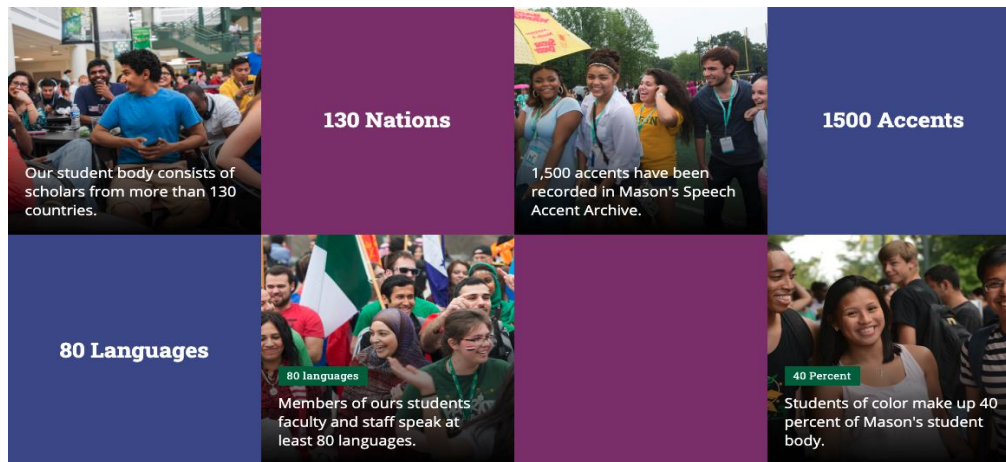


## Elizabeth Paul, English, CHSS

I have been using a non-traditional approach to assessing my students' work that utilizes completion grading and a portfolio system. The document below outlines this approach for a student audience. I've found the approach has the following benefits:

- Shifts students' focus away from grades to learning
- Students are more motivated
- Students feel more autonomy and take more risks
- Emphasizes process and revision
- Simplifies assessment
- Feedback can focus less on explaining grades and more on students' projects and learning
- Positions teachers as helpful reader and champion rather than judge of students' work

### Completion Grading in English 100: Composition for Multilingual Writers



### Overview

In this course, we will use a system of grading based on your completion of assignments and projects, rather than on a teacher's judgment of the quality of your work. We'll use this grading system because it will help us shift the focus from grades to developing your writing practices. Also, this approach better aligns with the values of our course theme because traditional rubrics are unlikely to acknowledge the diverse competencies of our diverse student body.

But this doesn't mean you won't learn as much. Just as in composition courses with traditional grading practices, the projects in this course have been carefully designed so that any student who completes all of them should be sufficiently prepared to respond to writing assignments they encounter in other academic settings.

This also doesn't mean that I don't care about the quality of your work or that you won't get feedback on your writing. Quite the opposite! Not having to worry about grades will free us up to talk about what really matters--you and your work. I'm looking forward to it!

Please keep reading for more details about our non-traditional grading . . .

## Overall Course Grade Breakdown

|   |   |                                    |                                   |  |
|---|---|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Low-Stakes Assignments</b><br>Classwork & Homework | <b>Portfolio 1</b><br>Literacy Narrative & Writer's Statement | <b>Portfolio 2</b><br>Blog Article | <b>Portfolio 3</b><br>White Paper | <b>Portfolio 4</b><br>Radical Revision Project |
| <b>30%</b>  | <b>20%</b>  | <b>20%</b>                         | <b>20%</b>                        | <b>10%</b>                                     |

### Low-Stakes Assignments

Low-stakes assignments may be assigned during class or for homework and include things like reading assignments, journal assignments, peer review assignments, project plans, and other worksheets.

Low-stakes assignments will get a complete or incomplete instead of letter grades (A-F). I will count a low-stakes assignment complete if the work submitted shows attention to the assignment instructions *and* any instruction given in class.

Low-stakes assignments are your opportunities to develop and practice skills you will use in your major projects. They are also the little steps that will add up to completing the bigger steps in your major projects. Finally, we will often build on these assignments during class. So even though these assignments are low-stakes, they're important in multiple ways.

Some low-stakes assignments may require more time and seem "bigger" than others. If you and I were trading commodities, it might make sense that I would give you more points for "bigger" assignments. But we're not trading—we're learning. Learning isn't a transaction—it's more like a journey in which you take many steps, each of which is essential to moving forward and reaching your goal. In other words, all low-stakes assignments are important, so they will all be weighed the same.

