Grading Contract

Traditionally students submit their work and receive a letter grade that is intended to symbolize the quality of their writing. These symbols accumulate throughout the semester and are eventually averaged to reflect the student's overall performance in the class. *This contract allows you to earn a final grade that is based instead on participation, intellectual engagement, technical improvement, and risk-taking.* While this doesn't make the coursework easier or more difficult; it does give you a wider latitude to produce pieces of writing that are exciting to you and to experiment with ideas or techniques you might not typically consider.

I will still collect individual assignments throughout the semester and you will continue to receive feedback, but any evaluation will be substantive, rather than quantitative (you'll get comments, but no number or letter grades). At the midterm you will receive a progress report, and at the end of the semester we will use the grading contract to assess how well you met the following criteria and whether or not you exceeded the requirements for a B.

You will earn a B in this course if you

- attend class regularly, and on time—no more than three absences (including scheduled conferences),
- submit work on time, and in the proper format,
- participate in class regularly, including discussions, workshops, and group assignments,
- give thoughtful, detailed feedback in peer reviews and offer *constructive* criticism whenever possible (i.e. criticism that acknowledges the strengths and weaknesses of a piece while making specific suggestions for improvement),
- attend to all aspects of a written assignment (i.e. page or word count, subject matter/content, techniques),
- demonstrate an intellectual engagement that pushes your work in an interesting, perhaps unfamiliar direction,
- make substantial revisions between initial and revised drafts, addressing issues of form, content, style, and technique as discussed in class and in your peer and instructor feedback,
- copyedit revised drafts for usage, spelling, and other grammatical errors, and
- attribute all non-original text (direct quotes, paraphrase) and ideas properly according to MLA guidelines.

Grades Higher Than a B

There is no specific criteria for work above a B, but as a general rule I ask that you consider the following questions:

- Are the words on this page important to me, or is this simply a paper I had to write for a general education class I had to take?
- Did I challenge myself technically and/or intellectually, or did I phone it in and rehash an essay I used for college applications? (I mean obviously it was good or I wouldn't be here, right?)
- Could this project have a life beyond this classroom, or is it dead in the water?

What got you an A in high school might not get you an A in college. Neither will doing only what is asked of you. I have done my best to create prompts and assignments that are interesting and engaging, but at the end of the day it's your job to take the ball and run with it.

Grades Lower Than a B

Work that does not meet the basic requirements will likely receive a grade lower than a B. Most C, D, and F grades are the result of late or missing work, repeated and consistent absence, lack of engagement and effort, academic misconduct, or an unyielding disrespect for the people in this room. If you feel you may be falling behind or encounter attendance problems, please contact me so we can address these issues as soon as possible.