

# Grading Contracts 101

## WHAT—

Grading Contracts are a system of grading that “decouple[s] evaluation from grades” (Elbow and Danielewicz, 10), and instead, gives students grades based on their work or labors. Students’ labors might include completing homework assignments, attending and participating in class, turning in assignments, drafts and revisions on time, and turning in a specific page-requirement for each assignment.

### Key Features

- Student writing and work is not *graded* for quality (though quality is regularly discussed).
- Grades are not given on individual assignments; they are typically withheld until midterm and/or the end of the semester.
- Teachers do provide written feedback on student writing that responds to their ideas, explains their strengths and weaknesses, and offers suggestions for either revisions or future improvements; feedback is only geared towards responding to their writing—there is no need to justify or explain a grade.
- Higher final course grades are the result of extra work that is intended to increase and deepen learning experiences for students.
- Teachers keep track of student labors by recording attendance and homework and assignments as complete, incomplete, missing, or late.
- All work (homework, attendance, major assignments, drafts) is treated as being equally important; that is, there are no percentages that create work hierarchies (e.g., research paper is 30% of the grade, participation is 10%).
- Students understand exactly how to get various letter grades and have a clear understanding of where they’re at all semester. Students have more agency and access to whatever grade they want to get.
- There is room for varying levels of teacher-student negotiations of final grades, given extenuating circumstances, that is encouraged to take place via face-to-face discussions.

### Different Models

Guaranteed B (Elbow and Danielewicz, 2008)

- All students are guaranteed a B for completing the work of the course and missing no more than 1 week of class;
- Grades higher than a B are based on the teacher’s evaluation of the *quality* of the writing, as going above and beyond the basic expectations; an “A” is for rewarding superior writing quality.

All Grades Are Labor-Based

- The default grade is still a “B”; however, students get an “A” not through stronger quality of writing, but through laboring more—via extra credit, longer papers, including more sources, etc. (Inoue 2019)
- Final +/-s on course grades are either at the teacher’s discretion or the result of extra labor

Different Approaches to Classroom Negotiated Contract

- Through class discussions, you arrive at what “A”, “B” or “C” writing is, and this is how you grade student writing (Shor 1996)
- Through class discussions, you negotiate what level of effort an “A”, “B” or “C” involves and that is the grading contract (Inoue 2005)

- Both of these models involve classrooms that center a good amount of class time on discussing grading, writing, and effort as class content

#### Different Approaches to Communicating Grades with Students

- Tallying students' efforts each unit, providing them with a unit grade based on their labors;
- Tallying students' labors and giving them a midterm contract grade, and then a final course grade;
- Waiting until the very end of the class to evaluate efforts and grades
- Asking students to keep a labor log (Inoue 2019), so they are aware of their efforts and grade throughout the semester;
- Using Canvas to collect all homework and writing assignments, so students can see what work has been turned in on time and what hasn't

## WHY—

There are a number of pedagogical reasons to shift to grading contracts. Here are a few that are explored in more depth in some of the references below.

Grading contracts are valuable because they:

- Offer students the opportunity to be experimental and exploratory in their writing—to take risks, rather than only producing writing that is thought to be “correct” or doing exactly and only “what the assignment requires”;
- Value the time and labor students decide to commit to the class; privilege students who are investing the time, energy and effort into literacy learning.
- Create opportunities for teacher feedback to be more of a genuine response to student writing instead of a justification of a particular grade;
- Encourage students to engage with feedback on their writing more;
- Provide students with a clear and concrete understanding of their grade at all times throughout the semester; grades are simple and easy to calculate;
- Do not penalize or reward students for the level of knowledge about and experience with writing and language prior to entering class; all students have the same potential to earn an A;
- Encourage diverse writing and are accepting of language differences.

## HOW—

Using grading contracts requires thinking through some logistics. The following questions and bulleted considerations and options are some of the key aspects of a grading contract that are worth some extra pre-semester planning and thinking time.

How will you create **meaningful extra work** that fosters deeper learning experiences?

