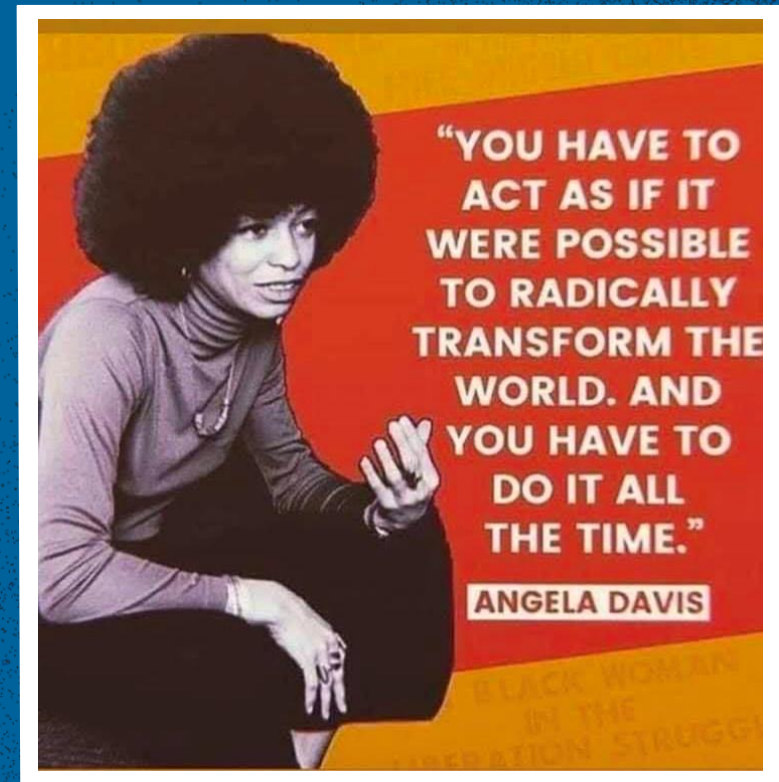


# Anti-Racist Assessment and Grading Practices



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UC San Diego

# Meet the Facilitators



**Joey Relaford-Doyle, Ph.D. (she/they)**  
*Cognitive Science*  
Education Specialist  
Teaching and Learning Commons Engaged Teaching  
Hub

