




Equitable Grading Strategies

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Featuring: Ian Colmer, Tram Dang, Jessica Krug



“I am no longer accepting the things I
cannot change. I am changing the things I
cannot accept.”



— *Angela Davis*





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01

Overview

Equitable Practices

are

- ✓ race-conscious
- ✓ about eliminating biases
- ✓ supportive of students' learning and success
- ✓ inclusive of perspectives, cultures, and ways of knowing
- ✓ about addressing oppressive structures

are not

- ✗ color-blind
- ✗ equitable if implemented without an equity mindset
- ✗ about lowering rigor
- ✗ about perpetuating dominant culture and perspectives
- ✗ about maintaining oppressive structures

How do You Grade?

Memory

Do you have a specific grading experience from your time as a student?*

Where?

From where did you get your first grading system?



Change?

What do you like about your current grading system? What do you want to change?

Issues?

Is there anything that frustrates your about your current system?

*From @ONE Equitable Grading Strategies Course

Drawbacks of Traditional Grading



Points are a commodity and fungible – earn enough points in different areas to accumulate enough to pass



Omnibus grades (weighted grades) hide information about students' knowledge and include biases

	Weights	Brock	Misty
Homework	10%	100%	60%
Exams	60%	60%	90%
Class Activities	20%	75%	40%
Participation	10%	90%	20%

Both students have 70% in the class.

Drawbacks of Traditional Grading

- Half of the 100-point grade scale is dedicated to failure.
- Students are penalized during the learning period.
- Grades may not reflect knowledge and understanding
 - Behaviors are penalized (late work, no staples, attendance).
 - Gradebook “hacks” are sometimes used (dropping scores, changing weights, replacing missed assignments/exams).
- Extra credit may not be equitable.





02

History

Industrial Revolution (19th Century)

Need to Americanize immigrants.



“..foreign influence has begun a system of colonization with a purpose of preserving foreign languages and traditions and proportionately destroying distinctive Americanism” (Tyack, p. 371).

Senator Henry Wilson argued that educational systems should transform people into citizens with “desirable traits of New England and American character” (Tyack, p. 371).

Concern over immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, Ireland, China, Japan, and Philippines.



Science Research



Research in IQ concluded

- IQ is fixed
- IQ can be measured with standardized tests

Behavioral research concluded

- behavior can be influenced with proper rewards and consequences

In education:

- rise of standardized testing to sort students
- lower test scores for African Americans and immigrants since tests were biased

Samuel Clemens :: Mark Twain

Mary Anne Evans :: _____





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Samuel Clemens :: Mark Twain

Abel Tesfaye :: The Weeknd

Mary Anne Evans :: _____

Peter Gene Hernandez :: _____



Impact on Culture



Belief that intelligence follows the bell curve – only a few students can achieve high academic standards



Top grades are reserved for a few students



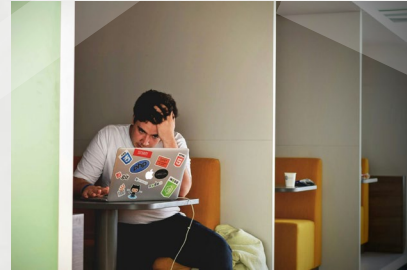
Non-White people are not intelligent



Extrinsic motivation is most effective in influencing behaviors



Grading can be used to “correct” behaviors



Impact on Students

Focus on attaining points

Want extra credit assignments

Cheating is incentivized

Complete assignments without deep understanding

Develop anxiety over high-stakes assessments





03

Practices

Equitable Grading

- Transparency in grade policies and assessment criteria
- Non-punitive
 - E.g., do not deduct for lateness.
- Bias-free
 - Focus on student knowledge.
 - Grades are not influenced by their circumstances or behavior (or how we perceive their behavior).
- Inclusive
 - Acknowledge that students come from diverse backgrounds and cultures and bring valuable experience and knowledge to the classroom.
- Continuous Improvement
 - Learn from constructive feedback.
 - Foster a growth mindset.



Types of Equitable Grading



Standards-Based Grading

Students evaluated on proficiency of specified learning objectives – no averaging across assignments



Contract Grading

Collaboratively establish expectations for assignments; grade negotiation based on pre-determined criteria outlined in a contract



Ungrading

Emphasis on feedback and self-assessment; students participate in the assessment of their work and focus on learning outcomes

Reflection Questions

- Is this policy punitive?
- Am I penalizing students for making mistakes?
- Is the letter grade I assign an accurate representation of the student's knowledge?
- Are my policies for grading work transparent?
- Is there a path to success for students?

I'm always reflecting on my policies and making pivots.