- Create a limited amount of extra credit projects students can do throughout the semester at any time;
- Create add-ons to major assignments that ask for more work (longer, the use of more sources), reflection on the work and learning, resources for other students, additional revisions and feedback from others, or other small ways to increase the work in ways that foster learning;
- Consider when you will allow extra work to be completed—any time students want, when major assignments are due, or some combination of the two

- Consider how much extra work is necessary to get an “A”; ideally, you want to create a balance between extra work being rigorous, but doable by all students.

How will you **track** student labors and work?

- Ask students to submit all homework and assignments using Blackboard/Canvas to track lateness via timestamps (making each assignment worth 1 point means that students either have 1 point per assignment or a 0, is a way to use the grading features in these LMS systems)
- Use your own spreadsheet (Recommendation: take notes regarding dates, homework/assignment name, and level of completion)
- Consider the different options of labor-based categories and their implications:
  - “Late” work means that you’re allowing students to make it up within a 48-hour window;
  - “Unsubmitted” work might mean that something is either done or not done, no make-ups allowed
  - “Complete” vs. “Uncomplete” should be clearly articulated for both yourself and students. In writing classes, for example, a “complete” draft (for me) means an introduction, use of all required materials/sources, a full essay with all body paragraphs, and meeting the minimum page length (I let the conclusion slide for drafts). While you can be flexible about complete/incomplete, it helps to have a clear definition when starting.

What are you willing to **negotiate with students**? When and how?

- Will you allow students to do extra work to eliminate absences, late work, etc.? If so, how much extra work is necessary for what?
- Will you allow students to use “pleas” in order to advocate that a particular lateness, absence, etc. not count against their grade? If so, what is your procedure for this?
- Will you allow students to negotiate their final grade or the +/-? If so, when and how?
- Will you allow the class to discuss and negotiate the terms of the grading contract? If so, when and how will you build this into your class time?
- When and how will you let students know where they are at in terms of their final grade?

#### Further Reading

- Elbow, Peter and Jane Danielewicz. “A Unilateral Grading Contract to Improve Learning and Teaching.” English Department Faculty Publication Series, University of Massachusetts—Amherst, January 2008.
- Inoue, Asao B. *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies: Teaching and Assessing Writing for a Socially Just Future*. Anderson, SC: Parlor Press, 2015. Available on the WAC Clearinghouse Website: <https://wac.colostate.edu/books/perspectives/inoue/>
- . “Community-Based Assessment Pedagogy.” *Assessing Writing* vol. 9, 2005: 208-38.
- . *Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom*. Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2019. Available on the WAC Clearinghouse Website: <https://wac.colostate.edu/books/perspectives/labor/>
- Shor, Ira. *When Students Have Power: Negotiating Authority in a Critical Pedagogy*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996.

## English 21007 Grading Contract

Professor Missy Watson | Spring 2019 | Adapted from Dr. Peter Elbow & Dr. Asao Inoue

Dear Class,

I am incorporating a contract for grading in our class, which avoids the uses of grades and numbers on assignments. In this class, your final course letter grade will be determined by the work you put into completing assignments and participating in the learning process. This doesn't mean, however, that quality of work matters less; we will regularly address the quality of your writing. The difference is in this class we focus on improving our literacy and critical thinking skills through hard work and collaborative efforts (rather than comparing the quality of your work to your classmates or some abstract notion of standards). When it comes to evaluating writing, my goal as your instructor is to create opportunities for receiving and providing feedback that will help us all evolve and grow as thinkers and writers. That is, we will try to create a *culture of support*: a culture where you, your colleagues, and I function as allies, fellow-travelers with various skills, experiences, and talents that we offer the group, rather than adversaries working against each other for grades or approval by teachers.

Taking grades out of the class, I hope, will allow you freedom to take risks and really work hard. Taking risks—even if they don't pay off in our favor—can show us our weaknesses, misunderstandings, and provide opportunities to grow and change. Furthermore, since I won't be assigning a number or letter grade to anything and since my feedback will be less frequent than your peers', this makes your colleagues and your own assessment and revision advice all the more valuable. This will help you listen carefully to colleagues' differing judgments and build self-assessment strategies that function apart from a teacher's approval. I want you to learn to assess the worth of those judgments for your work and make informed, careful decisions in your writing that you can explain to others. Such assessments will require time and critical thinking.

