

## Example of a Labor-Based Grading Contract<sup>1</sup>

**Instructions:** If you accept this contract, make a copy of this document, “sign” (typing your name is fine), and date. Rename the document with “your last name-contract” as the title and place it in the Grading Contracts folder in our Google drive.

If you don’t accept the contract for any reason, make an appointment with me, and we’ll discuss whether there are grounds for renegotiation.

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Conventional grading often leads students to think more about grades than about writing; to be reluctant to take risks in their research and writing; to worry about pleasing the professor instead of figuring out what they really want to say or how they want to say it. For these reasons, I am using a method of evaluation known as “contract grading.” This method will keep you accountable for completing and handing in assignments on time, and will also provide an atmosphere conducive to growing as writers and citizens.

You are guaranteed a final grade of B+ if you:

- Attend class and arrive on time (in accordance with attendance policy outlined in syllabus)
- Participate in all in-class exercises and activities
- Meet due dates and criteria for all major assignments, as described on the assignment sheets
- Complete all informal, low-stakes assignments (e.g., exercises, collaborative commenting)
- Give thoughtful written and spoken peer feedback and work faithfully with your group on other collaborative tasks
- Sustain effort and investment on each draft (e.g., each draft of all major assignments)
- Make substantive revisions when the assignment is to revise—not just editing or touching up
- Copyedit all minor and major assignments (spell-check writing done in Word, check for grammatical errors and consistency, etc.)
- Attend required conferences with your instructor
- Attend scheduled evening events
- Submit all required drafts of all major assignments

I will provide feedback on all major assignments to help you improve your work. Late and missed assignments and peer review sheets/assessments are also examples of ways of lowering your contract grade.

In sum, you can earn a B+ for your final course grade based entirely on what you do—on your conscientious effort and participation. The grade of B+ does not derive from my judgment about the quality of your work. To earn higher grades you can choose to perform community labor (see Community Contributions).

Student’s signature:

Instructor’s signature:

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the example offered in Asao B. Inoue’s [Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom](#); adapted in collaboration with many Writing Program faculty.

### Extra Labor Opportunities

One of the benefits of contract grading is that it allows our course to function as a community of learning rather than as a site for competition. This environment will allow for more creativity, more risk-taking, an emphasis on process, and opportunities for meaningful collaboration. Therefore, any students who want to do more than fulfill the base contract to further foster this community can increase their grade from a B+ to an A- or an A.

Provided that the base contract terms are met, students who earn **4 extra labor units will receive an A-; 8 extra units will result in an A grade**. If you are working towards a lower contract grade, your final grade will be increased similarly: A B would be raised to a B+ with 4 extra labor units and an A- with 8 extra labor units.

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Writing group (3 units): Form a writing group of between 3 or 4 people (from our class) that you will meet with at least twice over the course of the semester. These meetings need to address different assignments; for example, you can't meet twice to discuss the TED Talk. Steps:

*Part 1: Due in Module 1 before your first meeting (first unit)*

1. Form a group and get the OK from your instructor before the end of the first semester module.
2. Writing groups can offer different kinds of support, so decide with your group how yours will function and be structured. Review [this handout](#).
3. Before the first meeting, set personal goals by answering [these questions](#). Your group might decide to share the answers at the first meeting.
4. Submit documentation that includes:
  - The names of the members of your group.
  - The assignments that you plan to work on in your meetings.
  - The answers to [these questions](#).

*Part 2: Due after your final meeting (2 units)*

After your final meeting, and to receive the full 3 units, submit documentation that includes:

1. The personal goals you set in #3.
2. The names of the members of your group and the dates of your meetings.
3. A reflection of at least 200 words that addresses the following questions?
  - How did your group structure its meetings? Was this structure helpful? Why or why not?
  - How did the writing group help to address your personal goals?
  - How might you incorporate writing groups into future writing assignments?

5-minute outside source share (1 unit): Once during the semester, you may present an article or resource you've come across that you think ties into something we've been thinking about in class or that might help your peers as they work on the class assignments. You must sign up for this in consultation with me at least one class period in advance (although you are welcome to sign up earlier). Submit a link to the article and a basic outline of your 5-minute talk beforehand for credit.

Leave a substantive, informed reader comment (1 unit): Drawing on your own expertise and/or research, and up to two times during the semester, leave a substantive public comment on an article you read in *BU Today POV* or *Cognoscenti*. Be prepared to get responses--and respond to them, if you like! Take a screenshot to submit for credit.

Write a letter to the *New York Times* (1 unit): Start by reading [this](#) article about letters to the newspaper. Then, following the [guidelines](#) published by the *New York Times*, submit a letter to the newspaper on an opinion piece that has been published in the previous seven days. Share your letter for credit.

Revisit your Wikipedia page (2 units)

*Part 1:* Now that some time has passed, return to your Wikipedia page. Is your contribution still there? Has the page changed or been further revised? Submit a 200-word reflection on the current state of the page, considering any more recent changes or gaps that you weren't able to fill in the assignment.

*Part 2: Keep editing Wikipedia!*

Applying all that you learned during Module 2, contribute another 150-300 researched, attributed, and polished words to a page of your choosing. You might continue to add to the page you started working on then, or you might find a new place to make an impact.

Add a graphic to a Wikipedia page (2 units)

*Part 1:* Locate a page on Wikipedia that would benefit from a well-researched chart, graph, table or other form of data representation. It can be the page that you've already contributed to or an entirely new one. This Wikipedia [page](#) reviews the options and offers resources on various design tools, including existing Wikipedia templates. Research, design, and publish your work.

*Part 2:* Submit a 200-word reflection on your contribution to Wikipedia along with the graphic that you created. Some questions to consider: Where did you locate the gap, and why was it a meaningful one to fill? Why did you choose the form (i.e., pie chart, stacked bar graph) that you did? What challenges did you encounter in the process of researching and creating this graphic, and how did you address them? How did you take your public audience into consideration for this assignment?

15-minute favorite peer review activity, with instructions handout (2 units): You may design **one** in-class peer review activity to engage the work students have done for class. You're encouraged to bring ideas from other classes you've taken, drawing on your favorite approaches to peer review. You must sign up for this in consultation with me at least one week in advance (although you are welcome to sign up sooner). Submit an instructions handout for students and a brief outline of your plan in advance for credit.

Conduct and integrate an interview (2 units): Using the resources and guidance on Blackboard, conduct an interview that you can feature in either your TED Talk or your Commentary piece.

Some other labor that benefits the larger community by deploying skills you've developed in this course (units determined in consult): Do the skills or ideas you've been developing in our class offer you the opportunity to give back to the larger community (BU, your former high school, or the local Boston community) in some way? If you have an idea, come to me early. We will plan it, while making sure the amount of labor is commensurate with the other items above.