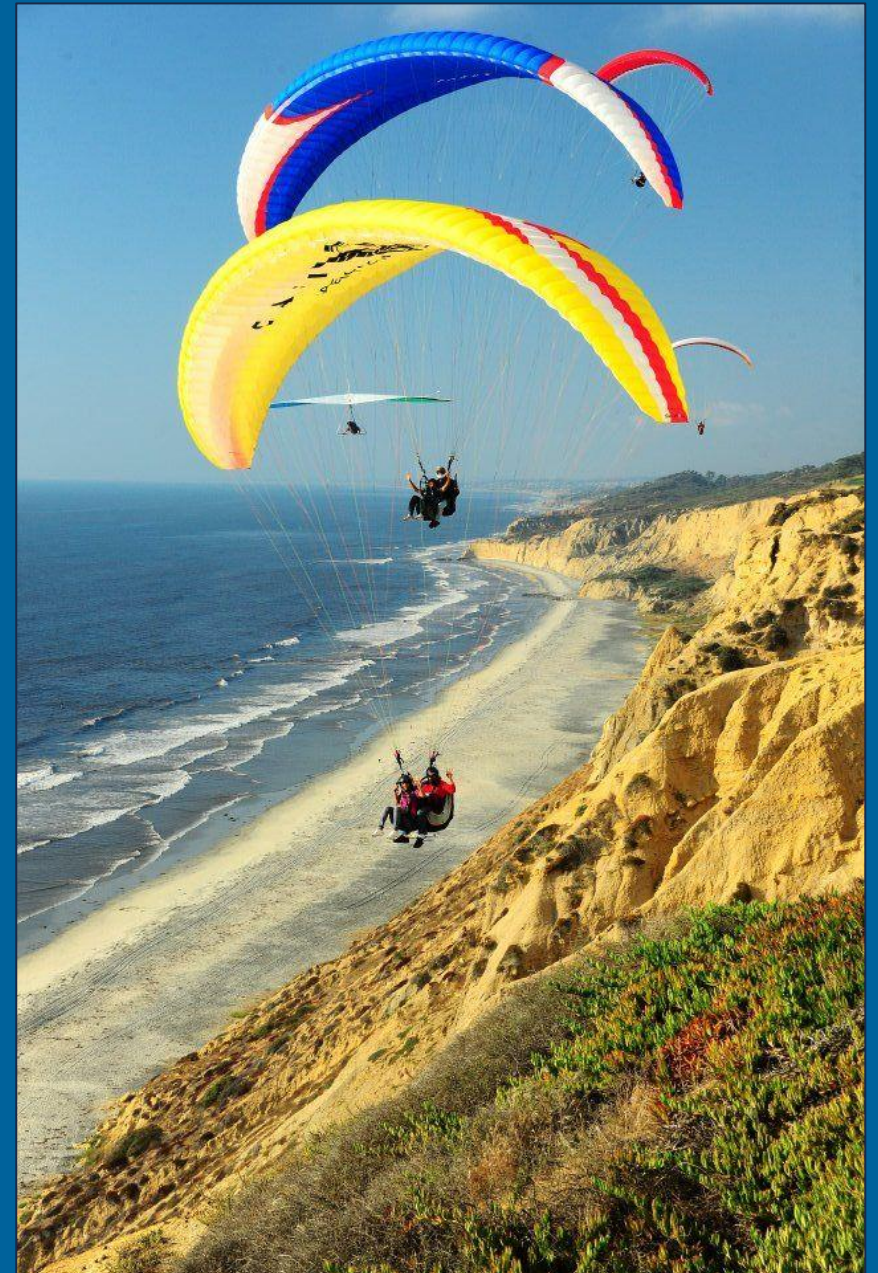


**Eric Rodríguez-Delgado (he/him)**  
*Anthropology*  
Graduate Teaching Consultant  
Engaged Teaching Hub

# Introductions

Please share -

- Name, discipline, the course you're teaching this quarter or next quarter.
- In a few words, what motivated you to come to this workshop?