So, if you're looking to game the system and do the least amount of work to get the highest possible course grade, this is NOT the class for you. You'll only be frustrated. But, if you genuinely wish to learn and improve yourself as a writer and reader, are willing to do a lot of work to reach those goals, accept the idea that your labors will be rewarded, then this is the class for you.

## General Terms of Agreement

1. **Attendance and Lateness.** You agree to strive to attend every class and be on time. If extenuating circumstances prevent you from attending class, you are responsible for asking your classmates about announcements and/or new requirements. Per university guidelines, you are permitted to miss up to four classes without being dropped. If lateness becomes a problem (as in you are late 4 or more times), you and I will need to talk about whether this will constitute an absence. Of course, being a few minutes late a few times in a semester is understandable.
2. **Participation and Collaboration.** You agree to participate in ways that best fit you and that are most appropriate for each day's goal (by actively listening, taking notes, asking questions, offering comments, etc.). You agree to work cooperatively and collegially in groups, to share your writing, to listen supportively to the writing of others, and, when called for, give full and thoughtful assessments that help your colleagues consider ways to revise. You agree to come to class prepared with (your own copies of) all readings under investigation.
3. **Assignments.** You agree to strive to turn in on time all homework and other small assignments. All should be **completed fully** and **meet all assignment requirements**. If you are absent, you are responsible for submitting work that's due **on time**. *IMPORTANT: If assignments are **not completed** fully, they may be marked as "ignored" (see below).*

Late Assignments: An assignment is considered "late" if it is turned in after its initial due date and time but submitted within two days (48 hours). Note that a late assignment may be due on a day when our class is not scheduled to meet. 4 late assignments are permitted without penalty.

Make-up Assignments: An assignment is considered a "make-up" if it is turned in at some point in the semester but after the 48-hour window. Also, a "late" assignment becomes a "make-up" (even if submitted within 48 hours of the due date) once you've used up all the "late" assignments dictated by your grade choice. Refer to chart below for the breakdown.

Ignored Assignments. Any assignments not done at all, for whatever reason, are considered "Ignored." Even one ignored assignment will prevent you from earning a B or higher in the course (see chart below). *IMPORTANT: **Drafts of major essays cannot be submitted late. If drafts are not submitted on time, they will be considered "ignored."***

4. **All Phase Projects** must meet the following conditions:

On Time. You agree to turn in (on time and in the appropriate manner) all four major projects. If extenuating circumstances prevent you from turning in a major assignment, contact me right away so that we can make a plan and discuss how this will affect your final grade.

Complete. Each project must fully meet the expectations of the assignment. The project will not qualify as "complete" unless it has achieved all of the goals of the assignment as discussed in class or explained on handouts. This means that projects are not *just done* but done in the manner expected. If I find that a given project is not "complete," I will contact you about rewriting and how this will affect your final grade.

*Improvement.* While you do not have to worry about anyone’s judgments or standards to meet the grading contract, you are obligated to listen carefully to and address your colleagues’ and my concerns in all your work of the class. This means that when you receive feedback you’ll use that feedback to help you continually improve your writing. You won’t just correct errors or touch up pieces here and there in this class. Each major essay and project will be reshaped, extended, or complicated as necessary based on the feedback you receive. You will also need to make efforts to improve your copy editing skills. While I certainly do not expect error-free texts, I do expect you to take an active role in developing your English language usage, grammar, and mechanics. If too little changes in your writing over the course of the semester, I will contact you so that we can make a plan and/or determine how this will affect your final grade.

