

COURSE SYLLABUS (Spring 2024)

UWRT 150.14 T/Th 8:00-9:15 WAL 3605

UWRT 150.43 T/Th 9:30-10:45 WAL 3605

UWRT 150.53 T/Th 11:00-12:15 SUS 3160

UWRT 150.58 T/Th 3:30-4:45 LBR A210

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Office Hours: Th 12:30-3:15 pm and by appointment LBR-A110

Grading Contract

What is a labor-based grading contract?





A grading contract is an agreement between an instructor and their students regarding the way that assignments will be evaluated; much like other contracts, this arrangement is meant to be transparent and mutual—students in this course should always know how and why grades are assigned. A “labor-based grading contract” refers to a system of assigning grades based on labor put into work rather than just the quality of work. If you do the work in the manner and spirit that it is asked, you will receive full credit for that assignment.

What is the rationale for using a labor-based grading contract?

- A labor-based grading contract is meant to explicitly redress the documented inequities in traditional methods of grading, which often benefit students who speak certain dialects of English and students who were trained to use a certain dialogue of English language and grammar (what we sometimes call “academic writing” or “Standard Written English”).
- A labor-based grading contract emphasizes the importance of the work that goes into the writing process rather than only assessing the final product.
- A labor-based grading contract gives you credit for the work you’ve done in this course, rather than your previous experiences in English/writing courses.
- A labor-based grading contract prioritizes student choice and flexibility.

The default grade for the course is a “B.” In short, when you do all that is asked of you in the manner and spirit it is asked, you work through the processes we establish during the semester, and you do all the labor asked of you, then you’ll get a “B” course grade. All of our assignments have a set of evaluative criteria, including logistical criteria, such as a word count, and rhetorical criteria that determine the writing goals. When you put in the labor to engage critically with those criteria and with feedback from me and your peers, you are guaranteed a B course grade. If you do not participate fully in the class, turn in assignments late, forget to do assignments, or do not follow instructions, you will earn a lower course grade (see the grade table on the next page).

Grading Contract Table

	# of participation days <i>missed</i>	# of Process Activities <i>partially complete</i> (short, late, or missing criteria)  in MyCourses	# of Process Activities <i>missed</i>  in MyCourses	# of Major Projects <i>partially complete</i> (short, late, or missing criteria)  in MyCourses	# of Major Projects <i>missed</i>  in MyCourses	# of Optional Assns <i>completed</i>
A	4 or fewer	2	2	1	0	3
A-	4 or fewer	2	2	1	0	2
B+	4 or fewer	2	2	1	0	1
B	4 or fewer	2	2	1	0	0
B-	5-6	3	3	1	0	0
C+	7-8	4	4	2	0	0
C	9-10	5	5	2	0	0
C-	11-12	6	6	2	0	0
D and F*	13+	7+	7+	3	1+	0

*D and F grades both represent a failure to engage substantively with the course. In such cases, I reserve the right to assess which grade is merited based on your overall performance.

In order to meet the grading contract and earn a “B” in the course, you must complete the requirement in each column of the grading contract. For example, at the B level, this means

- not missing more than 4 participation days
- having 2 or fewer partially complete process activities
- missing 2 or fewer process activities
- having 1 or fewer partially complete major assignments
- missing no major assignments.

The requirements remain the same for all grade steps above the B-level—the difference between a B-level and above comes from completing additional optional assignments, which are outlined at the end of this grading contract.

Contract Components

You are guaranteed a course grade of “B” if you meet all of the following conditions.

- **Mutual Respect.** You agree to be a respectful and generous member of our classroom community (see the syllabus for more information about being a respectful member of our class community). If you refuse to treat others in this space with respect, you void this grading contract.
- **Participation.** You agree to fully participate in the majority of the activities during the semester, including class activities, peer review, and process activities, including responding meaningfully to your peers and meeting any stated length requirements. See the grading table, above, for specifics about each category of participation.
- **Projects.** You agree to turn in properly and on time all projects expected of you in the spirit they are assigned, which means you’ll complete all of the instructions for each assignment including but not limited to meeting stated length requirements. Each assignment sheet will have stated evaluative criteria that must be met in order to count as complete.
- **Revisions.** You agree to complete revisions of all Major Projects at the time when the revision is due. When revising, you won’t just copy edit or touch up. Revision entails significant development between drafts in terms of the goal and method of the project. Revisions must somehow respond to or consider seriously the feedback that you receive from your peers and/or your instructor.

Participation Days : *This column adheres to the University Writing Program’s policy:*

“Because UWRT courses are participation and discussion-based courses, attendance is an important component of your participation in this course. You are allowed to miss 2 weeks of classes for the semester (6 classes for MWF sections, 4 classes for T/TH and M/W sections). Beginning with the next absence after this limit, your course grade may be lowered 1/2 letter grade for each absence.

Extenuating circumstances (a death in the family, serious illness, etc.) will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The writing program does not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences, so you do not need to tell your instructor why you missed class. However, if you anticipate exceeding the 2-week absence limit, you should talk with your instructor immediately.

Any student who misses more than 1/3 of the classes may be given an “F” in the course. “I” or Incomplete grades are granted rarely and only for extenuating circumstances, in agreement and contract with the professor.”

Class activities constitute much of the daily work in our course. Often, there will be homework that you need to bring to class in order to participate in the activity, but I typically will not collect this homework. If you physically come to class but are unprepared (not having completed an activity, homework, or a reading), this will count as a “non-participation day.” In most cases, “participation days” can be made up with asynchronous participation (e.g., completing an activity or set of discussion questions on your own), but it’s important to note that our course will be most successful if all students are present and participate as much as possible.

