

Judging Students' Performance: Are We Too Lenient or Severe When We Grade Our Learners in Online Courses?

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Disclaimer

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We have nothing disclose in this presentation.

Objectives

Describe multiple assessment strategies to judge student performance in an online course

Describe the effects and consequences of leniency or severity in grading online learners

Discuss the benefits and pitfalls of both analytical and holistic approaches in point-based grading systems

Discuss commonly accepted reliable grading systems in online courses

“Why would anyone want to change current grading practices?”

The answer is quite simple: grades are so imprecise that they are almost meaningless.”

Robert Marzano

Challenges to Our Current Grading Practices

How to accurately reflect the quality of student work

How to assure fairness

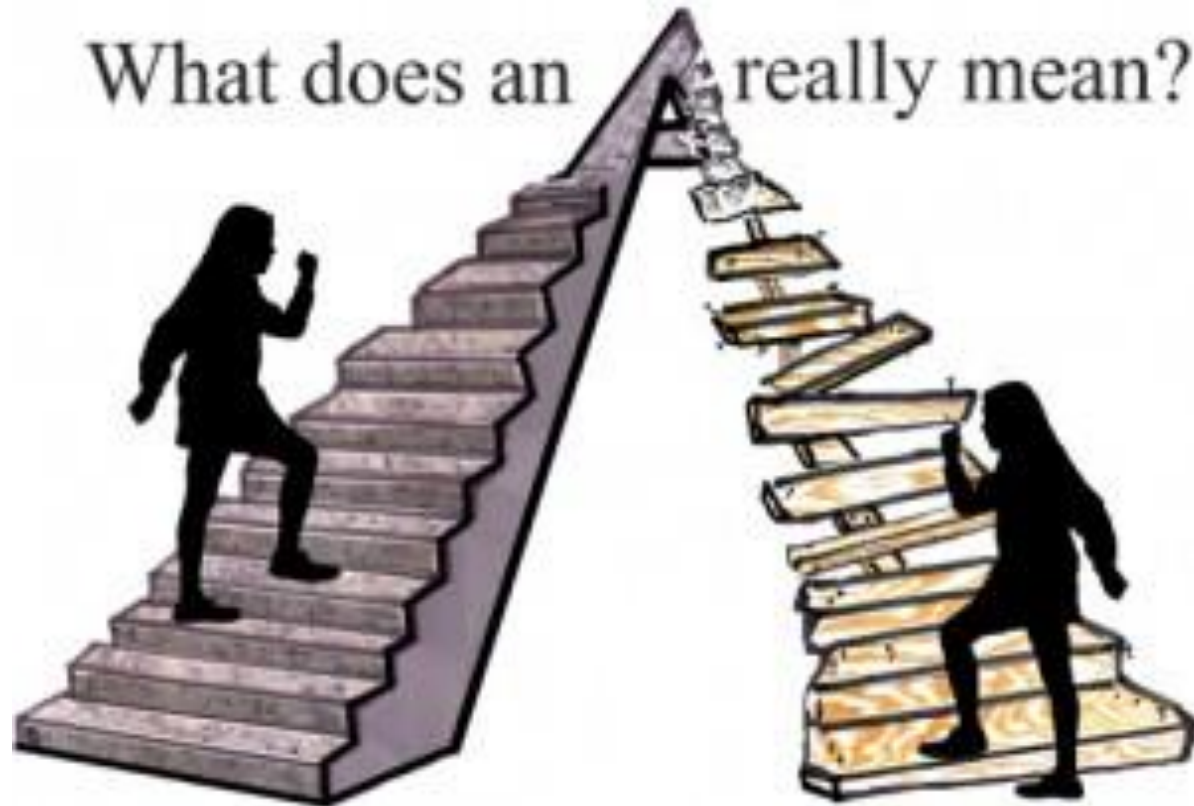
How to deal with dissatisfied students if they protest their grades