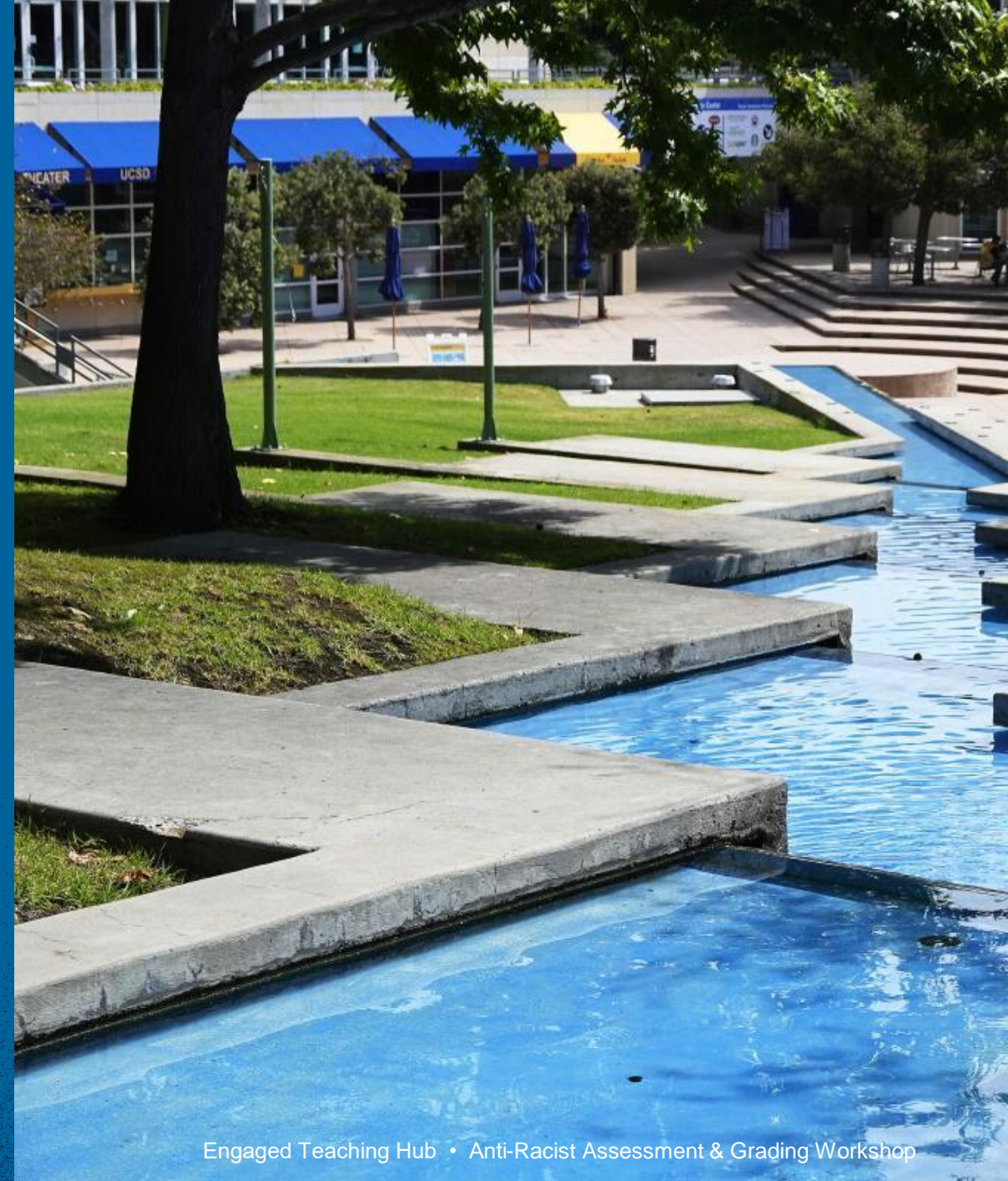
# Learning Outcomes

- Appraise traditional grading systems and their application in our current teaching contexts.
- Describe characteristics of meaningful, student-centered assessments and equitable grading practices.
- Identify and share ONE achievable change you can make to your teaching strategies to move towards more equitable assessments and grading practices.

Slides will be shared following the workshop.

# Guiding Principles

- Lean into discomfort
- Listen deeply to learn
- Engage with humility
- Engage through dialogue
- Be fully present
- Consider air time, elevate marginalized voices
- Maintain confidentiality



# Part I: Questioning our Grading Practices

# Entering Our Space

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Please share in chat: What **feelings** come to mind when you think about grading?

Ideally, what do you want grades to mean? What should they convey to you and your students?

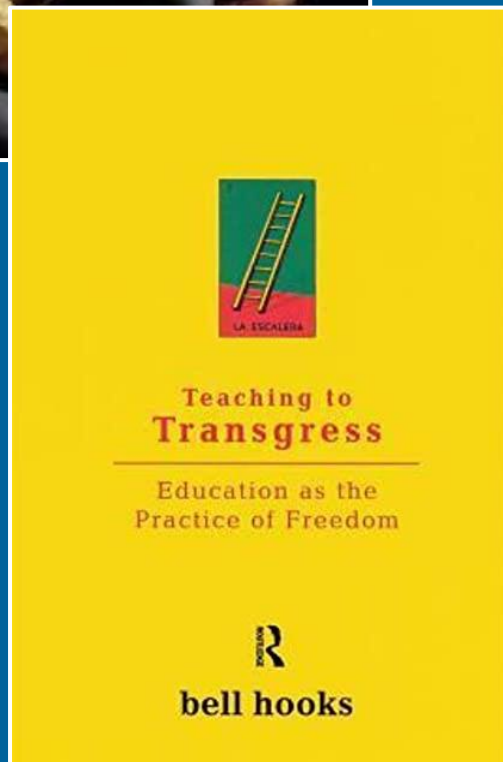
# Time Association

Share in the chat, how long do you think our modern grading system (A-F) has been around?



