Grading Contracts

(Adapted from Jacki Fiscus)

In this course, we are using a grade contract system so that grading is transparent, which enables you to be in control of the grade you receive. I've created contracts for the grade options, the obligations of which are listed on your handout and posted on Canvas. If you have any questions about them at any point in the quarter, please come see me.

Logistics:

· The choices for grades in this course are: 4.0, 3.6, 3.3, 3.0, 2.5, 2.0, 1.0, or 0.0.

· To earn a grade, your goal is to meet all the obligations.

  - If you know you will not be able to meet an obligation (e.g. you are on a sports team with UW sanctioned travel) or learn that you will not be able to meet an obligation (e.g. you are diagnosed with an illness), then communicate with me as soon as possible so we can discuss alternative obligations.

  - If you accidentally miss an obligation, then you must communicate about this mistake with me and do an agreed upon “Extra Credit Opportunity” assignment to make up for it.

· Before the second week of the course, we will set up grade trackers using Google Sheets, which you will fill out throughout the quarter. You will indicate what grade you are intending to go for at that point, but you can change your grade choice at any time throughout the quarter.

· If you have any questions, you should communicate with me immediately. Please do not let confusion get in the way of your success.

Below are the contractual obligations for each grade. We will use Google Sheets to track your progress, and you can also use the check boxes below to confirm your progress. Remember, you must meet these obligations in order to attain the grade you sign up for, but we can work together for make-up work if need be (unless this becomes a habit and then we’ll re-evaluate your grade choice).

Note: There are three formal and seven informal writing assignments, in addition to regular homework such as discussion board posts and Canvas Annotation Journal entries. If at any point I cut one of the informal writing assignments, the grading contract will be adjusted accordingly.

What you can expect of me

· I will be available during my posted office hours, and if I need to cancel office hours, I will provide alternative, additional hours when I will be available within one week, unless prevented by illness or emergency.

· I will provide clear expectations for all written formal and informal assignments to be considered complete, and provide clarification for any questions asked at least 48 hours before the assignment is due.
- I will provide at least 1 week’s notice of any changes to the syllabus, unless that change is to cancel an assignment or reading.

- I will participate in class activities with good faith, interacting with others in appropriate and productive ways.

- No *required* assignment or reading will be posted less than one week before it is due. No formal writing assignment prompt will be posted less than two weeks before it is due.

- If I mark any assignment as “incomplete” when you think it is “complete,” I will explain why and, provided you contact me to explain the misunderstanding within a week of receiving the grade, provide you with the opportunity to fix any mistakes and receive full credit for completing the assignment on time. (If this becomes a pattern, you must contact me to set up a meeting to discuss the problem and, if necessary, renegotiate your grade contract.)

- When providing feedback, I will try to be as clear and prompt as I am able, and I will answer any questions you have about your feedback.

**4.0 Grade:**

- Participates in class activities with good faith, interacting with others in appropriate and productive ways.

- Misses no more than one day of classroom activities.

- Misses no more than one homework activity.

- Submits all 3 formal writing assignments and at least 6 out of 7 informal writing assignments on time. All writing assignments are submitted and complete by the day the final paper is due.

- All informal and formal writing assignments are done completely. (Note: stipulations for “completion” will be fully articulated for each assignment, and will include, in addition to items like length requirements, items like “fully responding to the prompt questions,” “making clear connections between your claim and the textual evidence it relies on,” etc.)

- Demonstrates extensive and strategic growth in writing about literature over the quarter.

- Learns something interesting related to the course content and arranges a 15-minute conference during Weeks 3-9 with me to discuss it. This could mean that you read a book, went to a museum, listened to a podcast, went to a performance, etc. Come to my office and have a conversation with me about what you learned.

**3.6 Grade:** The differences from the 4.0 grade to the 3.6 grade obligations are red. Also, the last bullet on the 4.0 grade (the “learn something” assignment, which is then brought into office hours) is not an obligation for a 3.6 grade.

- Participates in class activities with good faith, interacting with others in appropriate and productive ways.
"Misses no more than two days of classroom activities.

"Misses no more than two homework activities.

"Submits all 3 formal writing assignments and at least 6 out of 7 informal writing assignments on time. All writing assignments are submitted and complete by the day the final paper is due.

"2 of the 3 formal writing assignments, including the final paper, and 6 of the 7 informal writing assignments are turned in as complete assignments. **All are ultimately complete by due date of the final paper.**

"Demonstrates growth in writing about literature throughout the quarter.

### 3.3 Grade: The differences from the 3.6 grade to the 3.3 grade obligations are red.

"Participates in class activities with good faith, interacting with others in appropriate and productive ways.

"Misses no more than two days of classroom activities.

"Misses no more than two homework activities.

"Submits 2 out of 3 formal writing assignments (including the final paper) and 5 out of 7 informal writing assignments on time.

"2 of the 3 formal writing assignments, including the final paper, and 5 of the 7 informal writing assignments are turned in as complete assignments. **All are ultimately complete by the due date for the final paper.**

"Demonstrates growth in writing about literature throughout the quarter.

