

Chris Phillips

Sample language from syllabus and assignment prompt, 2020

I use the following language in more or less this form for all of my courses. This sets the basis for my conversation with students, as a class and following up individually as needed, as well as for what they're expected to do and receive as they complete assignments during the semester.

There are no letter grades associated with your work in this class. Instead, you'll receive feedback on work-in-progress as well as "final" versions of assignments (which may be revisited at any time, if you wish). I will often ask you to write or record a response to my feedback as well as what you receive from others during the semester. Ungrading actually requires more work from you than a traditional grading system does, but the bet is that it's a *lot* more worthwhile for you to take this much control over your learning and your experience in this course. We will meet via Zoom after Week 14 to discuss your learning and what grade you assign it for your transcript.

There is no separate attendance or participation grade. Showing up prepared and ready to engage in the work of the course is assumed as part of your responsibility in this course, and you will find that you'll need to be prepared and present in order to do well with the writing assignments. It's my job to teach you as well as I know how, and it's your job to learn as deeply as you can, including finding your own connections and relevance in relation to our course material.

This assignment from a sophomore-level gateway course for English majors and minors at Lafayette College builds on the ungrading policy above, and it highlights the centrality of student creativity, critical thinking, and self-reflection – it's not an easy assignment, but it works best when they have fun with it.

English 205: Seminar in Textual Practices Poetry Recording Project

Your project will include:

1. A recording of yourself reading the poem in a way that audibly interprets the meaning of the poem. This should reflect analytical work that you've done for the written close reading (see below), in that the listener should be able to "hear" what you've found in the poem. Pay special attention to how you use speed, vocal tone, and rhythm. This part of the analysis is to be uploaded as an .mp3 file to the "Poetry Project" assignment link on Moodle.
2. A 3-4pp. (double-spaced) close reading of the poem, in which you focus on drawing attention to and analyzing the use of particular words, poetic devices, forms, etc. You don't need to use a specific critical vocabulary for this assignment, but your reading should arrive at a central thesis or point about the poem. Submit this to the same assignment link as a Word document.

You are welcome to send me drafts of parts 1 and 2 electronically (via email) no later than Friday, September 18 for my feedback; you may also bring them in to my office hours to discuss. The final projects will be due (as one Word document and one mp3 file) on the "Poetry Project" link on Moodle by 5pm on **Wednesday, September 23**.

Note: Audacity is a free, user-friendly recording application that works on both Mac and Windows. IT has good documentation on [how to download and use Audacity](#), and I've recorded a [screencast demo](#) showing which features you'll need to know for recording, editing, and exporting your poem.