Focus on assigning numbers vs. promoting actual learning

What to do if low grades can be a source of anxiety for students

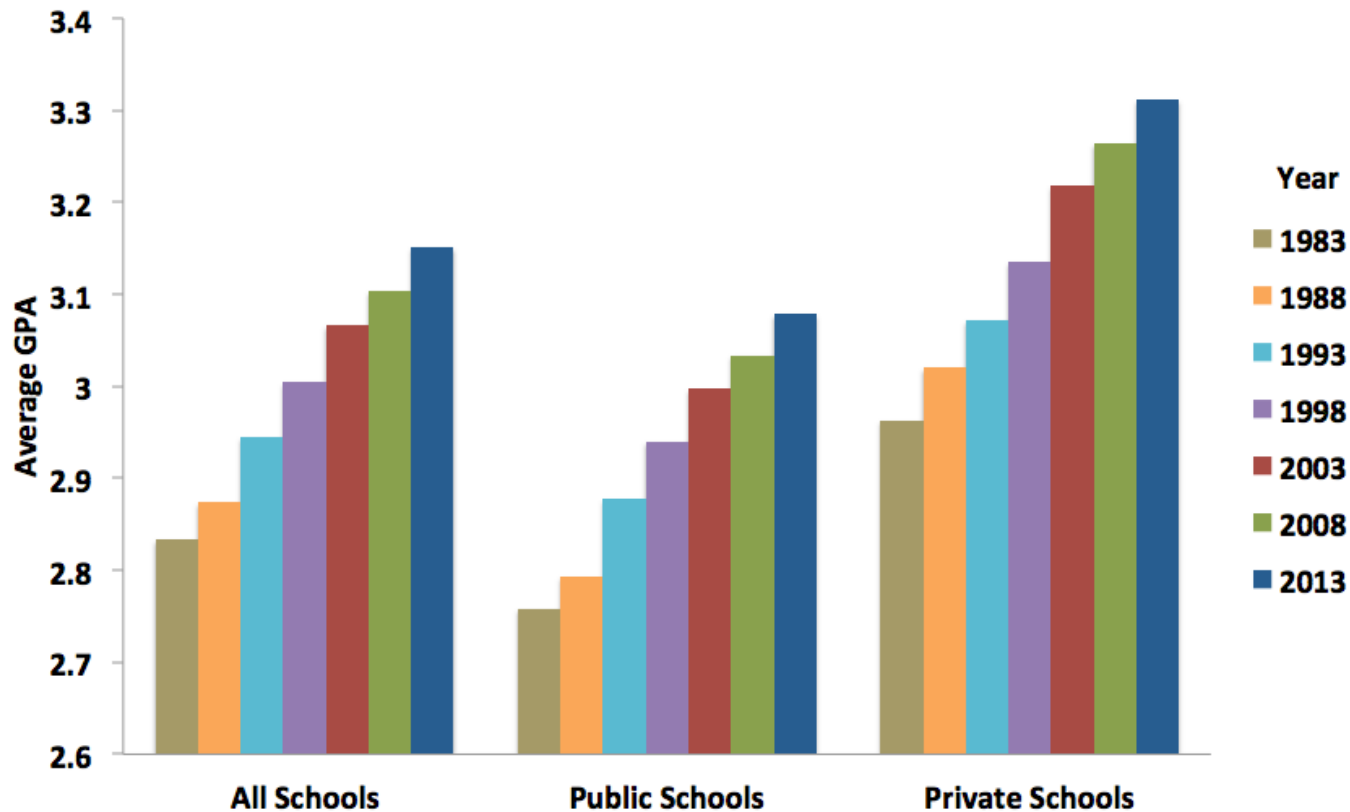
Effects of grades on motivation

What Does An “A” Really Mean?