Kristin's Grading

Students are assessed on their proficiency to complete a skill or learning objective (standard)

No points – qualitative rubrics

Exam redos so students can learn from mistakes

Homework and in-class activities are part of grade
- no late penalties
- not graded on correctness – feedback is given if submitted on time

Kristin's Grading

Grade	# standards at Proficient or Excellent	% complete of each HW set	% of in-class work completed	Majority of standards are Excellent
A	85%	70%	70%	<u>Yes</u>
B	85%	70%	70%	No
C	70%	50%	50%	No
D	60%	50%	50%	No

Quotes

“I was really close! I got ‘Developing’ on the topic.”

– Math 4 student

“This class made me fall in love with math again and it felt so rewarding to learn a topic and through trial and error eventually understand it.”

– Math 28 student

“...my learning [of] the material was more prioritized.”

– Math 7 student

“I retained more information than any previous math class.”

– Math 28 student

Benefits



Grades reflect student understanding



Reduced test anxiety



Student retention is higher



Relationships with students are improved



More questions about content

Challenges



Students not accustomed to
new grading



Cognitive shift for how I
approach grading

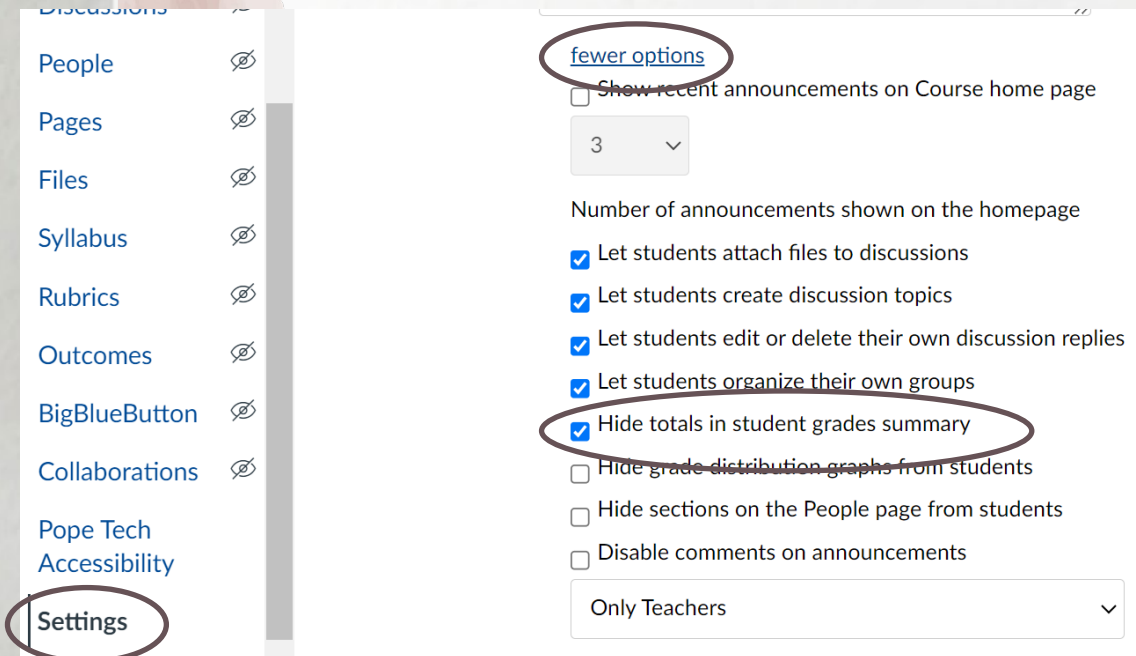


Canvas is made for points
(there is a work around!)



Difficult to support
students in large classes

Canvas "hack"



The image shows a screenshot of the Canvas LMS interface. On the left is a navigation sidebar with the following items: Discussions, People, Pages, Files, Syllabus, Rubrics, Outcomes, BigBlueButton, Collaborations, Pope Tech, and Accessibility. The 'Settings' item at the bottom of the sidebar is circled in red. To the right is a settings panel with the following options:

- [fewer options](#) (circled in red)
- Show recent announcements on Course home page
- 3 (dropdown menu)
- Number of announcements shown on the homepage
- Let students attach files to discussions
- Let students create discussion topics
- Let students edit or delete their own discussion replies
- Let students organize their own groups
- Hide totals in student grades summary (circled in red)
- Hide grade distribution graphs from students
- Hide sections on the People page from students
- Disable comments on announcements
- Only Teachers (dropdown menu)

1. Settings
2. Click "more options"
3. Check "Hide totals in student grades summary"



04 Showcase

The Besties



Jan Colmer

English



Tram Dang

Engineering/Physics



Jessica Krug

English



Jan's Grading

Graded

- Writing assignments (15 pts)
- Group assignments (6 pts)
- Personal growth (4 pts)

Ungraded

- Essay drafts
- Reading quizzes
- Peer reviews
- Discussions

Points convert to a letter grade at the end of the semester.