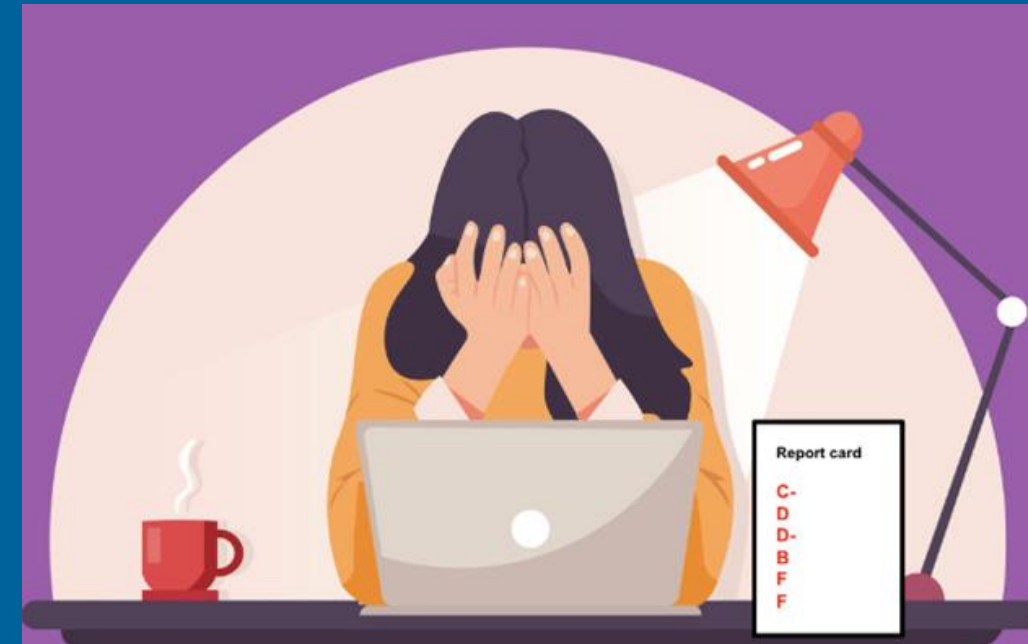
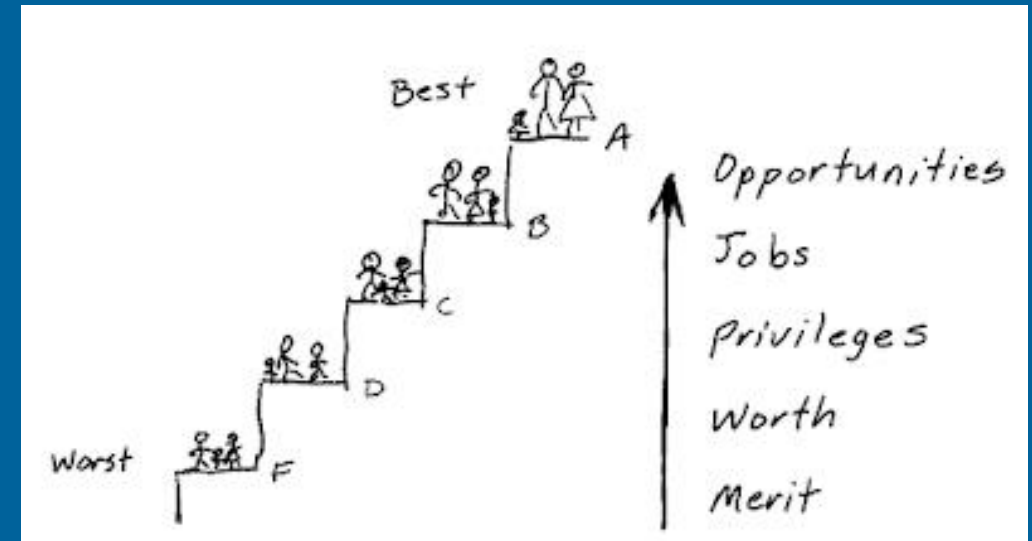


“Many professors are afraid of allowing non-directed thought in the classroom for fear that deviation from a set agenda will interfere with the grading process. A more flexible grading process must go hand-in-hand with a transformed classroom. Standards must always be high. Excellence must be valued, but standards cannot be absolute and fixed.” (bell hooks)



# Modern Grading

- Grading is not a neutral practice.
  - Is inherent ranking of students and their worth in society.
- Grading can...
  - diminish students' interest in whatever they're learning
  - create a preference for the easiest possible task.
  - reduce the quality of students' thinking.



# A History of Modern Grading...

It was **NOT** established as a measure of teaching or learning.



Grading as a practice of ranking students by their **social performance**. Graders assumed a natural social ranking of people.

1630s



Grading was part of a **nation-building project**. Grades determined who was most **fit** to be full citizens.