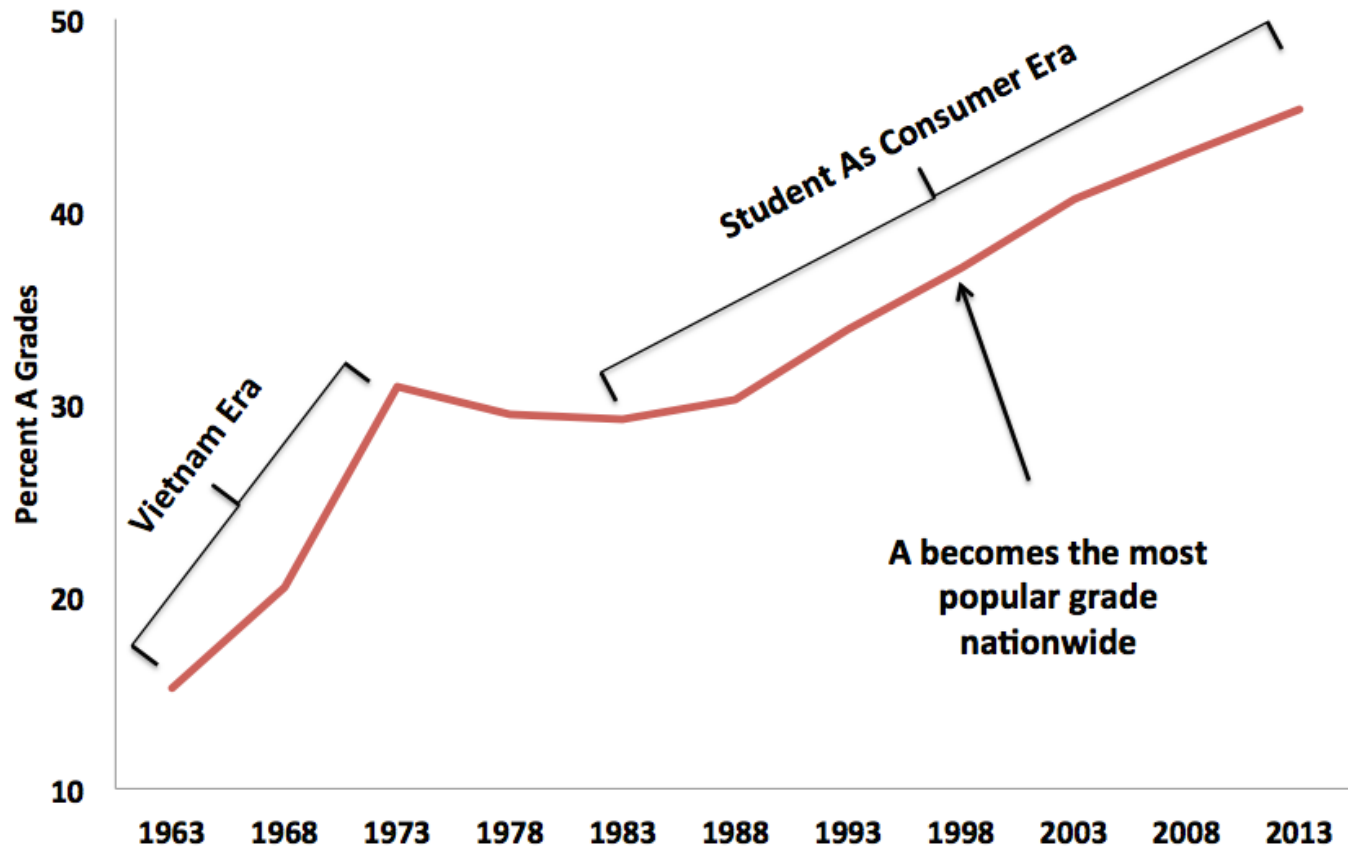
Grade Inflation at American Colleges and Universities

