on campus. Your survey should aim to gather data that could inform decision-making or policy discussions related to this issue.

Requirements:
- Choose a relevant campus issue (examples: dining hall satisfaction, library usage patterns, parking concerns, study space availability, mental health resources, campus safety, etc.)
- Write 3-4 clear, unambiguous questions
- Include at least one quantitative question and one qualitative question
- Specify your target population (who should respond to this survey?)
- Include a brief introduction explaining the survey's purpose to potential respondents

Part II: Statistical Analysis and Critique (Due: [Date - 1 week later])
Write a 2-3 page analysis of your own survey using concepts from class. Your analysis should address:

Bias and Validity Assessment:
- What types of bias might affect your survey results? (Consider selection bias, response bias, nonresponse bias, question wording bias, etc.)
- How might the sampling method you propose introduce bias?
- Are there any leading questions or problematic phrasing in your survey?

Experimental Design Critique:
- What is your target population vs. your likely sample? How might these differ?
- What confounding variables might affect your results?
- How could you improve your sampling method to get more representative data?

Data Collection Challenges:
- What practical obstacles might you encounter when distributing this survey?
- How might these obstacles affect the reliability of your results?
- What ethical considerations should be addressed?

Improvement Recommendations:
- Revise at least one of your original questions to reduce bias
- Propose a more robust sampling strategy
- Suggest how you might validate your findings

Submission Requirements:
- Submit both your original survey and your statistical analysis
- Use proper statistical terminology throughout your critique
- Include at least 3 specific references to course concepts (bias types, sampling methods, experimental design principles)
- Typed, double-spaced, 12-point font

Grading Criteria:
- Survey quality and relevance: 30%
- Identification and analysis of bias: 35%
- Understanding of experimental design principles: 25%
- Writing clarity and use of statistical terminology: 10%

This assignment will help you understand how statistical principles apply to real-world data collection and why critical evaluation of survey methodology is essential for drawing valid conclusions.

Personal or Contemporary Connections

Discussion prompt:
In Chapter 2 of The Social Animal, Elliott Aronson describes a number of cognitive biases/distortions that social psychologists have observed and analyzed in human behavior.

For this thread, please choose three (3) cognitive biases/distortions that you found particularly uncomfortable to read about -- uncomfortable in the sense that you recognize some aspect of yourself and/or your cognitions in them.

After selecting the three you wish to focus on, please complete the following:
- Identify the cognitive distortion in bold type and briefly summarize/paraphrase a description of how it works, what its effects are, how it manifests, etc.
- Provide 1-2 specific, concise examples of how it has shown up in your life.
- After each example, explain how you benefit from the bias/distortion AND what it costs you. How might your experience of life be different in the absence of the distortion? What work would you have to do to be able to see it clearly?

Response posts
In your responses to classmates, please address your own experiences with the cognitive distortions/biases they chose and how their analysis influences your interpretation of each distortion.

This prompt is from Megan B. McNamara, an instructional designer and continuing lecturer in sociology at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

Reflection

Assignment: Write a 2-3 page reflective essay analyzing your research and writing process for the argumentative research paper you just completed.

Purpose: This reflection helps you develop metacognitive awareness of your writing process, recognize your growth as a researcher and writer, and identify strategies for future writing projects.

Your reflection should address the following areas:

Research Process (40%):
- How did you approach finding and evaluating sources? What databases, search strategies, or keywords proved most/least effective?
- Describe a moment when you encountered conflicting information or perspectives in your sources. How did you navigate this challenge?
- What did you learn about the difference between primary and secondary sources through this project?
- How did your research question or focus evolve as you discovered new information?

Writing and Revision Process (35%):
- Describe your drafting process. Did you write linearly, or did you jump around? How did you organize your ideas?
- What was your biggest challenge in integrating sources into your argument? How did you work to make sources support rather than dominate your voice?
- Identify one specific revision you made between drafts. Why did you make this change, and how did it improve your paper?
- How did peer feedback or instructor comments influence your revision process?

Reflection on Learning (25%):
- What did you discover about your own strengths and weaknesses as a researcher and writer?
- How has your understanding of academic argument and evidence changed through this assignment?
- What strategies from this project will you apply to future writing assignments?
- If you could start this project over, what would you do differently?

Requirements:
- 2-3 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font
- Use specific examples from your research paper to illustrate your points
- Be honest about both successes and struggles
- Focus on process rather than just defending your final product
- Submit along with your final research paper

Grading Criteria:
- Depth of reflection and self-analysis
- Specific examples and evidence from your writing process
- Insight into your development as a writer and researcher
- Clear organization and writing quality

Note: This reflection will not be graded on whether you had a "perfect" writing process, but rather on your thoughtful analysis of your actual experience and learning.

