English 1A Grading Contract

A grading contract is a method of assessment that refocuses the class and the students onto the work of the course rather than the hoops needed to jump through to get a particular grade. Conventional grading often leads students to think more about grades than about learning. Sometimes grades even lead to the feeling that you are working *against* the teacher or having to hide a part of yourself from him or her. Grading contracts have a proven ability to refocus students away from grades and toward the labor of learning. For these reasons, I am using a contract for grading in our class.

Since this class attempts to encourage exploration, speculation, evaluation and generalization as a means of producing learning, our contract asks you to have a responsibility to yourself and to the class to do the work required of you. This means you should attend class and participate during class time, ask questions of me or your classmates if you do not understand or want more information, and know what assignments you have turned in and where you stand in relation to our contract.

I have the responsibilities of preparing every class so it moves you forward in your learning, answering any questions you have about course content or your progress, and providing helpful and honest suggestions about the effectiveness of your work in the class. I also promise to make myself available to you for questions and concerns outside of class during my office hours.

**Therefore, if you do everything asked for in the class—in the spirit and letter that it is asked of you—then the default grade for the course will be a “B.”** If you miss class, turn in assignments late, don’t accomplish assignments *in the ways we discuss or agree upon*, or forget to do assignments, etc., your grade will be lower. This means that getting a “B” does not depend on my assessment of the quality of your work but on your willingness and ability to establish good and responsible labor practices.

**Please Note**: You need to earn a C in this class for it to count toward the GE Area D-1 requirement.

# **Responsibilities for “B” Grades**

You are guaranteed a course grade of “B” **if you meet all of the following conditions (1-9 below):**

1. Participation: You’ll fully participate in at least 86% of our scheduled class sessions and their activities and assignments. You may miss (for whatever reason) 14% of our class sessions. Leaving class 10 minutes or more before class ends or coming to class 10 minutes or more after class starts constitutes non-participation. For our class, attendance equates to participation, which means that you need to come to class with the homework done and be prepared to participate in the activities of the class. *This means if you come to class, but your homework is not done, you may not receive participation credit.* Using cell phones for texting, gaming, or using computers for things unrelated to the class focus is unacceptable and, if it becomes a problem, you will lose participation credit on each day there is a problem; however, *academic* use of technology is a part of our learning environment and as such is acceptable.
   * **Please Note:** sometimes there are emergency situations when all of us need to use or check our phone or have our phone on in class. If you have a situation where this is the case, please contact me before class to let me know the situation.
   * **Please Note**: Assignments not turned in because of an absence, either ones assigned on the schedule or ones assigned on earlier days in class, will be late or delinquent (depending on when you turn it in finally, see the guidelines #4 and #5 below).

## Exemptions from Participation Requirements

* 1. Medical Leave: Students needing to miss class due to medical reasons will be excused from that day’s class meeting and are exempt from this contract’s stipulation on participation if medical documentation is provided. Students are still responsible for doing all of the coursework in a timely manner, however.
  2. Religious Observances: Students who will be absent from class due to religious observance must provide notice of the date(s) to me, in writing, by the end of the second week of classes.
  3. College Sponsored Events: For those students who will need to take time off for college sponsored events, I will need to know the date of those absences by the second week of classes in order to excuse those absences. This will need to be on letterhead from the person in charge of your organization. Having excused absences does not mean that you get an additional 6 absences on top of the excused one. It means that you and I will need to work out what is fair in relation to the number of classes you need to miss for college sponsored events and create an attendance contract that both you and I sign.

