

Grading Contract

Conventional grading often leads students to think more about grades than about writing; to be reluctant to take risks in their research and writing; to worry about pleasing the professor instead of figuring out what they really want to say or how they want to say it. For these reasons, I am using a method of evaluation known as “contract grading.” This method will keep you accountable for completing and handing in assignments on time, and will also provide an atmosphere conducive to growing as writers and citizens.

You are guaranteed a final grade of B+ if you:

- Complete the tasks described on major assignments sheets by the due dates
- Attend class and arrive on time, including scheduled evening events and required conferences with your instructor (no more than 2 absences)
- Participate in in-class exercises and activities
- Complete all informal, low-stakes assignments (e.g., reading, homework exercises)
- Give thoughtful written and spoken peer feedback and work faithfully with your group on other collaborative tasks
- Sustain effort and investment on each draft of all major assignments.
- Make substantive revisions when the assignment is to revise—not just editing or touching up
- Copyedit all minor and major assignments (spell-check, check for grammatical errors and consistency, etc.)

In sum, you can earn a B+ for your final course grade based entirely on what you do—on your conscientious effort and participation. The grade of B+ does not derive from my judgment about the quality of your work. I will provide feedback on all major assignments to help you improve your work.

Lower or higher final course grades will also be based entirely on what you do. To *raise* your grades, you can choose to perform community contributions (examples will be discussed in class). For grades lower than B+, refer to the chart on our syllabus.

Student signature:

Date:

Instructor signature:

Date:

Community Contributions

One of the benefits of contract grading is that it allows our course to function as a community of learning rather than as a site for competition. This environment will allow for more creativity, more risk-taking, an emphasis on process, and opportunities for meaningful collaboration. Therefore, any students who want to do more than fulfill the base contract to further foster this community can increase their grade from a B+ to an A- or an A.

Provided that the base contract terms are met, students who earn 4 units will receive an A-; 8 units will result in an A grade.

- Peer draft exchange (2 units)
You may organize and submit documentation of a peer draft exchange with a peer for two units each for one of the major assignments. You can either work asynchronously and write a letter to your peer; OR set up a meeting accompanied by a reflection and plan of action. These exchanges must be pre-approved by the instructor.
- 15-minute Turabian lesson plan, with examples handout (2 units):
You may present one lesson plan to lead the class in a review assigned Turabian material. You must sign up for this in advance in consultation with me at least one week in advance (although you are welcome to sign up sooner). I will provide you with a template for lesson plans.
- Leave a substantive, informed reader comment (1 unit):
Drawing on your work in this course and conversations we've had around our topics, once during the semester, leave a substantive public comment in a local publication (like *The Boston Globe*, *BU Today*, a particular radio show on wbur.org, or similar). If you can't figure out how to contribute a comment to the publication, let me know, and we'll tackle it together. Be prepared to get responses--and respond to them, if you like! Take a screenshot (or retype your comment) to submit for credit.
- 5-minute outside source share (1 unit):
Once during the semester, you may present an article or resource you've come across that you think ties into something we've been thinking about in class or that might help your peers as they work on the class assignments. You must sign up for this in consultation with me at least one class period in advance (although you are welcome to sign up earlier). Submit a link to the article and a basic outline of your 5-minute talk beforehand for credit.
- Record and submit a 40-minute oral history via the StoryCorp app (4 units):
All students will be recording oral histories in Module 3. However, for CBL units, you may conduct a longer interview (40 minutes) using the StoryCorps app and submit

it there. You will also need to prepare a longer list of interview questions. Archiving a migration story will contribute to the community beyond our classroom in a very meaningful way!

- Some other labor that benefits the class and our mutual learning of rhetoric, language diversity, and academic writing (units determined in consult):
Do you want to write about and report to us on a cultural event related to the class? Or maybe you would like to read an article for us and summarize some of its findings or ideas that you think will help us do our work in class? If you have an idea, come to me early. We will plan it, while making sure the amount of labor is commensurate with the other items above.
- Some other labor that benefits the larger community by deploying skills you've developed in this course (units determined in consult):
Do the skills or ideas you've been developing in our class offer you the opportunity to give back to the larger community (BU, your former high school, or the local Boston community) in some way? If you have an idea, come to me early. We will plan it, while making sure the amount of labor is commensurate with the other items above.