Recent GPA Trends Nationwide
Four-Year Colleges & Universities



The Two Modern Eras of Grade Inflation

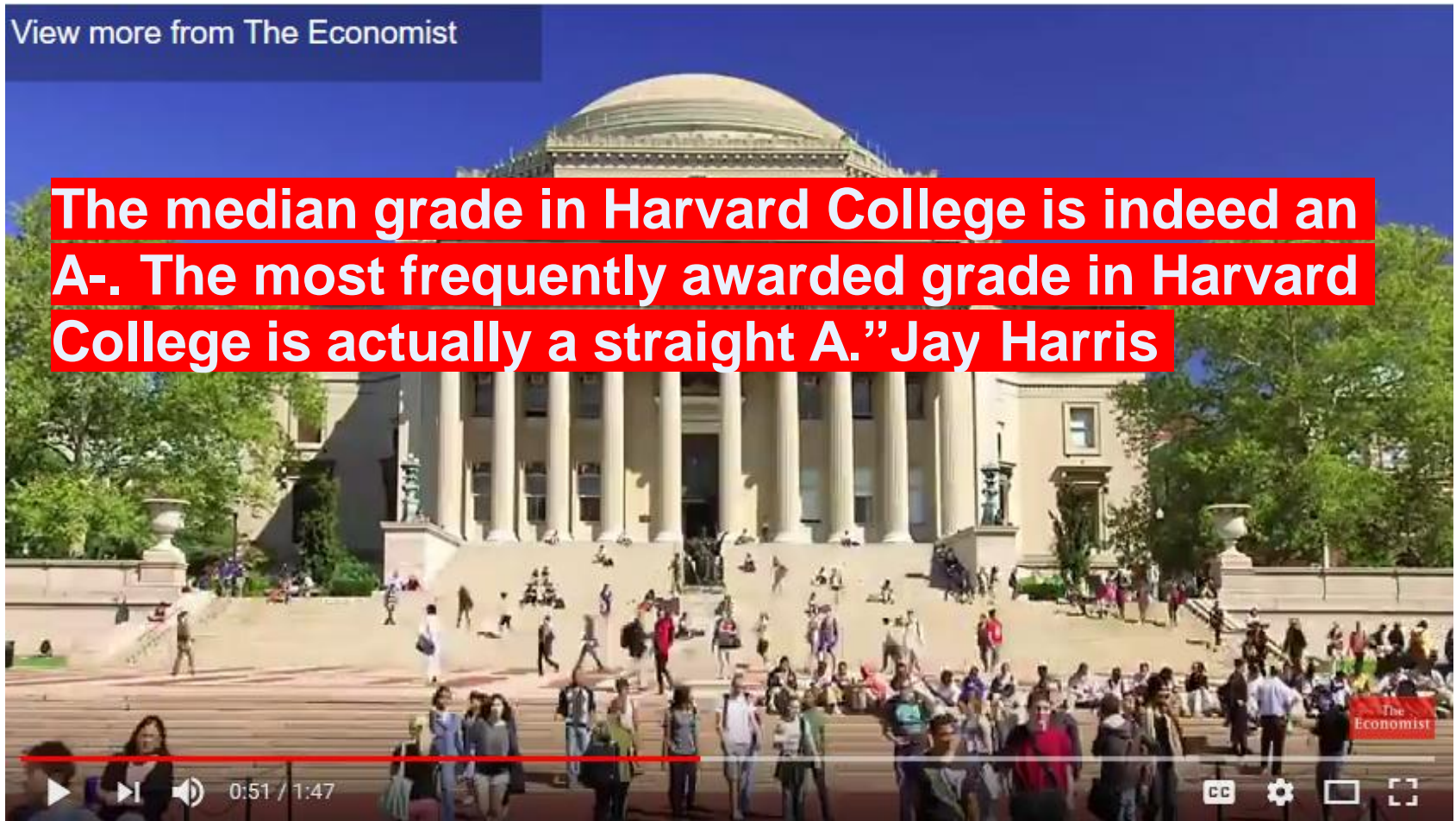
50 Years of the Rise of the A Grade



Grade Inflation

View more from The Economist

The median grade in Harvard College is indeed an A-. The most frequently awarded grade in Harvard College is actually a straight A.” Jay Harris



GRADE INFLATION

A

AVERAGE

B

BELOW
AVERAGE

C

COMPLAIN
UNTIL YOU GET
A BETTER
GRADE

D

THE DEAN
GETS
INVOLVED

F

FILE
LAWSUIT

I

IN COMPLETE
DENIAL

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Rationale for Grading

Important criteria for grading systems

- Must be fair
- Must be accurate
- Should be based on sufficient amount of valid data
- Should be defensible

Purposes of Grading

Communicate information about student's achievement and progress

Document students' performance to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs

Select, identify, or group students for certain educational programs

Provide incentives for students to learn

Provide meaningful feedback as well as information for student self-evaluation

Provide evidence of students' lack of effort or inappropriate responsibility

Provide evidence of non-academic factors



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Types of Grading Systems

- Criterion-Referenced (Absolute grading)
- Norm-Referenced (Relative grading)
 - The Bell Curve
 - Clumping
 - Quota Systems
- Contract system and rubrics
- Grading on effort and improvement
 - Individual Learning Expectation (ILE) and Dual Marking Systems
- Marzano Rating Scale
- Point System and Percentage Grading