Process Activities

Throughout the semester you will engage in activities that are essential in building toward your major projects. These are important for your own projects' development as well as the rest of your classmates. See the "Partially Complete" section below for more information.

<i>Major Project 1: Literacy Narrative</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion post ("Brief History" #1) • Discussion post ("Brief History" #2) • Discussion post ("Novice as Expert") • Discussion post (NWWK #3) • Literacy narrative brainstorm post • Rough draft*
<i>Major Project 2: Survey Data Group Report</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion post (BIAW) • Discussion post (NWWK #1-2) • Discussion post (NWWK #4-5) • Group contract* • Survey Data Group Report Draft*
<i>Major Project 3: Group Inquiry Project</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion post (Wide Read) • Project proposal • Discussion post (Driscoll) • Group conferences* • Primary research plan • Annotated bibliography • Introduction and Methodology draft • Full IMRaD Draft* • Presentation*

*Drafts of your projects are required per the "revision" clause of our contract, so full drafts cannot be missed even though there is otherwise some allowance for missed Process Activities.

Major Projects

There are three Major Projects in this course. The assignment prompts for these will be available on MyCourses. Each of these assignments will be drafted and then revised substantially in response to feedback from the instructor and your peers before you submit the final version. **You must complete all Major Projects in order to pass the course.**

Partially Complete Work (Process Activities & Major Projects)

The grading table acknowledges that at the baseline "B" level, you may turn in up to 2 "partially complete" Process Activities and up to 1 partially complete Major Project. Three conditions may lead to your work earning a "partially complete" mark (shown by a yellow caution symbol ⚠ on MyCourses):

- **Short:** All of our work in the course will have a word count or range that accounts for the scope of each activity or project. Work that is significantly short of the word count (e.g., 100+ words for an activity of 500 words or fewer; 200+ words for an activity or project longer than 500 words), and, importantly, that does not fully complete the goals of the assignment because of that short length, will receive a "partially complete" score.

- **Late:** Work that is late may be marked as “partially completed.” Contact me about work that will be significantly late prior to the need for an extension to negotiate a new deadline.
- **Missing criteria:** Work that does not meet all of the goals or evaluative criteria will be marked as “partially completed.” For example, if a Major Project has three stated evaluative criteria, and you successfully complete only two of them, this will be graded as “partially complete.” If you meet less than half of the criteria for an activity or project, your work will be returned to you to revise again. If this occurs at the end of the semester, the project or activity will be considered “missed” because there will not be an opportunity to revise further.

Improving Your Contracted Grade

A B grade depends primarily on your labor. Have you shown responsible effort and consistency in our class? Have you done what was asked of you in the spirit it was asked?

Higher grades than the default require more labor that supports your writing development and/or the classroom community. In order to raise your grade, you may complete as many of the following optional assignments as you like. Each item completed fully and in the appropriate manner will raise your final course grade by one “step,” a half letter beyond B (e.g., B to B+).

These optional assignments cannot positively impact your grade if you do not participate in or submit more than one major project.

Optional Assignment #1: Visual Representation

For this assignment, you will re-mediate your literacy narrative into a visual medium. For example, you could make a short video essay, or a multi-panel comic, a collage, a poster, or some other visual representation of the stories you’re telling and claims you’re making about your development in the literacy narrative. You’ll be evaluated not on your technical or artistic skill, but rather the thoughtful and critical connection between the literacy narrative and the optional visual representation. Length varies based on choice of medium and genre.

Optional Assignment #2: Reflection on Writing Survey

For this assignment, you will go beyond the survey report that you composed with your group. On your own, you’ll write a reflection which synthesizes the survey data and your personal beliefs about what matters in writing and education. Consider what questions and answers from the survey continue to be “troublesome” or even absent. Use quotes and claims from what we’ve read this semester to support your thinking. 500 words.

Optional Assignment #3: Threshold Concepts across the Disciplines

For this assignment, you will gather evidence: artifacts, observations, and/or reflective discussion of your own experience within a specific discipline. Looking at that corpus of evidence, you will formulate three to four original threshold concepts with descriptions that are essential to developing expertise within your chosen discipline. Use *Naming What We Know* (2016) as a model for your threshold concept descriptions. Each threshold concept description should be approximately 250 words with specific reference to your research.

Additional Options

Expanded project

All three of our major projects will have specific expanded guidelines that will be published on MyCourses. These expanded projects will ask you to move beyond the baseline requirements for those projects in ways that contribute to your own writing development, the course community, or both. You can also propose an alternative expanded project that extends the work of the assignment in one or more of these ways:

- Adding an additional “mode” (i.e., visual, spatial, aural, gestural, linguistic) to the project’s final form (e.g., creating an additional infographic, website, or video)
- “Remixing” elements from your project into a new genre/form
- Expanding the scope of the project by conducting additional research or additional writing for a clear rhetorical purpose

Exemplary labor

If, at the end of the semester, you have missed no more than four classes, have participated in all class activities, process activities, and major assignments on time and in fulfillment of the assignment goals, you will earn an additional grade step. Exemplary labor rewards students who engage fully in the course and demonstrate exceptional commitment to their learning and the course community.

An additional assignment you propose

You can also propose your own optional assignment. 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, talk to me 2-3 weeks before you’d be turning this in.