Graded Assignments



No Letter Grades



Grading
Checklist



Mostly All-or-
Nothing



Revision
Opportunity










1-Week Grace
Period





Takeaways



-  Grading more closely tied to standards
 -  Grading revisions is manageable (after trial and error)
 -  Students usually do the ungraded work
 -  Communication is very important
- 
- 
- 



— — Why did I evolve? — —▶



- 10 years from now, what do I want my students to remember?
- How are my values reflected in my course policies?
 - **Flexibility** for different learners and needs
 - **Reflection** helps us improve our practice
 - **Learning is nonlinear** and happens at different paces

PHYSICS 21 – Calc-Based Physics Mechanics

Flexibility – Grading contract to determine homework, lab, and quiz performance

I, Sam Williams, am currently enrolled in PHYSICS 21 (section ID 2797) in Spring 2024. I plan putting forth the effort to earn **a B -**. In order to earn this grade, I am committing myself to completing my work to the following standard below, on top of the work required to show competency on physics topics as outlined in the course syllabus. I understand that if I don't meet the requirements I set forth for myself, this may impact my overall grade assignment. I also understand that if I need to adjust my committed activities below due to any life events that may occur, I will reach out to my instructor for accommodations. While my instructor is not required to give any accommodations to the activities below, she will do her best to make sure that any outcomes are fair.

- **Participation in good faith.** I agree to participate in good faith in all of the course-related activities, both inside and outside and outside of class. I promise to participate as fully as possible in the spirit of the activities to meet both the course goals and my personal learning goals.
- **Attendance.** I understand that my performance in the class is tied to my attendance. I will do my best to show up to class in person and on time. I understand that if I cannot

PHYSICS 21 – Calc-Based Physics Mechanics

Reflection – Post-exam reflection regarding progress towards grade goals

What grade do you think you earned on each problem?

Problem 1: A level ▾

Problem 2: B level ▾

Problem 3: A level ▾

Problem 4: C level ▾

**Please reflect on the following by
entering your responses in the space provided.**

How did you do on the quiz? What did you do to study for the quiz? How did you adapt your study habits while you were in the process of taking the quiz to achieve the grade you wanted?

I felt very confident on the quiz. In preparation, I did all the chapter 2 and 3 homework without outside assistance (just my calculator). I adapted my study habits by starting to use the equation sheet to do the homework and quiz because I was previously unaware that I would be able to have it during the exam. This improved my understanding of the concepts because I previously focused a lot of my time on memorizing the equations. At the end of my attempts, I was getting irritated because I knew all the conceptual ideas, but I kept making little mistakes in arithmetic

PHYSICS 21 – Calc-Based Physics Mechanics

Learning is nonlinear – Students can show competency at any time

You earned	You want	Tasks
B-Level	A-Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a novel A-level problem covering the competency you'd like to show that relates to your personal interests or life.• Create a solution for your problem.• Record yourself walking through the problem to share on Discord.
C-Level	B-Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Go over your test question <i>in person or on Zoom</i> with your instructor.• Create a novel B-level problem covering the competency you'd like to show that relates to your personal interests or life.• Create a solution for your problem.• Record yourself walking through the problem to share on Discord.
C-Level	A-Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Go over your test question <i>in person or on Zoom</i> with your instructor.• Create a novel B-level AND A-level problem covering the competency you'd like to show that relates to your personal interests or life.• Create a solution for your problems.• Record yourself walking through the A-level problem to share on

Resources

Tools I use

- [Custom Canvas grading schemes](#) to move away from points
- [Google Assignments LTI 1.3](#) to establish grading contracts, etc.
- [Gradescope](#) because I hate carrying around stacks of exams

Stuff from me:

- Copy of my syllabus:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xOnA11NT7MRv0BhUm7CDrfEGce3UlacV/view>
- Email: dang_tram@smc.edu

Finally, here's a plug for the Equity and Diversity Committee's 2-Part workshop this afternoon – "Syllabus Evaluation: Practical Strategies for All Faculty"

Grading Policies

Course policies (including grading schemes) should be based on our pedagogical values.

Consider:

- ▶ **Course integrity** (do we follow the COR?)
- ▶ **Student learning** (pacing, time for feedback)
- ▶ **Equity-minded teaching** (moves from a punitive perspective to one of structure and support)



05

How to
Start

Resources



Books

- *Grading for Equity* by Joe Feldman
- *Labor-based Contract Grading* by Asao Inoue
- *Ungrading* by Susan Blum



@ONE COURSE

- Equitable Grading Strategies
- Four-week course, 10 hrs per week
- Free



Equity and Diversity Senate Committee

- Reading *Ungrading*

Practices to Consider

- Allow retakes or corrections for assignments
- Equitize extra credit or eliminate
- Flexible deadlines – with support
- Use minimum grading (Avoid zeros) – Grades start at 50%
- Use rubrics with 0-4 scales



Thank You!

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Images from [Unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com)

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