1860s



Under pressure for legibility, The A–F grading system was implemented to **standardize a decentralized system**.

1940s

**Imagine an educational system without grades.**

**What feelings come up for you?**

**If you can't imagine an educational system without grades, why not?**

# Myths of Modern Grading

## Myth 1: Grades Communicate Students' Proficiency

- Studies since 1888 show that grades are highly inconsistent measures of students' learning

## Myth 2: Grades Reduce Bias

## Myth 3: Grades Motivate Students

- Pressure to earn high grades contributes to academic dishonesty and mental health problems (see loss-framed grading).
- Grades affect students' achievement, self-concept, and motivation.
- Students who earn low grades tend to achieve less and feel lower self-esteem over time.

# Part II: Anti-Racist Grading Practices

# Assessment & Grading

- **Assessment:** process of gathering information from multiple and diverse sources to understand learner knowledge, skills and dispositions (Huba & Freed, 2000).
- **Grading:** A process of evaluating learning and assigning a score which communicates student performance to student, instructor, and third parties.

Meaningful & equitable grading requires meaningful & equitable assessments.



# Key Equitable Assessment Practices

- Ensure **alignment** between course learning outcomes, assessments, and learning activities.
- Provide plenty of **low-stakes practice** (formative assessment) before higher-stakes (summative) assessment.
- When possible, **give students agency** in how they demonstrate their learning (e.g., written essay or oral presentation; connecting course concepts to topic of their choice)
- Create **opportunities for reflection and revision** (rewrites, test retakes, etc.)



# Pillars of Equitable Grading

## ➤ Accurate

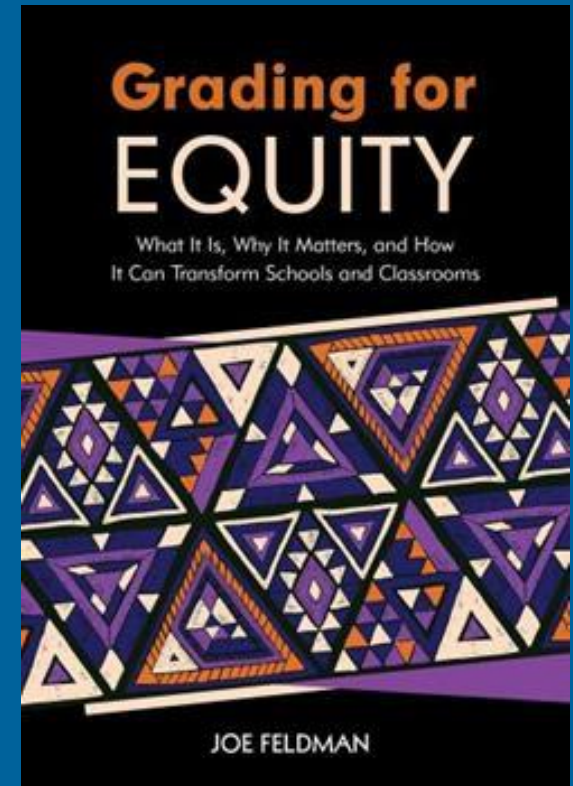
*Grades should provide an accurate and meaningful measure of student learning.*

## ➤ Bias-Resistant

*Grading practices must provide all students an opportunity to succeed regardless of privilege, and be resistant to personal biases based on students' race, gender, language, accommodation needs, etc.*

## ➤ Motivational

*We should grade students in a way that promotes the value of learning, perseverance, and confidence.*



*Grading for Equity*  
(Joe Feldman, 2019)

# What do these grading practices have in common?

- Late penalties
- Grading participation/attendance
- Grading homework
- Giving a '0' for missing work
- Grading students on non-course content (e.g. grading writing mechanics in a non-writing course)

These practices assign grades to aspects of students' behavior or performance **other than** their learning of course material.

As a result, these practices perpetuate inequity and can be disproportionately harmful to marginalized students.

*Grading for Equity* (Joe Feldman, 2019)

# Moving towards more equitable practices

- Late penalties →
- Grading participation/attendance →
- Grading homework →
- Giving a '0' for missing work →
- Grading students on non-course content (e.g. grading writing mechanics in a non-writing course) →
- Build flexibility into deadlines
- Allow multiple forms of participation
- Base grades only on well-designed summative assessments, with retake opportunities
- Require completion; use a nonzero “minimum grade” such as 50.
- Not everything students do needs to be graded! Ensure alignment between learning outcomes, learning activities, assessments, and grades.

