

POSITION PAPER

SET W06

DUE W13 · TUE 1 DEC

10%

CRITICALITY + AGENCY

1,200 words saying what you think a technology should or should not do, and defending it against the best argument on the other side.

WHAT THIS IS

Criticality and Agency is ten percent of your grade — the whole of that criterion rests on this paper — and it is not a participation prize. The outcome is that you can take a position and defend it. Not summarise a debate, not present both sides evenhandedly and stop — take a position.

Refusal is a legitimate design outcome. A paper arguing convincingly that something should not be built has met the outcome in full, and will mark exactly as well as one arguing that it should. What will not mark well is having no position, or having one so hedged that nobody could disagree with it.

WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT

Something from your own term. Your domain, your probe, the technology you have been living with since September. The W12 refusal exercise — the thing in your project you would decline to build, and why — feeds directly into this and is the easiest place to start.

The useful question in this course has always been the specific one: for whom, at whose cost, under what conditions. A paper that answers those three is already most of the way there. A paper about whether AI is good or bad is not a paper.

WHAT MAKES THIS GO WRONG

- The both-sides essay. Presenting two positions fairly and declining to hold either is the single most common way to lose marks here.
- Attacking the weakest opposing argument. Engage the strongest one. If you cannot state it in a way its advocates would recognise, you do not understand it yet.
- Conceding nothing. A paper that gives no ground reads as unserious.
- General evidence. “Studies show” is not evidence. Your own interviews, your own probe, a traced primary source — those are.
- Going over. 1,200 words is a constraint to design for, not a target to overshoot.

DUE BEFORE YOU PRESENT, ON PURPOSE

This is due at W13 and the finals are at W14, so I arrive on the eighth having read all twenty-four. Anything worth pushing on can be raised in the closing session or in writing. It also means the paper is written while the work is still moving, which tends to make it sharper.

HOW THIS IS MARKED

Marked on these criteria. Percentages are shares of this assignment, not of the course. The full rubric — including every indicator behind each criterion — goes out with this brief, and it is the same sheet I mark on.

- 35% **The position**
- 30% **The argument**
- 25% **Evidence**
- 10% **Written**

REQUIRED TO PASS — NOT SCORED

- AI Use Statement attached
- Within the word count
- Submitted at W13, before you present

IF SOMETHING HERE DOES NOT WORK FOR YOU

Any live presentation can be a recorded presentation with live Q&A, or a one-on-one defence. On request, no documentation required. A missed live event is rescheduled in the assessment period and the late penalty does not apply to it. If a tool, sensor, library or device does not work on your machine or your body, there is a declared alternative for every hands-on in this course — take it, no explanation needed. And you can complete this course without using generative AI: tell me and we will set up the equivalent path.