1. Lateness and Leaving Class: You’ll each agree to come on time or early to class, and you’ll agree to stay in class once you are here. Walking in to class late 2 or 3 times in a semester or needing to step out to use the restroom once or twice is understandable, but coming habitually late every week, stepping out of class regularly to answer your phone, send a text message, get a drink, or leaving class habitually early is not acceptable. This is disruptive and it disrespects the community of learning in the class. If you are late to class or are absent, you are still responsible to find out what assignments or instructions were made, and you should do so by contacting your peers and referring to the course syllabus, the course schedule, Canvas, etc.; if you email me to ask what we’ve done for the day, I will not likely respond.
2. Sharing and Collaboration: You’ll work cooperatively in groups. Be willing to share your writing (in class and on Canvas), to listen supportively to the writing of others, and, when called for, give full and thoughtful assessments that consistently help your colleagues consider ways to revise according to our class-defined rubrics.
3. Late Assignments: You will agree to turn in properly and on time the final portfolio, all writing project drafts, discussion board posts, and other assignments. Because your colleagues in class depend on you to get your work done on time so that they can do theirs on time, late assignments will not be accepted\*.
   * **\*Exception:** **You may turn in a late assignment THREE TIMEs OR LESS during the semester**. **All “late assignments” are due 48 hours after their initial due date** (e.g. if the assignment was due on Wednesday by the end of the day, a late assignment must be turned in by the end of the following Friday). The exceptions are the Final Portfolios and the Final Portfolio Assessments which must be turned in on time.
   * **Please Note**: If you have more than three late assignments, each late assignment after the third is considered a “delinquent” assignment (see #1 below). Making a habit of turning work in late or delinquently will have an effect on your overall grade for the course.

# Exceptions to Expectations on Completed Coursework

1. Delinquent Assignments: Delinquent assignments are assignments that are not completed or are turned in after the late assignment deadline. After you have used your three “late assignment” passes, all additional assignments turned in incomplete, not on time, or otherwise not according to our guidelines are considered “Delinquent assignments.” **In order to meet our contract for a “B” grade, you cannot have any “Delinquent assignments.”** One of these in the gradebook means an automatic “C.” Two delinquent assignments gives you a “D,” and three or more delinquent assignments means an “F” course grade. (If the pace of the course is too fast, or if our reading gets too heavy, then let me know and we can make an adjustment to our work. But don’t wait to inform me of these issues until after you’ve fallen behind. Keep me posted on the class’ pace).
2. Incomplete Assignments: Incomplete assignments are those assignments that were completed on time but did not match the “spirit and letter” of the assignment in some way (perhaps instructions were not carefully followed, or perhaps there was a misunderstand as to the expectations of the assignment). When an assignment is incomplete, you will have 48 hours from the time you receive notice from me that the assignment is incomplete to revise and resubmit the assignment for no penalty. If you take longer than 48 hours it will be a late assignment until 48 hours have passed from the original notification at which time it becomes a “delinquent” assignment. The final portfolio does not fall under this category (it must be complete and on time).
3. Canvas Assignments and Formal Writing Projects need to meet the following conditions:
   1. *Complete and On Time*: You’ll turn in on time and in the appropriate manner complete products that meet individual assignment guidelines, which will be listed in the syllabus or assignment prompt or will be worked out together in class.
   2. *Revisions*: When the assignment is to revise, you will work to reshape, extend, complicate, or substantially clarify your ideas – or relate your ideas to comments from me, your classmates, or the information generated in a class workshop. I expect you to do more than just correct or touch up or add additional paragraphs to an existing text; revisions should respond substantially to your colleagues’ and my assessments.
   3. *Copy Editing*: Your writing must be well copy edited – that is, free from virtually all mistakes in spelling and grammar. It's fine to get help in copy-editing, but be sure that you are doing the editing and that the final product reflects your words and abilities with language. I will not be so concerned with editing issues in drafts or in your Canvas assignments or assessments. But please be sure to proofread these at least once before submitting them. If you struggle with grammar, I encourage you to see me for individual tutorial sessions during my office hours.
   4. *Mindfulness*: In each of these projects, you are being asked to go beyond summarizing and reporting what you found in the reading and in your research. I encourage you to push your thinking in this class by questioning your own assumptions as well as ours (mine and your classmates), and connecting and analyzing the readings in the class in relation to your work. Finally, adopt a habit of mind of positioning yourself in the present moment as you labor for this class.
4. Peer Responses and Assessments: we will make frequent use of this kind of writing/discussion in class. Your work needs to meet the following conditions:
   1. *Complete and On**Time*: All peer responses should be complete and submitted on time and in the appropriate way so that your colleagues will get your assessments of their writing the way the class has predetermined.
   2. *Content*: All peer responses should focus their comments on rubrics we develop, following the directions established in class for peer response and our evolving class discussions about them. Our goal in workshops is to help focus and expand our peers’ ideas, not correct their grammar.
   3. *Courtesy and Respect*: All peer response should be courteous and respectful in tone, but *honest*. It’s okay to say something doesn’t seem right in a draft, or that something doesn’t really work. Respect means we are kind and truthful.
   4. *Final Portfolio Assessments*: **Participation in the Final portfolio assessments is mandatory**. **These cannot be missed nor turned in late**.
5. Final Portfolios: You’ll turn in complete and on time a final course portfolio according to the portfolio handout. Late or missed portfolios constitute an automatic failing grade. The final portfolio must be passing in order for the student to get a B in the class.

