COURSE SYLLABUS

AI for the Workplace with Claude

This hands-on course covers everything you need to put Claude to work in your job. Over two days, you'll go from the basics of prompting to building a fully operational AI system with Projects, Plugins, automations, and desktop tools, all using your own work files as the foundation.

> Group classes (Live Online) and onsite training are available for this course. For more information, email partnerships@vdci.edu or visit: https://vdci.edu/courses/ai-for-the-workplace-with-claude



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Course Outline

Module 1: Getting Started with Claude AI

- Describe what Claude is, who builds it, and why it is not a search engine
- Understand the context window, how a conversation fills it, and when to start a new one
- Choose between the models and set how much effort goes into an answer
- Compare the plans, and identify where Claude can be reached: browser, desktop app, Chrome, Microsoft 365, and mobile
- Set instructions and turn on Memory, the two cheapest things you can do on day one

Module 2: Prompting Fundamentals and Working with Files

- Apply the five-part prompt: context, task, format, constraints, and examples
- Compare a weak prompt against a strong one and explain why the strong one works
- Work with images, PDFs, spreadsheets, and documents directly in a conversation
- Bring in current information with web search, and know what it does and does not settle
- Recognize the five prompting mistakes that account for most disappointing results

Module 3: Projects: Organizing Ongoing Work

- Explain the problem Projects solve compared with a regular conversation
- Set up a Project using its Instructions and Context panels
- Write Project instructions using a repeatable framework
- Build a knowledge base the Project draws on automatically

Module 4: Artifacts, Skills, and Memory

- Create and edit Artifacts, and know which kinds of output become one
- Build a Skill that carries your voice or a repeatable task, and know when a Skill beats an instruction
- Configure Memory, and understand how it differs from Project context
- Manage your usage so a plan goes further

Module 5: Intermediate Prompting and Advanced Features

- Ask for reasoning you can check, and read it rather than collapsing it
- Break a large task into steps Claude can follow in sequence
- Talk to Claude instead of typing, and know when dictation is the better input
- Let Claude interview you with the "You Ask Me" technique instead of writing the perfect prompt

Module 6: Claude vs. Other AI Tools

- Compare Claude against other major AI tools on the capabilities that matter for professional work
- Apply a practical framework for choosing the right tool for a given task
- Follow the basic rules for protecting sensitive information in any AI tool

Module 7: Claude Cowork

- Place Cowork as one of three ways to work in the app you already have, rather than a separate product to install
- Describe the kind of work Cowork is for, and how it differs from Chat
- Explain where a Cowork session actually runs, and what the desktop app is still needed for
- Run a first Cowork task that reads and writes real files

Module 8: Building Your Context System

- Name the layers of context Cowork draws on, and what each one covers
- Write instructions that apply to every session, and Project instructions that apply to one
- Make "ask me clarifying questions first" a standing default rather than something you retype

Module 9: Guardrails, Permissions, and Safe Use

- Explain what Cowork can and cannot reach, based on the folder you point it at
- Choose an approval mode, and configure network egress settings for a given task
- Recognize prompt injection and apply the practical defenses against it
- Apply the data privacy and compliance rules that govern regulated work

Module 10: Connectors, Chrome, and Microsoft 365

- Set up and use a Connector through MCP
- Work safely in the browser, the highest-risk surface, using the Chrome side panel
- Run Claude inside Excel, PowerPoint and Word, where it sees the live file and edits in place
- Move a workflow across two Office applications in a single conversation

Module 11: Plugins and Scheduled Tasks

- Explain what a Plugin bundles and how slash commands trigger it
- Install a Plugin from a marketplace and use it on real work
- Set up a recurring Scheduled Task, and know what it can still reach when your computer is asleep

Module 12: Judging What You Get Back

- Explain why a confident answer and a correct answer are different properties
- Apply three checks to any output before you use it: is it true, is it complete, is it yours
- Identify the failure that leaves no trace on the page, which is the one people miss
- Audit something you built earlier in the course and fix what the checks find

Module 13: Capstone: Build Your Personal Claude System

- Audit your own week and identify the work worth handing over
- Ask Claude what it needs from you, and write the answer into your instructions
- Connect the tools your top tasks depend on, and schedule the work that recurs

- Run one real task end to end using everything built across the two days

Module 14: Wrap-Up and Next Steps

- Recap the full arc of skills and system components built across both days
- Understand the honest, current limitations, including what depends on your plan and your device
- Leave with a concrete plan for the first week of applying what was learned