### Overview of Grade Breakdown Guidelines

	# of Absences	# of Late Assigns.	# of Make-up Assigns.	# of Ignored Assigns.	# of Extra Assigns.
<b>A</b>	3 or fewer	1	0	0	2
<b>B</b>	4 or fewer	2	1	0	0
<b>C</b>	5 or fewer	3	2	1	0
<b>D</b>	6 or fewer	4	3	2	0
<b>F</b>	7 or fewer	5 or more	4 or more	3 or more	0

### “A” Grades

Grades of “A” depend on you 1) being absent three times or less, having one or no “late” assignments, and no “make-up” or “ignored” assignments; and 2) completing **extended** versions of the Phase 1 and 2 assignments, which equates to doing about twice the work for the Phase 1 and Phase 2 projects. Thus, you earn an “A” if you do more work in the first two assignments and you exceed “B” expectations for attendance, participation, and for submitting homework and other assignments.

### “B” Grades

In a way, “B” is the default grade for this class. You earn a “B” if you put in good time and effort, do all required work, and do all four phase projects in an acceptable fashion. Grades of “B” depend on you having four or fewer absences, having two or fewer “late” assignments, no more than one “make-up” assignment, and no “ignored” assignments. No extra assignments are required for a “B.”

## Grades Lower Than "B"

I hope no one will aim for lower grades. If you miss more than four classes, turn in more than two "late" assignments, turn in more than one "make up" assignment, or have any "ignored" assignments, your grade will drop below a "B." Thus, the quickest way to slide to a "C," "D," or "F" is to miss classes and/or not submit assignments. See the "Breakdown" section above to see the specifications for each grade below a "B."

## Exceptions

**University and Military Obligations.** Any absence due to a university-sponsored group activity (e.g., sporting event, performance, band, etc.) will not count against you, as stipulated by university policy, as long as you FIRST provide written documentation within the first two weeks of the semester of all absences. This same policy applies if you have mandatory military-related absences (e.g., deployment, work, duty, etc.). This will allow us to determine ahead of time how you will meet assignments and our contract, despite being absent.

**Pleas.** Because we all know that life isn't perfect and that each semester does not always go according to our plans, I offer you one plea that you can make to me to change your progress in the course. For instance, you might plea to get a late or missed assignment removed from your record so that you may still meet our contract, etc. **Anyone can make a plea to me once during the semester.** However, there must be some kind of special or extenuating circumstances that warrants the plea. You may not plead a case just because you want something removed from your record.

**+/- Grades.** +/- grades will be assigned at my discretion. They will be used in cases when 1) your assignments and participation suggest you labored above and beyond the expectations (+); 2) the quality and completeness of your major projects, smaller assignments, and participation is lacking in one way or another (-); or, 3) in the case that that a plea is granted and/or we determine special accommodations are in order. You will be notified if your final grade will have a + or -.

**\*By staying in our course, you agree to all of the above terms, and I agree to keep track of the above details responsibly and enforce them democratically.**

# PWR 393: Technical Writing

Instructor: Dr. Kati Ahern

Email: [katherine.ahern@cortland.edu](mailto:katherine.ahern@cortland.edu) (Please feel free to email me any day or time!)

Office Phone: 607-753-4886 / Office Location: Old Main, 113-C

Our class meets: Tues/Thurs 2:50-4:05 in Old Main G-17

My office hours are as follows: **Tuesdays and Thursdays 1pm-2pm; Weds 11-1:30pm and 3-4pm; and by appointment.** (I am or can be on-campus with a pretty wide range of availability, so please don't hesitate to let me know if these hours do not meet your individual needs!)

## Course Description

Strategies for effective technical communication across a range of media, documents and industries. Also introduces students to the discipline and profession of technical communication, a field involving the communication of technical information, processes, illustrations, and concepts between experts and a variety of audiences. Prerequisite: CPN 101 or 103. Fulfills: LASR. (3 cr. hr.)

Technical writing often involves negotiating multiple levels of complexity within a writing situation. For instance, technical writing may involve communicating technical information to a non-expert audience, translating technical information and making it “ready-to-use” in another context, and/or navigating client/customer relationships and requirements for productivity, profit, and ethics. In this class we will practice technical writing genres such as tutorials, reports, memos, and usability reports. Our key concepts will involve understanding audience, context-awareness, and accessible and inclusive document design.

## Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Understand what readers need to know to take action or make a decision
- Work (individually and collaboratively) to plan, implement, and write about long term, complex research projects
- Consider differences in communicating in print versus digital environments, different modalities, and genres (such as letters, tutorials, documentation, proposals, and technical reports) in ways most persuasive for a specific audience
- See writing as a social action that has consequences

## Course Diversity and Inclusion Statement

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course. In order to become a part of a class community, I believe that students must feel that their



learning needs are being met. In this course diversity will be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated.

Always we will need respect for others. Thus, an additional aim of our course necessarily will be for us to practice empathy and perspective-taking as we deepen our understandings of multiple perspectives – whatever our backgrounds, experiences, or positions. Our course conversations may not always be easy; we sometimes will make mistakes in our speaking and our listening; sometimes we will need patience or courage or imagination or any number of qualities in combination to engage our texts, our classmates, and our own ideas and experiences.

[Please see the section on “SUNY Cortland Community Values” (found on page 7) for more information on resources regarding diversity, inclusion, disability, Title IX, and academic integrity.]

## Required Materials

The textbook we will be using for this course is a free, open-access textbook. You can find it at the following link. However, I would recommend downloading the digital version just in case so that you have it at the ready.

*Technical Writing Essentials*, by Suzan Last

<https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/technicalwriting/?sfns=xmwa>

## Contract Grading

### Example Contract #2

Labor-Based (or “work-based”) Contract Grading is a system of grading based off the research of Asao Inoue (2015; 2018). It differs from traditional grading in that you do not receive a grade based on the subjective quality of your work, but instead based on the labor (or work) you complete within the course. In other words, you will receive feedback from me, comments, suggestions for revision, encouragement, and support, but you will not receive an “A, B, C, D, or E” based on how “well” you completed the project.

There are three kinds of labor in our class: **Project Labor** (formal projects), **Practice Labor** (completion-based homework and informal writing), and **Community Labor** (assignments and group work that supports your peers.)

Formal Projects are graded on a Baseline and + system. All + parts are due at the time of the assignment due date. Practice Assignments are graded on a completion score (# completed/# offered) within 48 hours of assigned date. Community Labor is also graded on a completion score (# completed/# offered) with a grace allowance of 3. (This means 3 missed community assignments or 3 absences.) Community Labor cannot be made up/completed late. (All of these details and more will be explained on the “Contract Grading” handout as well.)

## Assignment Details

Project: Tutorial.....	15%
Project: Usability Report for Tutorial.....	5%
Project: Transcript of a Podcast.....	25%
Project: Short Report and Data Collection.....	20%
Project: CP2 Water Project.....	20%
Practices.....	10%
Community Labor.....	5%

## Description of Assignments

### *Project: Tutorial (15%)*

In this project you will compose a complex, multiple-step tutorial (or set of instructions.) It is essential that your tutorial be written for a specific audience and serve a need. (Ex. You should not design a tutorial for a “simple” task such as making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich or an audience that would already know how to accomplish the task.) Additionally, your tutorial **MUST** involve visual and verbal components, and involve at least 6 complex steps.

The following are 3 possible “+” parts: + = a 1-pg audience analysis and rationale for your tutorial; + = a 2-pg genre analysis of at least 3 other tutorials that already exist on your topic/related topics and why your tutorial fits the needs of your audience better; + = a 1-pg revision memo, detailing which revisions you would want to make in design, content, layout, and organization would better address the needs of your audience. \*\*Remember, you can choose to do any, all, or none of these + parts.

### *Project Usability Report for Tutorial (5%)*

In this project you will complete a usability study for your tutorial. This means deciding what kinds of questions or information that you will “test” for participants being able to find or do. Your usability report should include the following setup: 1) design of usability test, 2) selection of participants for testing, 3) results (quantifiable and/or observed), and 4) comments from participants.

The following are 3 possible “+” parts: + = a 1-pg. revision statement about what you would change if you were to revise your usability test or report; + = a 1-pg genre analysis of usability reports—what you find to be useful or compelling in this genre and/or what cannot be accomplished through usability testing; + = a 1-pg. statement assessing the validity (how “true” do you think the results are?), reliability (repeatable?), or generalizable you think your usability test was based on your test design.