A complete will equal full credit and an incomplete will equal zero credit. Because low-stakes homework assignments prepare you for class activities and low-stakes classwork assignments are integrated into face-to-face class sessions, low-stakes assignments will receive zero credit if submitted late and cannot be made up if missed due to absence from class. Similarly, classwork cannot be done from home but must be done in class with the benefit of in-class instruction. However, you can miss four low-stakes assignments without penalty, which is automatically applied to your final course grade.

In total, these low-stakes assignments are worth 30% of the course grade (more than a whole portfolio!).

### Portfolios

In this class, the goal isn't to create "perfect" writing projects or even writing projects to impress or satisfy a teacher. **The goal is to develop a writing practice that includes writing first drafts, getting feedback, and making revisions to create projects you can be proud of, not only because of what they are but because of the care you've given them and the learning and skills they demonstrate.** In other words, *revising is really important in this class*, and you will write multiple drafts of your major projects. These drafts (and a few other kinds of pieces) will comprise portfolios.

Each portfolio will include multiple pieces of writing that show your sustained work on one or more major projects. For example, for your first portfolio, you will write a Literacy Narrative and Writer's Statement, and your

first portfolio will include: 1) a draft of your Literacy Narrative; 2) a memo about this draft; 3) a revision of your Literacy Narrative; 4) a memo about this revision; 5) a draft of your Writer's Statement; 6) a revision of your Writer's Statement; and 7) a Unit 1 Learning Narrative. This may sound like a lot, but these pieces won't be due all at once and I will guide you in building each portfolio one step at a time through low-stakes assignments and class activities.

Portfolio pieces like the ones listed above will get a complete or incomplete instead of letter grades (A-F). I will provide assignment descriptions of major projects including a list of any requirements for the various pieces (how long it should be, what kind of sources it should incorporate, etc.) As long as you submit a product that fits the description and requirements in the assignment, I will consider the piece complete.

There are two kinds of portfolio pieces—Required and Optional. If all Required portfolio pieces are complete, the portfolio will get an automatic B (85%). To earn a higher grade on your portfolio (A-, A, or A+), you can complete Optional portfolio pieces. Each Optional portfolio piece is worth 2.5% or 5 % and will raise your portfolio grade accordingly. For example, if you do one Optional piece worth 5%, your portfolio will get an A- (90%), while two such Optional pieces = A (95%) and three such Optional pieces = A+ (100%). Optional pieces will only raise the grade of a portfolio if all of the Required pieces are complete, so your first priority should be the Required pieces.

If a portfolio does not demonstrate engagement with course major projects and curriculum, it will receive a grade below a B, as per the following.

- One or more Required portfolio pieces is missing or incomplete (B- to C-)
- Half or more of the Required portfolio pieces are missing or incomplete (C- to D-)
- No portfolio pieces have been submitted (F)
- The portfolio includes work that is not the writer's own (F)
- 50% or more of the low-stakes assignments supporting a portfolio are incomplete (F)

For details about specific portfolios, see [Portfolios & Major Projects](#).

### **Revision Policy**

In Portfolios 1 and 2, if a portfolio piece is submitted and shows an authentic effort to meet requirements but receives an incomplete, you have two weeks to revise and resubmit the piece for a complete status. However, no revision and resubmission will be possible for Portfolios 3 and 4 because these portfolios come at the end of the semester.

### **Late Policy & Flex Passes**

Late portfolio pieces will be marked incomplete, bringing down the grade of the entire portfolio. Submitting portfolio pieces on time is really important! However, you have four flex passes in this course. Each flex pass gives you an additional 24 hours to submit a portfolio piece.

Flex passes can be applied individually or together. For example, you can use one flex pass to get 24 more hours to submit a portfolio piece. Or you can use two flex passes at once, getting 48 more hours to submit a portfolio piece. You can also use three at once for an additional 72 hours and four at once for an additional 96 hours.

- If you want to use a flex pass, you must notify me by email before the original deadline.
- A flex pass can be used on more than one portfolio piece at the same time only if they have the same due date and time. For example, you can use one flex pass for a draft and memo that are due at the same time.
- Flex passes cannot be applied at the end of the semester to bring your grade up.
- Flex passes cannot be used for Portfolio 4 because it is due at the end of the semester.

**Long-Term Emergencies**

If you are facing a long-term emergency, you should reach out to me as soon as possible to discuss the possibility of alternative due dates for a few assignments. If you have multiple emergencies in the semester, or if an emergency prevents you from attending to your work for 14 consecutive days, you will need to meet with me (in person or on Zoom) to discuss whether extended deadlines are a productive accommodation and whether you are still in a position to learn what you're supposed to learn from the course. Hopefully, you will have no emergencies and will be able to keep up with this course that has been carefully designed to spread out the work of learning as evenly as possible across the term.