**Grades: What Are They Good For?**

1. *What are the affordances and limitations of each of the following grading strategies from the perspective of a first-year student? From the perspective of the instructor?*

|  |
| --- |
| *Example A* - Melissa Wehler, Duquesne University  Participation (Quizzes, Attendance, In-Class Writing): 10%  Critical Analyses (3% Each): 15%  Paper One: Close, Critical Reading: 10%  Proposal + Outline: 10%  Paper Two: Comparison and Contrast: 10%  Paper Three: Critical Sources: 15%  Presentation + Final Project: 30% |
| *Example B* - Sean Mitesin, Purdue University  An "**A**" paper is one which would move your instructor and the best members of your class to admiration. It implies not only that the theme is virtually free of errors but that it makes its point, clearly, logically, and gracefully. It leads the reader clearly and easily through the material. The general argument is defined and supported. The claims that the paper presents are given importance and social significance. The essay works hard to take an educated stance on its topic and responsibly connects the reality of its ideas to the world around it.  A "**B**" paper reveals effective performance of the assignment. The theme is clear and logical but with perhaps some small problems in coherence or development and without the stylistic grace of the "A" paper. It has not more than an occasional error in spelling, sentence structure, diction, usage, or punctuation. A "B" is one that requires some revision to bring the work to "A" level work.  A "**C**" paper indicates that you have performed the assignment adequately but usually with some problems of clarity, logic, support or documentation, grammar, mechanics, and spelling. Improvement is desirable, but you should remember that a "C" grade does indicate average college work. A "C" paper requires significant revision to bring the paper to "A" level work. |
| *Example C* - Peter Elbow and Jane Danielewicz, University of Massachusetts, Amherst  **You are guaranteed at least a B if you:**  1. Attend class regularly—not missing more than a week's worth of classes;  2. Meet due dates and writing criteria for all major assignments; 3. Participate in all in-class exercises and activities;  4.Complete all informal, low stakes writing assignments (e.g. journal writing or discussion-board writing);  5.Give thoughtful peer feedback during class workshops and work faithfully with your group on other collaborative tasks (e.g., sharing papers, commenting on drafts, peer editing, on-line discussion boards, answering peer questions);  6. Sustain effort and investment on each draft of all papers;  7.Make substantive revisions when the assignment is to revise—extending or changing the thinking or organization—not just editing or touching up;  8.Attend conferences with the teacher to discuss drafts;  10.Submit your mid-term and final portfolio.  The grade of B does not derive from my judgment about the quality of your writing. |

2. *With your partner, decide which of the following descriptors in the box below most accurately describe which grading system.*

*A note: these systems are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and some of these descriptors could fit multiple categories:*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Percentage / Point System** | **Rubric / Checklists / Descriptors that use language from the learning objectives** | **Contract Grading** |
|  |  |  |

|  |
| --- |
| 1. Values “effort” over “achievement” 2. Probably the easiest for the instructor to calculate 3. Gives students specific criteria to follow 4. The main purpose of this / these system(s) is to assess student performance 5. The main purpose of this / these system(s) is to encourage student development 6. According to researchers (Spiedell and Thelin, 2006), a perceived increase of student responsibility with this / these system(s) led to anxiety and resistance 7. Already familiar to students from previous educational experiences 8. Not allowed by some English departments 9. According to some researchers (Shor, 1996; Elbow and Danielewicz, 2009; Inoue, 2012), this system generally has the most positive impact on students who view grades as “unhelpful, destructive, or harmful to their learning.” |