### *Transcript for Podcast-- Accessibility Project (25%)*

For this project you will pick a podcast or part of a podcast of at least 5-10 minutes in length and create an accessible transcript for that podcast. You may decide to work with a podcast where

there is an existing transcript in order to improve it, or to create a transcript from scratch. Your podcast must include at least 3 nonverbal sounds (which may be music, sound effects, or transitions within sections of the podcast.) Your transcript must make all material as accessible as possible. (Ex. don't just write [music] but describe it, add time stamps, think about visual design.)

The 3 possible “+” parts for this project are as follows: + = a 1pg revision memo detailing what you would like to have done differently, how, and why; + = a 2-3 pg analysis of the genre of podcast transcripts—what are they meant to accomplish, what have you noticed about their strengths and weaknesses? How do they work differently for different genres of podcasts?; + = a 2-3 page analysis of another transcript in detail. This could be a mentor text, a peer's text, or a text from our in-class examples.

#### *Short Report Problem on Campus, collection of data (20%)*

In this project you will create a short report in the genre of a “recommendation” report about a problem that you identify as being important to SUNY Cortland. Your recommendation report should be approximately 4-5 pgs with section headers that cover information that introduces an audience to the topic, identifies possible recommendations, involves at least one section on the collection and reporting of data-driven observation, and proposes a more elaborate next-step study of the problem.

The 3 possible “+” parts for this project are as follows: + = a revision memo outlining changes you would like to have made in the collection of your data, research, or framing of this problem on-campus, + = a 2-pg statement reimagining your intended audience, how you are connecting this problem to other problems on-campus or other campuses, and how you might address communicating recommendations in a different way than a report; + = a 2-pg discussion of benchmarks—discussing at least 3 different schools who have approached this problem, their solutions, and why those campuses are comparable to SUNY Cortland.

#### *CP2 Water Project (20%)*

For our experience of “writing for a client” you will be working in collaborative groups with groups of chemistry students. Together you will identify an interesting (to you!) project involving water in Cortland, on-campus, or in comparison to other water. Your water project will be local in that the groups of chemistry students must be able to collect samples and analyze the water in a way that addresses a question. In collaboration, your group will then design a visualization of that data. These visualizations and/or translations of information to an audience will then be presented at the end of the semester. Possible genres could include (but are not limited to): an art installation or visualization; a research poster; a flier or brochure for distribution; a lesson plan to be used with a defined age group of learners; a presentation designed for a specific audience.

Although you will be working in groups to create the main project you will still have the opportunity to complete the following 3 possible “+” parts individually: + = a 2 pg analysis of your chosen audience and genre for communicating the findings of the research design and

results; + = a design mock-up (a kind of prototyping or rough design) for an alternative genre of presenting that information; + = a revision memo discussing what might have been modified and/or how this 1 genre could be turned into a multiple-channel/multiple-genre information campaign.

*Practices (10%)*

Practices are applied scenarios based on the textbook reading. In some cases these practice assignments will come directly from the textbook’s applied sections. Practices are graded overall on how many are turned in / how many were offered within 48 hours of the assigned date. There will be 10 Practices offered for this course.

*Community Labor (5%)*

Community labor involves small assignments, such as writing peer review letters, completing tasks in a group, and participating in discussions. Community Labor is also graded on a completion score (# completed/#offered) with a grace allowance of 3. (This means 3 missed community assignments or 3 absences.) Community Labor cannot be made up/completed late.

## If You Need More Support

If there is anything I can do to improve your learning experience in this course, please let me know! Also, if you are looking for additional resources there is information listed in the “Community Values” section of this syllabus, as well as links provided here:

- The Writing Center: <http://www2.cortland.edu/offices/writing-center/>
- Counseling Services/The Counseling Center: <http://www2.cortland.edu/counseling>
- Disability Services: <https://www2.cortland.edu/offices/disability-resources/>
- Institutional Equity and Inclusion Office: <http://www2.cortland.edu/about/diversity/>
- Title IX: <http://www2.cortland.edu/titleix>

Starfish: You may see emails from starfish@cortland.edu regarding your academic performance in class as well as any recommendations to support you. To access Starfish, log into myRedDragon and select the Starfish tab to set up your profile.