Grading Online

Grading Scheme & Distribution

- Participate in the group work and complete the group tasks 26%
- Blackboard Discussion (individual postings) 25%
- Submit learning logs (7 logs) 14%
- Submit a complete final project 25%
- Present your final project to the class either in the classroom or via WebEx (10%)

Grading Scheme: This course adheres to the following grading scheme. Percentage/letter grade conversion used for this course is as follows:

Grade	Numerical Score	Description	Quality Points
A	96-100%	Excellent	4.0
A-	91-95%		3.67
B+	87-90%		3.33
B	82-86%	Good	3.00
B-	78-81%		2.67
C+	74-77%		2.33
C	70-73%	Satisfactory	2.00
F	69 & below	Fail	0.00
I	Incomplete		
W	Withdrew		

Grading Scheme & Distribution

Participation in class discussions- 20%

Reflective Journaling- 30%

Small Group Activities/Participation - 20%

Attitude Change Project (Annotated Bibliography, Presentation, & PPT or Wiki)- 30%

Grade	Numerical Scale	Description	Quality Points
A	96-100%	Excellent	4.00
A-	91-95%		3.67
B+	87-90%		3.33
B	82-86%	Good	3.00
B-	78-81%		2.67
C+	74-77%		2.33
C	70-73%	Satisfactory	2.00
F	69 and below	Fail	0.00
I	Incomplete		
W	Withdrew		

Grading Scheme & Distribution

Assignments:	Value	Due Date
<u>Discussion Posts and Participation</u> W1D1 and W1D2 W2D1 W3D1 W4D1 W5D1 W6D1 W7D1 W8D1	20%	<u>Primary/ Secondary</u> June 12/ June 14 June 17/ June 19 June 24/ June 26 July 1 / July 3 July 8/ July 10 July 15/ July 17 July 22/ July 24 July 27/ July 29
<u>Curriculum Design Plan</u> W2A1- Draft of Problem Identification & Needs Assessment W4A1- Draft of Goals, Objectives, Strategies & Assessment W5A1- Draft of Implementation and Feedback Collection W8A1- Complete Plan	40%	June 19 July 3 July 10 July 27
<u>Curriculum Trends and Professional Development Project</u> W3A1- Trends in Health Professions Curriculum W7A1- Prioritization and Professional Development	20%	June 26 July 24
<u>Analysis of Curriculum Issue</u> W6A1- Analysis of Curriculum Issue Presentation	20%	July 17

A Sample Grading Scale

- **A:** Outstanding, Student consistently demonstrates in-depth understanding of curriculum in health professions education. Student fully engages in class activities and consistently demonstrates outstanding performance in class, and on assigned projects. Student goes beyond the bounds of the assignment to bring innovative or creative solutions to real world curriculum problems in health professions education.
- **B:** Student demonstrates a strong knowledge of the major approaches to curriculum and development of curricular components. Student fully engages in course activities and generally demonstrates strong performance on these. Student fully and completely meets all expectations on assignments.
- **C:** Student demonstrates basic awareness of curriculum development in health professions education, and shows developing skill in applying curriculum theory in health professions education.
- **D:** Student falls short in meeting minimal expectations and course objectives.

A Sample for Flexible Grading

All scores on exams and assignments will be based on 100 points. The final grade for each term will be determined by a formula chosen at the beginning of each mini semester by each student subject to the following constraints.

Class Participation	5% - 15%
Memorandum Reports and Problem Sets (lowest grade dropped)	15% - 30%
Midterm Exam	15% - 30%
Final Exam	30% - 50%

Total Percentage Must Be 100

Final grades will be balanced between prior criteria and the _____ School guideline grade distribution. The following table specifies both the prior criteria, by the relationships between the numeric score resulting from the formula and the letter grade assigned, and the guideline grade distribution. Discretion in balancing prior criteria and the grade distribution remains the prerogative of the instructor. (Quality points refer to the _____ School nine-point grading scale.)