Bonus Option

History professor Timothy Burke, who blogs on Substack at *Eight by Seven*, uses this prompt for writing in his courses:

Our writing is in the form of short reflective papers. These are due at the beginning of the class session in the week where they are listed. Please try to submit them on time, as we will reference the response papers in the second half of the discussion.

All of your writing should prioritize the following: 1. Your personal perspectives and views. You must use first-person and you must talk about how you see these issues, these histories. 2. Your understandings of the class material and our discussions. Your writing must reference the work we are doing in class, both the things we've read and viewed, and where pertinent, what we've said in our discussions. Your writing is a form of witnessing, a transcription of how you've experienced this course in this semester.

Writing that is third-person, abstract, vague or does not connect to the course will be graded no better than a C regardless of the effort you put into it, the quality of your prose, or additional research you did. You should be using your writing to think about the questions asked for the reflective essays and to express your thinking to me.

Do not use generative AI to write these reflective essays.

https://timothyburke.substack.com/p/academia-dispatches-from-the-ai-front

Alternate Forms of Assignment

Analysis Paper, *from an introductory economics course*

AI-resistant prompt: social media-style presentation

Objective: Demonstrate your understanding of supply and demand curves, market equilibrium, and factors that cause shifts in supply and demand through an engaging video presentation.

Instructions:
Create a 60-90 second video in the style of a TikTok, Instagram Reel, or YouTube Short explaining supply and demand in one of these markets: coffee, gasoline, or rental housing. Your video should:
1. Hook viewers in the first 5 seconds with an attention-grabbing opening (e.g., "Why did your coffee just get more expensive? Let me explain...")
2. Visually demonstrate supply and demand using props, drawings, or digital graphics. Show the equilibrium point clearly - get creative! Use everyday objects, whiteboard animations, or simple graphics.
3. Explain 2-3 factors that shift demand OR supply in your chosen market. Make it relatable - connect to current events, seasonal changes, or trending topics your audience would recognize.
4. Show the impact of one shift on price and quantity using your visual method. Make the economic concept "click" for viewers.
5. Include a real example from recent news or personal experience that your audience can relate to.

Social Media Requirements:
- Vertical format (9:16 ratio)
- Clear audio throughout
- Text overlays for key terms (equilibrium, demand shift, etc.)
- Engaging transitions between concepts
- Call-to-action ending ("Now you know why prices change!")

Academic Requirements:
- Submit video file plus a 1-page reflection explaining your economic reasoning
- Include source citations for any news references in your reflection
- Use proper economic terminology throughout

Grading Criteria:
- Economic accuracy and understanding (35%)
- Creativity and engagement (25%)
- Visual clarity of concepts (20%)
- Production quality and social media style (20%)

Alternate Forms of Assignment

Due Date: September 22nd, beginning of class

Objective: Demonstrate close reading skills and analyze character development through detailed textual annotations across multiple chapters.

Instructions:
Create a comprehensive annotation portfolio for Chapters 4-7 of Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston, focusing specifically on Janie's character development throughout this section.

Your annotation portfolio should include:
1. Annotated Text Pages: Submit photocopies or digital copies of all assigned pages with your handwritten or typed annotations. You must have annotations on every page of the assigned reading.
2. Character Development Tracking: Use different colored pens/highlighters or annotation symbols to identify and mark:
   - Green: Moments showing Janie's growth or change
   - Blue: Literary techniques revealing character (dialogue, imagery, symbolism)
   - Yellow: Key interactions with other characters that shape Janie
   - Pink: Internal thoughts or reflections that show her mindset
3. Margin Commentary: Write substantive margin notes that:
   - Analyze WHY specific passages are significant to character development
   - Make connections between scenes or chapters
   - Identify literary devices and their effects
   - Pose questions about character motivations or actions
4. Annotation Summary Sheet: Include a 1-page reflection identifying:
   - The three most important moments for Janie's development in these chapters
   - Two recurring symbols or motifs you noticed and their significance
   - One question about Janie's character that these chapters raise for you

Annotation Requirements:
- Minimum 25 substantive annotations per chapter (100+ total)
- Mix of highlighting, underlining, and written commentary
- Annotations should demonstrate analysis, not just identification
- Use literary terminology appropriately in your notes

Grading Criteria:
- Depth and insight of annotations (40%)
- Coverage and consistency across all chapters (25%)
- Quality of analysis in margin notes (20%)
- Reflection sheet thoughtfulness (15%)

Note: Your annotations will serve as the foundation for our class discussion and your future essay assignments. Come prepared to share specific annotated passages.