## Course Schedule

Course Meeting Day & Topic	Homework DUE
Tues, Aug 27 What is Tech Writing?	T: Nothing, first day of class ☺
Thurs, Aug 29 Backwards Engineering an Object activity, discuss Chp. 1	TH: read pg. 5-16 (on pg. not same as pdf— 1.0 Through 1.3), <b>Practice #1</b>
Tues, Sept 3 Tutorial Topic Generating, Look at 7.7 Writing Instructions	T: read second ½ of chp 1 (starting pg. 17 on printed page, sections 1.4 and 1.5), <b>Practice #2</b>

# Grade Agreement

WRIT 1380 | Spring 2020 | Kate Navickas

WRIT 1380 is now, as of fall 2019, using a grading contract. A grading contract is a system of grades that are based primarily on your *labors* or *work completed*. That means that your final course letter grade will be the result of your participation, attendance, and completion of homework, drafts, and assignments (as detailed explicitly below), rather than a subjective evaluation of your final assignments as compared to the writing of your peers (as typical grades are usually assigned).

Grading contracts are valuable for a number of reasons, including the fact that they:

- Offer you the opportunity to be experimental and exploratory in your writing—to take risks, rather than only producing writing that is thought to be “correct” or doing exactly and only “what the assignment requires”;
- Value the time and labor you decide to commit to the class;
- Provide you with a clear and concrete understanding of your grade at all times throughout the semester; grades are simple and easy to calculate;
- Do not penalize or reward you for the level of knowledge about and experience you have with writing and language prior to entering our class; all students have the same potential to earn an A;
- Privilege students who are investing the time, energy and effort into literacy learning.

While grading contracts focus on quantifiable outcomes (attendance, participation, completed work), that does not mean that you will not be expected to attend to and revise your writing and work for its quality. Grading contracts function on the belief that quality writing is the result of one’s efforts at drafting, getting and understanding feedback from others, and revising.

## Grade Breakdown & Explanation

	<b>Absences</b>	<b>Unsubmitted Homework</b>	<b>Incomplete Drafts</b>	<b>Extra Work</b>
<b>A</b>	2 or fewer	1	0	3
<b>B</b>	3 or fewer	2	1	1
<b>C</b>	4 or fewer	3	2	0
<b>D</b>	5 or fewer	4	3	0
<b>F</b>	6 or more	5 or more	4	0

### ATTENDANCE & HOMEWORK

Showing up to class and having done the homework is essential to our classroom dynamics, the growth of your peers (group work), and to your ability to complete the necessary writing process work to write a strong essay. I do not want to penalize anyone for emergencies, sickness or other situations beyond your control; however, I do want to reward and honor the work that being present and completing the homework requires. Thus, while all absences count (class and conferences), I will be flexible and

considerate when emergencies and such situations occur (please notify me by email). Additionally, if you are late to class or conferences by 10 minutes or more three times, this will count as one absence. Regarding homework, it is either completed for class or it is not—there are no options for making up homework, since homework is scaffolded to help you build a stronger writing process. If you don't complete the homework, you will become behind in regards to working towards the assignment and you will be unable to participate in small groups with your peers.

#### DRAFTS

You will be expected to have a draft of each of our four major assignments complete for your individual conference the week before the final assignment is due. Drafts are an essential element of writing, because in order to substantially revise an essay, you really need to have a complete draft; otherwise, "revision" tends to simply mean finishing your essay. **Thus, for our grading contract, drafts are either complete or incomplete. A complete draft** means that you have written an introduction, all of the body paragraphs and included all of the source requirements of the assignment. That is, you're allowed to have a complete draft that doesn't yet have a conclusion. If your draft is missing an introduction, any body paragraphs, or any sources, it will count as incomplete. You cannot have any incomplete drafts to get an "A" in this course (see above breakdown).

