

CONTRACT GRADING FOR DIHU301/ENGL305

In contract grading, you decide at the beginning of the semester what letter grade you wish to achieve in the course. Each letter grade has a different workload and puts different demands on the quality and quantity of your engagement with coursework.

I wish to quote from Cathy Davidson (via Ryan Cordell):

The advantage of contract grading is that you, the student, decide how much work you wish to do this semester; if you complete that work on time and satisfactorily, you will receive the grade for which you contracted. This means planning ahead, thinking about all of your obligations and responsibilities this semester and also determining what grade you want or need in this course.

The advantage of contract grading to the professor is no whining, no special pleading, on the student's part. If you complete the work you contracted for, you get the grade. Done. I respect the student who only needs a C, who has other obligations that preclude doing all of the requirements to earn an A in the course, and who contracts for the C and carries out the contract perfectly.

(This is another one of those major life skills: taking responsibility for your own workflow.)

(Cordell <https://f19tot.ryanecordell.org/assignments/>)

Proponents of contract grading (students and instructors alike!) also see it as a way to focus on the process of learning, rather than simply exchanging work for a grade.

Within the letter grade you contract for, you can receive one of three grades from me: exceptional, proficient, and minimally proficient. This grade will determine where in the letter grade your assignment sits. So, say you contract for a B in this course. If you produce exceptional work in this letter grade, your assignment will receive a B+. If your work is satisfactorily proficient, you'll receive a B as per your contract. And if your work is minimally proficient, you'll receive a B-. You must be careful, however, that your work does not fall far below the expected proficiency for your contracted grade. If it does, that will count as breach of contract (which I'll discuss below).

What does "proficient" mean?

In most versions of Contract Grading, "proficient" means the same as "satisfactory" in traditional grading rubrics or "what I would normally provide a mid-range B grade for." So, if you contract for an A grade, and all your work is mid-range B grade quality, you'll get an A—the balance of the grade is accounted for in your A-level engagement and workload. If you produce higher-quality work in your contracted grade range, then you'll fall into the "exceptional" category.

What if some of my work is exceptional, some is proficient, and some is below proficient? Contract Grading is holistic, rather than numerical. I'll look at the balance of your *Course Content Assignments* (not the Learning Ownership Assignments). To help balance larger and smaller assignments, I've grouped them, as you'll see in the grading example below. If more than half of your grades are exceptional, and the rest are proficient, you'll receive a "+" in your contracted grade category. If you have some exceptional assignments and some minimally proficient assignments, they'll cancel each other out and land at proficient.

How does this translate to grade percentages?

Once you have reached a proficiency level within your contracted grade, I'll choose a letter grade in the middle of the standard, percentage-based, UBCO grade range, which you'll find here:

<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/okanagan/index.cfm?tree=3,41,90,1014>. **That means that I assign a letter grade at the end of class, based holistically on the assignments you completed for your contracted grade.** Remember that you'll know what grade range you'll be awarded from the very beginning of term, that you'll have feedback from me all through term about the proficiency level of your assignments, so it will be easy to predict your final grade. I reserve the right to choose a percentage at the top of the grade range if you really hit it out of the park.

THE PROFESSOR'S END OF THE BARGAIN

There are two parties to a grading contract: the student and the professor. So, what can you expect from me as part of this contract?

I commit to these things:

1. Providing substantive and timely commentary on your assignments that aims to cultivate your skills in research, analysis, and critical thinking with various media. Some of this commentary may be in a rubric format, and some may be prose. All of it will be aimed towards your development.
2. When work is not satisfactory, I will provide as clear information as possible to help you improve it.
3. Make myself available for in-person consultation, both in office hours and in the 1-on-1 classes scheduled for the end of term.
4. Equally supporting students with advanced and beginner levels of technical expertise. All lecture content assumes no technical expertise, and the process of learning and humanistic inquiry are the core of this class.
5. Supporting your goals for learning in this class and respecting what you feel to be important and worthwhile in your learning.
6. Create a safe learning environment for all students regardless of identity, in which you may test out new ideas in good faith supported by your peers.