***What other practices come to mind?***

# Towards Student-Centered Grading Practices

**Ungrading:** Intentional, critical work to dismantle traditional, racist, and standardized approaches to evaluation.

## Common Approaches

- 1) **Specifications grading (specs grading)**
  - Essential and general pass/fail assessments determined by the Instructor (Nilson 2015)
- 2) **Labor-Based Grading Contracts (Community-based grading contracts)**
  - The co-creation of a course contract at the start of the semester that is utilized to grade all members of the course (Inoue 2019)
- 3) **Proficiency-Based Grading (standards-based grading)**
  - measures a student's mastery of the essential proficiency for a class, or how well a student understands the material in class. breaks down learning objectives into detailed learning goals. (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)

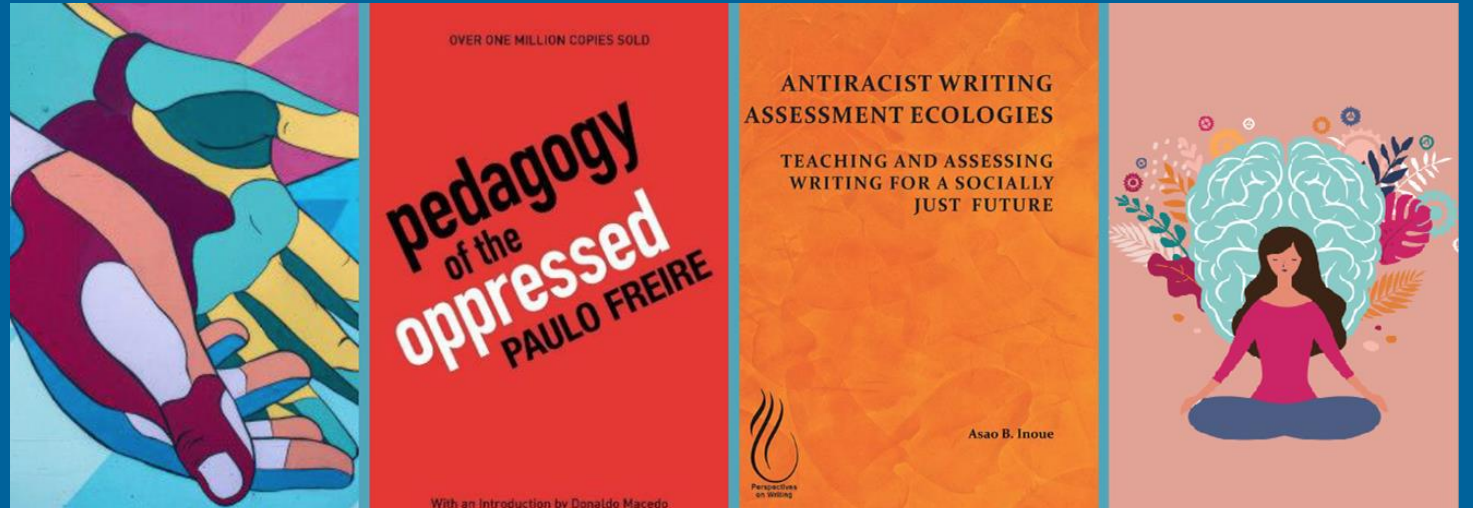
# Implementing Community-Based Grading Contracts at UCSD

**Course:** [ANAR 164: Introduction to Maritime and Underwater Archaeology](#)

**Method:** Day 1: Syllabus Review Activity and Discussion

Approach the syllabus as a conversation, rather than the expectations.

Live editing and added clarifications on the syllabus.



## How we teach

- Focus on building healthy classroom ecologies
- Focus on anti-racist pedagogy and assessments
- Mindfulness
- You are more than your studies and carry a wealth of personal knowledge and experiences that will be valued in this class.



# Implementing Community-Based Grading Contracts at UCSD (Con't)

Classroom Ethics can explain your reasoning behind the assignments, grading schema, and expectations for students and the instructor. Be open and receptive to your students.

Contract was done via Canvas they had to read and accept this syllabus before accessing content.