#### EXTRA WORK

In order to get an "A" in the class, you need to have completed 3 "extra works", whereas a "B" requires only 1 (see above breakdown). Extra work is directly attached to each final assignment. For each of our four essays, you will be given a specific work-based rubric, which will allow you to determine how much work you will want to do in order to get the grade that you want. I have included a sample rubric below, but each assignment's rubric will be slightly different. However, the basic rubric for each assignment is that a "B" means that you have completed the final assignment as detailed in the assignment handout, whereas an "A" means that you have completed extra work that fosters greater learning experiences in terms of writing, knowledge about writing, and reflection on your own writing process and growth. While in typical courses an "A" represents superior writing, in our class the "A" means that you have labored more in ways that are likely to result in your growth as a writer.

*In order to get an "A" for a final course grade, you need to complete A-level work for 3 out of the 4 final assignments.*

This is a sample rubric, the one you will receive for your Synthesis Essay:

	Work Completed
<b>A</b>	Working towards an "A" on this paper means completing <b>two</b> of the following (in addition to meeting the "B" requirements):  1. Write an additional 1-page explanation of what you learned about synthesis and writing from this assignment (due with the final essay)

	<p>2. Write a 1-page handout for other future FWS students that provides tips for completing this essay, specifically for selecting evidence, for synthesizing sources, and creating a focused essay that flows (due with the final essay)</p> <p>3. Complete an additional revision, in response to Kate’s feedback on your final synthesis, that includes track changes and in-text comments that describe what you revised and why (this is due no more than 7 days after you receive feedback from Kate)</p>
<b>B</b>	This essay is complete according to assignment guidelines, which means a full 5-page final essay that includes an introduction, conclusion, synthesis of four of the shared class readings and that has been revised to address feedback you received on your draft.
<b>C</b>	The essay is less than half complete.
<b>D</b>	The essay is only a quarter complete.
<b>F</b>	The essay has not been started.

To get an “A” in the class, you need to have completed 2 of the A requirements for three final assignments. However, if you do extra work above and beyond this (by either fulfilling A requirements for four final essays or by completing all three A options), during your final conference, we will discuss how to apply that extra work to your grade. The extra work can either go towards eliminating unsubmitted homework, incomplete drafts or absences or work towards a + on your final course grade.

## Negotiations

For our final conference, you should be prepared to discuss your final course grade. I will come to the conference prepared to tell you where you’re at in the course, you should come prepared to discuss what grade you believe you deserve based on the above contract, your work throughout the semester, and any extenuating circumstances. During this time, we might discuss how to negotiate extra assignment work you’ve completed throughout the semester in exchange for incomplete drafts, unsubmitted homework, or absences, if need be.

**+/- Grades.** +/- grades will be assigned at my discretion. They will be used in cases when 1) your assignments and participation suggest you labored above and beyond the expectations (+); 2) the quality and completeness of your major projects, smaller assignments, and participation is lacking in one way or another (-); or, 3) in the case that that we determine special accommodations are in order. You should reflect on whether or not any of these points should apply to you before your final conference.

**Accommodations/Inclusivity.** The goal of the Grading Contract is to meet you where you are in your reading and writing experience and to support you in growing as a critical thinker, reader, writer, communicator and collaborator. Additionally, the purpose is to ensure students are having

the opportunity to work in a just environment that adapts to their needs and equally supports each students' learning. Thus, when necessary I will work with individuals on a case-by-case basis to determine how best to accommodate your needs as a learner and the course's learning outcomes. Ultimately, the Grading Contract functions as a model for forming professional relationships and professional communication practices.

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*Grading contracts originate from research in the field of rhetoric and composition by Dr. Peter Elbow and Asao Inoue that has sought more equitable and just grading practices. This grading contract has been adapted from their work, as well as from the contracts of Dr. Missy Watson and Dr. Nicole Howell.*

**\*By staying in our course, you agree to all of the above terms, and I agree to keep track of the above details responsibly and enforce them democratically.**