

Contract Grading for Digital Alchemy and Networked Narratives 2019 (Grad Student Version)

In this class you'll decide in advance whether you'll aim for an A, a B, or a C. (lower/higher grades maybe be assigned at the instructor's discretion). In the beginning of the semester you will submit your proposed grade as a contract.

The requirements earning the grades are outlined below. This contract is for graduate students at Kean University registered for ENG 5085 in Spring Semester 2019. You can read more about the rationale for this method¹ and see some of your (possible) questions about this method of grading in the FAQ.

There are no tests or quizzes in this course; your grade rests totally on what you produce/create/write/share and how you participate in the network.

Choose your grade by agreeing to the terms that describe each grade.

A Grade

- Miss a maximum of one class without prior notification to instructor
- Miss a maximum of one weekly reflection blog post, all tweeted to #netnarr hashtag in twitter
- The Daily Digital Alchemy - #dda posts on twitter. Complete at least two DDAs per week, posted to twitter @netnarr and #netnarr hashtag.
- Create at least two new DDAs for others to complete.
- Robust use of twitter using #netnarr hashtag to extend our conversations, to share links, contribute to in class twitter chats, to ask and answer questions within the community, to meet other scholars, writers, artists, thinkers as you contribute to the “backchannel” of our class experience. Your activity node in the #netnarr conversation visualization should be sizable and well connected by lines to others. You regularly encourage connections and participation by the undergraduate Kean students and other open participants.
- Robust use of hypothes.is using #netnarr hashtag to annotate readings, converse with others, and to highlight key components in your readings.
- Blog posts have creative titles, embedded media including at least one image, and hyperlinks to relevant resources or your own / others work. Blog posts have strong narrative flow and express ideas in your own voice. Most media and quotes are attributed to the source.

- Weekly blog post summaries are posted before midnight Monday each week, with links to work done during the week, reflection on what was learned, connection to the work of others.
- Media Makes (assignments) are published within weekly blog posts with full description of idea genesis, connections to course themes, links to source materials, a summary of how it was created in a way that would help someone else.
- Actively contribute to classmates work by regular constructive commenting; reply where relevant to comments on your own blog. Respond and connect to other students and open participants in the network.
- Be a co-host for at least two Studio Visits held live in Google Hangouts or a planned Twitter chat. This means helping promote the event, and organizing / asking questions during the event. If live participating is not possible, a substitute can be a thorough blog post summary.
- Individual final project completion (both part 1 and part 2)
- Lead / co-lead the final project collaboration. This means encouraging participation, editing & organizing the content, and taking the lead in producing a final version of the collaboration that is suitable as a stand-alone shared resource.
- Participate with good faith and generosity in all classroom discussions and activities. Forms of participation include tweeting commentary and links during discussions
- Completion of a self-assessment final narrative and portfolio with deep self-reflection and thorough familiarity with all course activities, materials, and discussions.

B Grade

- Miss a maximum of one class without prior notification to instructor
- Miss a maximum of two weekly reflection blog posts, most tweeted to #netnarr hashtag in twitter
- The Daily Digital Alchemy - #dda posts on twitter. Complete at least one DDA per week, posted to twitter @netnarr and #netnarr hashtag.
- Create at least one new DDA for others to complete.
- Regular use of twitter using #netnarr hashtag to extend our conversations as described above. Your activity node in the #netnarr Conversation visualization should be above the baseline of casual participants and is somewhat connected by lines to others. You often encourage connections and participation by the undergraduate Kean students and other open participants.
- Regular use of hypothes.is using #netnarr hashtag to annotate readings, converse with others, and to highlight key components in your readings.
- Blog posts usually have memorable titles, embedded media and some hyperlinks to relevant resources or your own / others work. Blog posts are detailed summaries of your work. Much of the media and quotes you used are attributed to the source.

- Weekly blog post summaries are posted before midnight Monday each week, with links to work done during the week, reflection on what was learned, connection to the work of others.
- Media Makes (assignments) are published within weekly blog posts with full description of idea genesis, connections to course themes, links to source materials, a summary of how it was created in a way that would help someone else.
- Contribute to classmates work by regular commenting. Respond and connect to some students and open participants in the network.
- Be a co-host for at least one Studio Visits held live in Google Hangouts or a planned Twitter chat. This means helping promote the event, and organizing / asking questions during the event. If live participating is not possible, a substitute can be a thorough blog post summary.
- Individual final project completion (both part 1 and part 2)
- Lead / co-lead the final project collaboration. This means encouraging participation, editing & organizing the content, and taking the lead in producing a final version of the collaboration that is suitable as a stand-alone shared resource.
- Participate with good faith and generosity in all classroom discussions and activities. Forms of participation include tweeting commentary and links during discussions
- Completion of a self-assessment final narrative and portfolio with self-reflection and familiarity with all course activities, materials, and discussions.

