

AN UNGRADING EXPERIMENT

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Grading is ubiquitous in academia and the notion of ungrading is counterintuitive in that it centers student agency and critical thinking with regards to grades that students earn. Engaging with student work rather than going through the motions is at the heart of ungrading (Stommel, 2018; Morris & Stommel, 2018). I therefore decided to put ungrading in practice across two different classes across two quarters in my undergraduate education classes.



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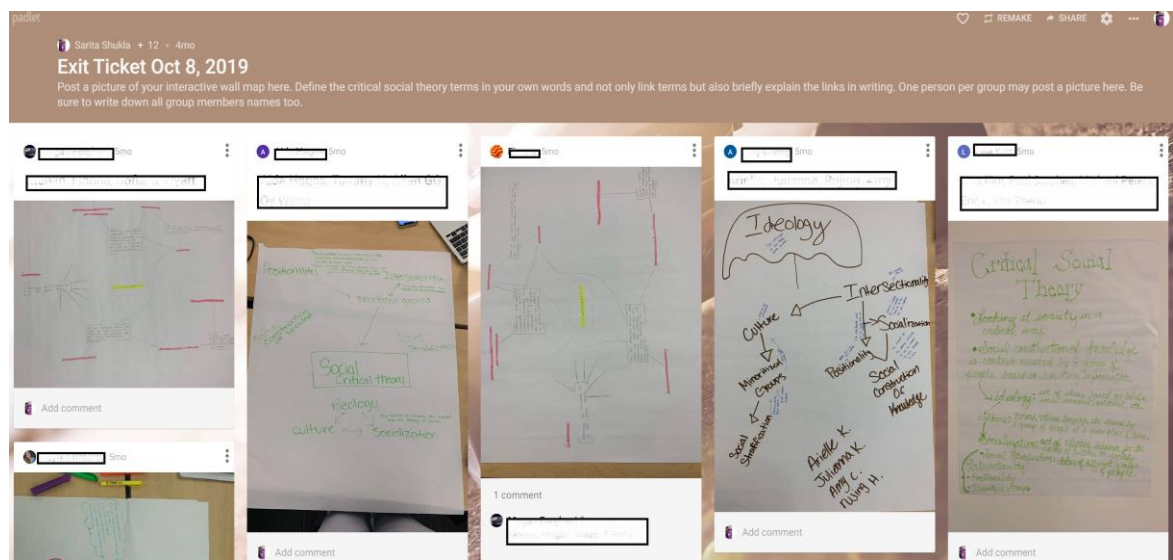
Scholarly Influences

The need for a grading strategy that meaningfully involves students is important. On the other hand, the task of grading takes time away from exploring and figuring out strategies that promote learning for all students. Peter Elbow's (1997) words resonate with me, "I would rather put my effort into trying to figure out which activities will lead to learning than to trying to measure the exact quality of the final product students turn in." (p. 133)* The work of Asao Inoue helped me critically think about grading practices for promoting social justice and equity via the design of writing assessments. Jesse Stommel's conceptual pieces on ungrading helped me put it all together.

Method

At the beginning of the quarter, instructor shares the self-evaluation assignment and students set up an account on Padlet.

Students complete assigned readings/videos and come to class



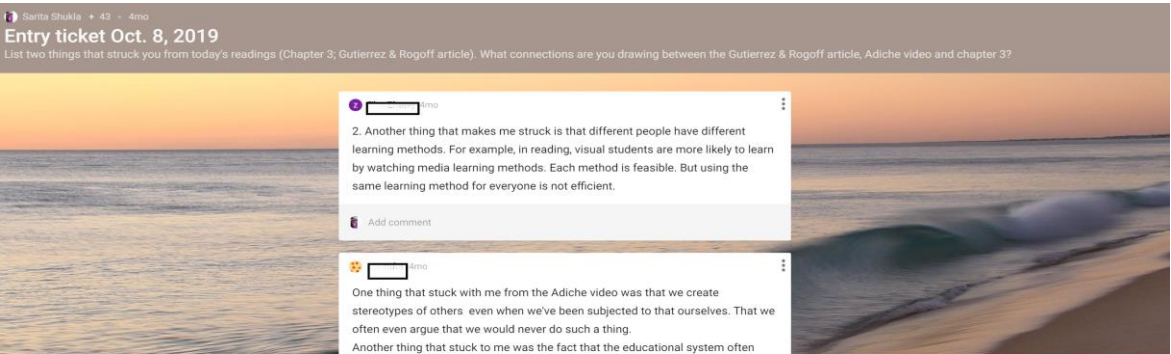
*Elbow, P. (1997). Grading Student Writing: Making It Simpler, Fairer, Clearer. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, (69), 127.

Context

- > Undergraduate classes in educational studies
- > Diverse student population in both classes
- > Students from programs around campus took these courses to satisfy either diversity or out of department course credit.
- > N= 48 students in one class
- > N= 60 students in the other class

Students respond to an entry question (an online virtual wall with varied uses) or an exit question via Padlet.

Student responses aggregated in real time and discussed in class.



Rinse and repeat every class session

Low stakes

At the end of the quarter, students evaluate their Padlet entry/exit tickets that they completed throughout the quarter and assign themselves a score. Self-evaluation based on several criteria and rubric:

- > How many Padlets did students complete?
- > Evidence of connections with readings and class discussions
- > Evidence of learning when compared to learning goals for class
- > 2-3 Padlets that students choose and put forth as evidence of meeting learning goals

Instructor reads students responses and provides input to student self-evaluations to determine final scores.

Results

Here are some exemplars from student self-evaluation that demonstrate:

Metacognitive thinking

In this padlet entry I had a quote that was significant to me and I wanted to analyze why that was as well as what it meant to me. If I were to be critical of myself, I would say I could've gone even further and related it to my group project and stereotype threats and the danger of ignoring diversity. However, overall given that this was my initial response and analysis of the quote I believe I did a good job of taking the material, relating it to our class, and voice how I feel. I believe the topic of race and culture in the classroom is a very serious and important topic to discuss, and I'm thankful I was able to read the article and gain more knowledge on the topic.

Critical thinking

Over time I definitely think my contribution to the Padlet discussion improved. My ability to think critically about the readings increased as I learned more about the broad subject of motivation in education. In addition, during the weeks that we had additional materials to study including videos or multiple readings, I think that I did a good job of tying these sources into the weekly reading. One example of this is the 1/28 Padlet reading in which we discuss the Schrieber reading in relation to the Ariely Ted Talk.

Critical self-reflection

In evaluating and reviewing my padlet entry/exit tickets I noticed as the quarter progressed I was able to make more connections and thoughtful comments because I was learning more about motivation and theories. Over time I believe they have improved, connected from my tickets shown down below you can see the improvement of quality with including course material to my own writing.

Application

Although I applied ungrading via the use of student self-evaluation to undergraduate educational studies classes, I believe that this practice holds merit and can be applied across disciplines and areas of study. If students can fully focus on the topic and issues at hand and not have to worry about the scores they will earn, it frees them up to be creative, critical thinkers. This is a goal worth striving for.