# “A” Grades

As you see, the grade of B depends primarily on *behaviors*. Have you shown responsible effort and consistency in our class? Have you done what was asked of you in the spirit and timeframe in which it was asked? Grades of “A,” however, depend on *acknowledged* *quality*. Thus you earn a B if you put in good time and effort. But to get an “A” you have to make your time and effort pay off into writing of genuine, recognizable excellence that responds in some way concretely to your colleagues’ and my concerns (and also meets the conditions for a B). This means that not only is revision important, but a certain kind of revision: one that demonstrates a reflective writer listening, making decisions, and moving drafts above and beyond our expectations (delineated by our rubrics). Writing in the “A” category will respond to assessments, demonstrate learning in the course, and be reflective of itself.

# Knowing Where You Stand & Checking Grades

I use the gradebook on Canvas to keep track of completed, late, and delinquent assignments as well as participation. At any time, you can go to Canvas and see where you stand. Below is a chart that lists the requirements for the class so you can easily reference what it takes to get a particular grade. Please also note that as our class is mostly paperless, I will respond to much of your submitted work over email or Canvas. Please be sure to check your student email regularly to be sure that you know about assignments that might need to be redone and can thus manage revising them within the time period allotted.

## Grades Lower Than B

I hope no one will aim for lower grades. The quickest way to slide to a “C,” “D,” or “F” is to miss classes, show up to class without the reading done, not turn in things on time—or in the spirit and letter of which it was asked—or not turn things in at all.

## Grading Scheme Breakdown

Below is a table that shows the main components that affect your successful compliance with our contract.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **# of Late Assigns.** | **# of Delinquent assigns.** | **Final Assessments** | **Final Portfolio** |
| **A** | 0 | 0 | Complete | “A” Quality |
| **B** | 3 or fewer | 0 | Complete | Pass |
| **C** | 4 or more | 1 | Complete | Pass |
| **D** | 4 or more | 2 | Not Complete | Pass or No Pass |
| **F** | 4 or more | 3 or more | Not Complete | Pass or No Pass |

**Please Note**: All assignments that are turned in as “late” (see above guidelines for assignments considered “late”) after the 3rd are considered “delinquent.”

# Forgiveness Clause

I, Jeremiah Henry, as the administrator of our contract, will decide in consultation with the student whether an exemption is warranted in any case. The student must come to the teacher (Jeremiah Henry) as soon as possible, **usually before the student is unable to meet the contract** (before breaching the contract), in order that he/she and the teacher can make fair and equitable arrangements, ones that will be fair and equitable to all in the class and still meet the college’s regulations on attendance, conduct, and workload in classes. You may invoke this forgiveness clause for any reason, but only once in the semester. Please keep in mind that the contract is a public, social contract, one agreed upon through group discussion and agreement, so my job is to make sure that whatever agreement we come to about a plea will not be unfair to others in class. The plea is NOT an “out clause” for anyone who happens to not fulfill the contract in some way; it is for rare and unusual circumstances out of the control of the student.

**\* Bonus:** Each student may earn an additional forgiveness from contract obligations (see above) by working with a consultant from the writing center. Please ask the writing center consultant to provide me with documentation about what you did during your time with them.

By staying in this course and attending class, you accept this contract and agree to abide by it, as do I.