Colleges without Letter Grades

- Reed College
- New College of Florida
- Evergreen State College
- Prescott College
- Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies
- Alverno College
- Sarah Lawrence College
- Antioch University
- Hampshire College
- Brown University

“Whether the actual path of learning is smooth or bumpy, and regardless of the effort the student has (or has not) put in, only the final achievement status should matter in determining the course grade.”

D Royce Sadler

Evaluating Discussion Board Messages/ Assignments: Errors/Bias

- Subjective
- Individual standards of the grader
- Rubric can be tricky and that may lead to unreliable scoring
- Bias: Format of the postings (word doc vs text post), more points for wordy messages

Self- and peer-evaluation

- Intra-Group Member Evaluation
- Final Project Presentation Evaluation



Grading Policies

University Grading Policies

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Using my.UChicago
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CeDiploma Overview

Grading policies are determined by the faculties of each School or Division, yet a standard “common” grading policy is shared by most of these units, with only slight variations. Related practices are established by the University Registrar in conjunction with area Deans of Students and IT Services.

THE “COMMON” GRADE POLICY

- Grades are to be submitted to the University Registrar the Tuesday following the end of Winter and Spring Quarters, and the Wednesday following the end of Autumn and Summer quarters.
- The University uses a 4 point scale for grades; these “quality” grades are as follows 4.0 = A, 3.7 = A-, 3.3=B+, 3.0 = B, 2.7 = B-, 2.3 = C+, 2.0 = C, 1.7 = C-, 1.3 = D+, 1.0 = D, F = 0. (Note that there is no A+ or D- in the common grade scale.)
- Grades of “P” indicate “Pass” and earned credit, but have no point value. “P” grades are not considered equivalent to a “B” or a “C” or any other grade when used for requirements. It is up to each department or division to make and hold to such determinations.
- Grades of “R” indicate a “Registered” or “Audit” status, have no point value, and do not confer credit. Grades of “R” are either assigned by the instructor or arranged in advance by the student via the registration process.
- Grades of “I” indicate “Incomplete” work. Once the work for an “I”-graded course has been completed, the University Registrar will record the new quality grade but leave the initial “I” as a qualifier, indicating that the work was completed late (e.g. IA or IB+).
- Grades of “W” indicate “Withdrawn” (albeit not “dropped”). Grades of “W” either are assigned by the instructor or

Grading Policies

Grading

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The following is the grading and grade-point system at UMKC:

Letter Grade	Description	Points per Semester Hour
A	The highest grade	4.0
A-		3.7
B+		3.3
B	Work of distinction	3.0
B-		2.7
C+		2.3
C	Average work	2.0
C-		1.7
D+		1.3
D	Passing, but unsatisfactory	1.0
D-		.7
F	Failure without credit	0.0
NR	Not Reported	0.0
WF	Withdrew failing	-
W	Withdrew; no academic assessment	-
I	Incomplete	-
AT	Audit	-
CR	Credit only	-
NC	No Credit	-
P	Passing	-
S	Satisfactory	-

Legal Considerations

- FERPA
 - FERPA statute: 20 U.S.C. § 1232g
 - FERPA regulations: 34 CFR Part 99
 - Review institutional guidelines
- Grades and Academic Freedom
 - Lovelace v. Southeastern Massachusetts University
 - Wozniak v. Conry
 - See statements from American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and National Education Association (NEA)

Small Group Discussion

Working in small groups, discuss the prompts assigned to your group # (1, 2, 3, or 4) and submit a summary of your responses for everyone to review.

Please use the form below to find your assigned prompts and submit your responses.

Group Questions:

<https://goo.gl/uqCp4V>

Putting It All Together

- There is no perfect grading system. Then how to make our grading more efficient?
- Questions to ask ourselves:
 - Can grades promote learning and motivation?
 - Are we clear on the purposes of grading?
 - Are grades given to differentiate *between* students or are they designed to *rank* students along a normal distribution?
 - Do grades objectively measure the quality of a student's work in a course?
 - Can we separate the formative assessment from the summative evaluation (end-of course assessment)?

Thank You!



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