C Grade

- Miss a maximum of three classes without prior notification to instructor
- Miss a maximum of three weekly reflection blog posts
- The Daily Digital Alchemy - #dda posts on twitter. Complete at least one DDA every other week, posted to twitter @netnarr and #netnarr hashtag.
- Blog posts usually have descriptive titles, some embedded media and some hyperlinks to relevant resources. They provide summaries of your work.
- Some use of twitter using #netnarr hashtag to extend our conversations as described above.
- Some use of hypothes.is using #netnarr hashtag to annotate readings, converse with others.
- Weekly blog post summaries are posted before midnight Monday each week and describe the work you did that week.
- Media Makes (assignments) are published within weekly blog posts with full description of idea genesis, connections to course themes, links to source materials, a summary of how it was created in a way that would help someone else.
- Participate with good faith and generosity in all classroom discussions and exercises.
- Contribute to classmates work by some commenting.

- Be a participant in at least one Studio Visits held live in Google Hangouts or a planned Twitter chat. This means helping promote the event, and organizing / asking questions during the event. If live participating is not possible, a substitute can be a thorough blog post summary.
- Individual final project completion (both part 1 and part 2)
- Lead / co-lead the final project collaboration. This means encouraging participation, editing & organizing the content, and taking the lead in producing a final version of the collaboration that is suitable as a stand-alone shared resource.
- Participate in most classroom discussions and activities. Forms of participation include tweeting commentary and links during discussions.
- Completion of a self-assessment final narrative and portfolio with self-reflection and familiarity with all course activities, materials, and discussions.

This course will revolve around exploring questions which are very current and for which there are no settled answers as well as creating many pieces of digital media. Therefore, we can't determine grades based on obtaining "the right answer" or even learning "the content." We will not be grading the aesthetic value of your media creations, but how well you are able to explain in your blog posts the meaning to you and connection to the course themes. There will be content to be learned, but learning content is not the point of the class, just a means to the end. In this kind of a course, your contract grades will ultimately be based on two things:

engagement and **insight**.

Engagement is like, but not the same as, effort. (Effort can mean merely going thru the motions. This is the opposite of engagement.) Engagement means taking the course seriously. Engagement means participating with, supporting, and interacting with other participants. Someone who is engaging is "in" the network dynamically, meeting and inspiring others through ideas and the shared work of #netnarr. Engaging is NOT just checking in once a week in order to post something without connecting to others.

Insight is sharing thoughts or observations that the class didn't know. Insight, in the context of our class, is coming up with something - an answer to a question, a direction for us to go, anything which leads us to further consider digital storytelling in a networked world.

Insight can be demonstrated in the following ways:

- sharing meaningful creative work
- remixing other people's meaningful creative work
- responding to other people's meaningful creative work by creating new digital artifacts,
- pointing out implications of an argument and responding thoughtfully,
- analyzing a text or creative digital artifact
- reflecting on or interpreting other people's insights,
- answering questions, either online or in-class, that no one else has answered.

Why are we doing contract grading?

Traditional grading is problematic. It is not the work involved. It's the transformation of a complicated, nuanced, and (ideally) supportive relationship into a mercenary transaction. It emphasizes a power hierarchy which we are attempting to undermine by setting up our class as a co-learning environment. Moreover, students come to class from many different backgrounds and with many different kinds of expertise. I don't like measuring wildly varying work according to one simplistic scale. Thus, rather than play the role of adversary, which is time-consuming and draining, I have chosen to spend our energy in shaping this innovative course experience with you. I leave the decisions about your grades in your hands. It's not a perfect system — in a perfect world, we wouldn't have grades at all — but it's a best effort to honor students as mature, complicated, intelligent, curious human beings.

Frequently Asked Questions regarding Contract Grading

What if I sign up for an A but screw up on one thing?

You get only **one** temporary exemption from the contract. That means if you screw up and are absent two times instead of one, you're OK; but you can't do it again or fail to fulfill any of the other terms of the contract. If you do, you should communicate with your instructor and we'll renegotiate your contract.

What if I change my mind about what grade I want?

Great! Email your instructor and we'll renegotiate your contract.

What if I think I've fulfilled the requirements of an assignment but you think I haven't?

That's OK. If I decide you haven't fulfilled the requirements of the assignment based on the terms of your contract grade, you'll get some feedback from me and I will let you know what is required to get back on track. We can negotiate this if you can show evidence to support the grade you believe you earned.

How do I know how I'm doing, relative to the other students in the class?

Who cares? This is not competitive.

How do you know we'll actually try to do a good job?

I don't. I am trusting you to be honest and communicate about any issues on the work you are doing.