## Our Guiding Classroom Ethics:

- Relationality (Community) – to create and sustain communication between teacher-student and student-student; to strengthen our collaborative and individual knowledges and learning.
- Responsibility (Assignments) – to honor our commitments to each other and the class that create and support intellectual development.
- Reciprocity (Feedback) – to reinforce a collaborative teaching/learning environment.
- Relevancy (Outcomes) – to improve writing and critical thinking skills.
- Respect (Course Agreements) – to foster a learning environment that is understanding and accommodating to varying lifeways, knowledges, perspectives, experiences, and opinions.

## Assignments

Grading will be based on the student's completion of the following assignments.

1. Attendance (100 pts)
2. Personal Connections Research Project (80 pts):
  - a. Assignment 1: Sharing your Connections (20 pts)
  - b. Assignment 2: Investigating our Connections (30 pts)
  - c. Assignment 3: Connecting to Larger Themes (30 pts)
3. In-class Ethics Debate Activity (20 pts)
4. Poster (100 pts)
  - a. Poster Topic Essay (70 pts)
  - b. Poster (30 pts)

## Grading scale

|         |      |       |      |
|---------|------|-------|------|
| 98-100< | = A+ | 77-79 | = C+ |
| 94-97   | = A  | 74-76 | = C  |
| 90-93   | = A- | 70-73 | = C- |
| 87-89   | = B+ | 67-69 | = D+ |
| 84-86   | = B  | 64-66 | = D  |
| 80-83   | = B- | 61-63 | = D- |
|         |      | <60   | = F  |

## Community-Based Grading Contracts (Con't)

### Personal Connections Research Project (80 pts)

From specific memories to the stories that inspire us, we all share a connection with water. This project serves as a guide for you to reflect on your personal connections with any number of waterbodies (Rivers, seas, oceans, lakes, lagoons, estuaries, coasts, cenotes) and demonstrate how maritime and underwater archaeology can help us learn more about ourselves and what is meaningful to us. This project is cumulative and spans 3 different assignments.

Assignment 1: Sharing our Personal Connections (20 pts)  
DUE DATE FRIDAY 1/20 at 11:59PM

For this initial assignment, please share ONE personal connection relating to water, either to its physical environments or the social behaviors surrounding it. These connections can be expressed through a number of experiences that are significant to you including hobbies, memories, cultural identities, locations, etc. Additional examples include fishing, vacations, stories, favorite movies, songs, cultural heritages, geography, boat trips, etc. In short, you decide! Whatever you choose, Be sure to discuss how maritime archaeology as a field can help you learn more about this subject.

This assignment is 350-500 words (1-2 pages, 12 pt font, double-spaced). No references are needed. For full credit, please:

1. Share ONE personal connection
2. Define maritime archaeology in your own words.
3. Explain how maritime archaeology can help expand your personal understanding or appreciation of this connection.

Chapter 3 of the "Our Blue Planet" Textbook provides a list of data, artifacts, subjects, and approaches that maritime archaeology applies that can contribute to your personal understanding.

All assignments include: a brief description, a statement of the purpose and goals of the labor, and a step-by-step process for completing the work.

| Full Credit   | Partial Credit  | No Credit  |
|---|---|--|
| The assignment is posted on time and in the correct place.  | The assignment is posted late (within 48 hours of the original deadline) and/or in the incorrect place.                       | The assignment is submitted after the 48 hour late window or not submitted at all. |
| The assignment includes everything asked for in the assignment descriptions and meets the minimum word count. | The assignment includes some of what is asked for in the assignment descriptions and/or does not meet the minimum word count. | The assignment does not include anything asked for in the assignment descriptions. |
| Will be marked as Full Credit on Canvas.  | Will be marked as Half Credit on Canvas.  | Will be marked as 0 on Canvas.   |

# **Part III: Applying Anti-Racist Grading Practices**



# Breakout Room Activity

What is **one change** you would like to make to your assessment or grading practices, in order to make them more equitable? What impact do you hope this has? What support or resources do you need to make this change?

(Option to stay in Main Room for Q&A)

# Exit ticket and future workshops

## Exit ticket

Please take a moment to tell us about your experience.

## Future workshops

All workshops for Fall quarter

<https://engagedteaching.ucsd.edu/educators/workshops.html>

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