Think about what else you might need from me. You'll have a chance to request it in your contract.

AT A GLANCE GRADE LEVELS

No matter what grade you contract for, there are a few things you must complete:

1. Complete the Learning Ownership Assignments (*Grading Contract*, *Midterm Contract Revision Meeting*, and *Final Self-Assessment*) thoroughly and conscientiously.
2. Come to class prepared to engage with the assigned materials and with your peers, and contribute productively to the classroom community.
3. Hand in work on time, taking no more than 2 late tokens (see Syllabus).
4. Complete all in-course asynchronous modules (Library Module; TEI Module).
5. Revise any assignments that are far below satisfactory as necessary until both the student and the instructor consider them to be at least minimally proficient.

All grade levels complete the same set of *Learning Ownership Assignments*. The *Course Content Assignments* differ in size and number for the different grade levels.

A-Grade Contract

Learning Ownership Assignments

Grading Contract

Midterm Contract Revision Meeting

Final Self Assessment

Course Content Assignments

2 Mandatory Engagement Assignments

+ 4 Additional Engagement Assignments

Annotated Bibliography with 6 sources

Encoded Chapter First Draft Presentation

Encoded Chapter (A Level)

Introduction + Justification + Editorial

Statement (1500 words)

B-Grade Contract

Learning Ownership Assignments

Grading Contract

Midterm Contract Revision Meeting

Final Self Assessment

Course Content Assignments

2 Mandatory Engagement Assignments

+ 2 Additional Engagement Assignments

Annotated Bibliography with 4 sources

Encoded Chapter First Draft Presentation

Encoded Chapter (B Level)

Justification + Editorial Statement (1000 words)

C-Grade Contract

Learning Ownership Assignments

Grading Contract

Contract Revision Meeting

Final Self Assessment

Course Content Assignments

2 Mandatory Engagement Assignments

+ 1 Additional Engagement Assignment

Annotated Bibliography with 2 sources

Encoded Chapter First Draft Presentation

Encoded Chapter (C Level)

Editorial Statement (500 words)

D and F Grades (Breach of Contract)

While it is not possible to *contract* for a D or an F in this class, there are some circumstances in which you might be issued one of these grades. I'll again quote from Davidson via Cordell:

The professor reserves the right to award a grade of D or F to anyone who fails to meet a contractual obligation in a systematic way. A "D" grade denotes some minimal fulfilling of the contract. An "F" is absence of enough satisfactory work, as contracted, to warrant passing of the course. Both a "D" and "F" denote a breakdown of the contractual relationship implied by signing any of the contracts described above.

EXAMPLE

Let's say that you contract for an A grade. You know at the beginning of semester that if you fulfill the terms of your contract proficiently, that you'll receive an A. Here's how the proficiency of your individual assignments works out over the term:

	Proficiency Level	
Engagement Assignment Group	Proficient	
Mandatory Engagement Assignment 1	Minimally Proficient	
Mandatory Engagement Assignment 2	Proficient	
Additional Engagement Assignment 1	Proficient	
Additional Engagement Assignment 2	Proficient	
Additional Engagement Assignment 3	Excellent	
Additional Engagement Assignment 4	Excellent	
Annotated Bibliography (6 sources)	Excellent	
Final Project Group	Excellent	
Encoded Chapter First Draft Presentation	Proficient	
Encoded Chapter (A Level)	Excellent	
Introduction and. Editorial Statement	Excellent	
Final Proficiency	Excellent	A+
		95%

In this assignment group, the balance of assignments is "Proficient."

This student has two "Excellent" assignment groups, and one "Proficient," so the balance is "Excellent."

An excellent proficiency lands you with a "+" in your contracted grade. This percentage is right in the middle of the A+ grade range.

Now that you have an overall sense of the grade levels and holistic grading process, I've prepared a few more documents to help you decide on your grade contract. Take a look at the **Detailed Assignment Descriptions** for the *Annotated Bibliography* and *Encoded Chapter* and *Introduction and Editorial Statement* to help you make your decision.

When you've decided what grade you would like to contract for, fill out the **Individual Grade Level Contract**.