### 3.0 Grade: The differences from the 3.3 grade to the 3.0 grade obligations are red.

"Participates in class activities with good faith, interacting with others in appropriate and productive ways.

"Misses no more than three days of classroom activities.

"Misses no more than three homework activities.

"2 of the 3 formal writing assignments, including the final paper, and 5 of the 7 informal writing assignments are turned in as complete and on time assignments. **One or more of the informal writing assignments that are late/incomplete are never completed. The 3 formal writing assignments are still completed by the due date for the final paper.**

### 2.5 Grade: The differences from the 3.0 grade to the 2.5 grade obligations are red.
Participates in some class activities, but has a pattern of engaging in disruptive behavior (e.g. coming in late, distracting others with technology, talking about non-class related topics, etc.).

Misses no more than four days of classroom activities.

Misses no more than four homework activities.

At least one formal writing assignment and five informal writing assignments are submitted on time and complete. The informal assignments that are late/incomplete are never completed. All 3 formal writing assignments are still completed by the due date for the final paper.

2.0 Grade: The differences from the 2.5 grade to the 2.0 grade obligations are red.

Participates in some class activities, but has a pattern of engaging in disruptive behavior (e.g. coming in late, distracting others with technology, talking about non-class related topics, etc.)

Misses no more than six homework activities.

At least one formal writing assignment and at least 3 informal writing assignments are submitted on time and complete. At least two formal writing assignments (including the final paper) and four informal writing assignments are turned in by the due date for the final paper.

1.0 Grade: The differences from the 2.0 grade to the 1.0 grade obligations are red.

At least two formal writing assignments and at least three informal writing assignments are turned in by the due date for the final paper.

0.0 Grade: The differences from the 1.0 grade to the below the 1.5 grade obligations are red.

Does not complete at least two formal writing assignments and three informal writing assignments.

FAQs:

I've read over the contracts, and I'm curious where they came from. Can we change them?

I created these grade contracts based off samples from other teachers. Feel free to reach out to me about any concerns you have about the fairness of these obligations and we will work together to come up with a solution.

In the contracts, you mention that I need to participate in “good faith.” What do you mean by that?
This means that I expect that you come to class prepared to participate in the activities for the day. Do the assigned reading, talk with your classmates during group work, give productive feedback in peer review, pay attention when others are speaking, etc.

You also mention “growth” and “extensive and strategic” growth.” What does that mean exactly?

Extensive and strategic growth means that you make productive changes to your work based off feedback and writing workshop activities. This does not mean that you must agree with all my suggestions or feedback from your peers; however, I do expect that you engage thoughtfully in what is brought up in instructor and peer feedback and discussed in class, so I will be looking for evidence of this thought process in your writing, your revisions, and any assigned writing reflections. Growth means that you make productive changes to your work, but do not always engage with feedback. At mid-term and during the final week of classes, you will have opportunities to self-assess and reflect on your growth. You will submit these reflections to me and receive comments; the midterm reflection will be a chance for you to make adjustments as needed.

What if I sign up for a grade but screw something up?

Things happen. First, communicate with me about the screw up via email or in person and explain what happened. Then, we will come up with a way to have you make up for whatever was done. If screwing up becomes a habit (e.g. done more than three times), we may need to renegotiate your contract.

What if I change my mind about the grade I want?

No problem. Communicate with me in person or via email, and we will set up a time for you to come to my office hours to renegotiate your contract.

What if I think I’m doing something correctly but you don’t think so?

Miscommunications happen. For example, if you think you’ve turned in a “complete” assignment, but I disagree and mark it incomplete, then you have one week to communicate it with me. We will work it out. If miscommunications happen repetitively over the quarter, as in more than three times, set up a meeting with me so we can clarify expectations and/or renegotiate your contract if need be.

Are you doing this so you don’t have to work as hard?

Absolutely not. I’m still giving you feedback; I’m just not assigning a letter grade to your assignments. I’m giving you the responsibility of choosing the grade you want and tracking your progress toward that grade. (And yes, of course I’ll be tracking your choices along with you.)

How do you know that we’ll try our hardest?

I don’t. But, I trust you, as authors and learners, to do your best. The contractual obligations I have created do require effort and good faith. I think that you’ll work to the capacity that you think you need to in order to get the grade you want.
A note on late or incomplete work:

All assignments are due on Canvas on the time and date specified (unless otherwise instructed), and I will not accept any assignments submitted any other way as counting as “on time” unless given approval ahead of time. Completeness of an assignment means that you have met assignment requirements, all of which are listed on the prompt. If you are unsure if you can get an assignment done completely and on time, contact me. The earlier that you contact me, the more time we have to discuss potential extensions for the assignment. If you are not approved for an extension, you may be at risk for violating your grade contract, depending on which contract you have chosen. Know that I will not give written feedback on any assignments that are turned in late or incomplete, so if you’d like to be able to show growth in this course (a requirement of some of the grade contract choices), you’ll need to get verbal feedback from me in office hours.

A note on classroom participation and homework activities:

I understand that things come up. If something is prohibiting you from coming to class or getting homework done, communicate with me. Depending on the situation, we may be able to create make up work so that you can maintain in good standing with your grade contract.