

FYSM 118 - The World Has Already Ended: Apocalypse and Fiction Fall 2019

Plan of assessment

I will be providing lots of written and oral feedback on your assignments. I will not be providing letter or number grades.

My hypothesis is that student learning is not enhanced by the assignment of grades. (This hypothesis is borne out by research: a study by Ruth Butler [1988] examined the three types of feedback teachers give: grades alone, both grades and comments, and comments alone. The students who showed the most growth were those who received comments alone. Even grades paired with comments—seemingly the most complete form of feedback—was just as ineffective as giving grades alone.)

However, the college requires that I assign you a final grade in this course.

Therefore, throughout the semester Maddie and I will offer you substantial feedback on assignments. You will find this feedback both generous and exacting—we have high standards! At midterm and the end of the semester, you will write us a letter on your learning in this course. Finally, you will be responsible for assigning yourself a letter grade for the course. I reserve the right to change this grade if I think it's wildly off base.

I do have a basic grading parameter. In order to earn a B you must

1. attend class regularly, not missing more than two classes, and do all the assigned reading;
2. meet due dates and basic criteria for all major assignments;
3. participate in all in-class exercises and activities;
4. complete all informal, low stakes writing assignments
5. give thoughtful peer feedback during class workshops and work faithfully with your group on other collaborative tasks
6. sustain effort and investment on each draft of all papers;
7. make substantive revisions when the assignment is to revise—extending or changing the thinking or organization—not just editing or touching up;
8. copy-edit all final revisions of main assignments until they conform to the conventions of edited, revised English;
9. attend conferences with the teacher to discuss drafts;
10. submit your mid term and final reflections.

I anticipate that this plan will make some of you happy, and some of you nervous. But my aim is to focus our attention entirely on your learning by making it harder to pay attention to your grades (which, if you think about it, are not terribly meaningful. What even is a B/B+, a grade I assign a lot? What's the difference between a student who got a 79 in a class and one who got an 80, in terms of what they learned? Why are there F's and D's but no E's?).