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PROMOTING SOCIAL JUSTICE
Ungrading: Socially Just Assessment Practices for the PA Classroom

Jeannine M. Love
Jamie Levine Daniel

Advancing social justice through public service requires administrators to cultivate particular capacities. To meet this need, public affairs programs and instructors are developing curricula that: incorporate *content* regarding systemic inequities; examine sociohistorical *contexts* in which such inequities are created and perpetuated; and, illuminate power dynamics embedded within these systems by utilizing *concepts* grounded in critical theory. However, engaging in social justice work requires administrators to not only assess existing power relations but also actively transform them. Thus, public administration curricula must also incorporate *capacity building* for participatory democracy. Students need opportunities to experience transformative processes with supportive guidance. This article examines ungrading as one tool instructors can employ to actively shift power dynamics, model participatory public engagement for future practice, and enhance deeper and more equitable student learning in the process.

> *The greatest service the teacher can render the student is to increase [their] freedom—[their] free range of activity and thought and [their] power of control.*
> *(Follett 1970, 137)*

Students in public affairs programs are often driven by a desire to promote social justice in their communities (Abbott et al. 2023). However, this goal is complicated by the reality that most administrative systems have created and continue to perpetuate "marginalizing and oppressive" relationships between public servants and their communities (Gaynor and Carrizales 2018, 69). Future administrators need to have the tools to both deconstruct oppressive systems and creatively reimagine and facilitate the liberatory transformation of those systems, ideally through participatory processes of co-creation (Bearfield et al. 2023; Gooden et al. 2023; Love and Stout 2023; Wright II 2023). Carefully planned curricula are needed to support students in developing these competencies: empathy for diverse and often traumatized publics; ability to identify systems and structures driving inequities; and creativity to imagine and co-create transformed power dynamics (Cliburn and Bohanon 2021; Emas et al. 2022; Lopez-Littleton and Blessett 2015; Miller, Yohn, and Trochmann 2024; Stivers et al. 2023; Stout, Love, and Tchida 2023).

These efforts must build on existing calls to center social equity as a cornerstone of public administration (Blessett et al. 2019; Frederickson 1990) and explicitly address systemic power dynamics to foster social justice (Stivers et al. 2023). Pedagogically, existing efforts have strategically targeted what has been termed the "three C's": content, context, and concepts (Hatch 2018). Educators are expanding *content* beyond the traditional public administration canon. They are purposefully incorporating diverse voices and perspectives, and providing robust data on the inequities that exist within a given society or field of practice (see for instance, Gooden 2014; Wright and Merritt 2020). Students are introduced to the sociohistorical *contexts* within which white, male, Anglo voices have been centered and resultant systemic inequities developed—including how these aspects of the field continue to shape contemporary practices, policies, processes, and outcomes (see, for instance, Emas et al. 2022; Gladden and Levine Daniel 2022; Love and Stout 2023; Roberts 2020; Santis 2022). Finally, students are learning to analyze these

deeply rooted patterns of oppression by utilizing theoretical *concepts* such as those found in critical theory, settler-colonial critique, queer theory, critical race theory, and feminist frameworks that provide the necessary tools to analyze power dynamics (Blessett and Gaynor 2021; Blessett et al. 2016; Gaynor and Lopez-Littleton 2022; Lee, Learmonth, and Harding 2008; Stout, Love, and Tchida 2023).

The three C's of decolonizing content, interrogating sociohistorical context, and engaging in conceptual power analyses provide students with a robust foundation for examining public affairs through a social justice lens (Capper, Theoharis, and Sebastian 2006). However, while these changes are necessary for identifying the need for socially just interventions, they are not sufficient to foster students' capacities to create change in practice. In other words, the application of the three-C model provides students a framework to better understand the deep historical and intersectional complexities of systemic injustice they hope to rectify, but often leaves them questioning where and how they can take action to intervene. When the classroom leaves a gap between the ability to analyze inequities and the ability to foster transformative change, students can be left feeling a sense of hopelessness. Students need—and want—to know how to engage in socially just practice (Stout, Love, and Tchida 2023). How do we prepare students for effective social-justice-oriented praxis?

Adding a Fourth C

Our answer to this dilemma is a fourth C: *capacity-building*. Intentional capacity building prepares current and future practitioners for social justice work through skill development (Capper, Theoharis, and Sebastian 2006). If we expect students to enact capacities for social justice as practitioners, they must have the opportunity to *practice* them during their education. Social justice classrooms, therefore, must foster these capacities through actively modeling them. Currently, these skills-based activities are often reserved for *outside* the classroom in the form of service-learning or capstone projects. While these kinds of projects do foster some essential skill-building, historically there has been a tendency for faculty and students to remain at the therapeutic rung of Arnstein's ladder of participation (Stout 2013), an orientation that reinforces dominance culture and community oppression (Tchida and Stout 2024). Thus, instructors must carefully design community-based learning that creates truly authentic public participation. Models are available to demonstrate how to do so effectively (see, for instance, Stout 2019; Stout, Love, and Tchida 2023), and we encourage others to build on this work. Such service-learning provides students essential opportunities for capacity building within and in relation to the *external* partnership community; however, it can often overlook the *internal* community of the classroom. Capacity building nurtured outside the classroom but truncated within the classroom sends confusing messages about when and where community empowerment is valued. As Rubaii (2016) forcefully argues: "focusing on *what* we teach is necessary but not sufficient"; we must also interrogate *how* we teach (472).

Any course can center opportunities for social-justice-oriented capacity building through the strategic design of deeply inclusive course policies and collaborative assessment practices, jettisoning top-down edicts. Creatively reimagining the most fundamental policies and procedures of our courses can empower students as co-learners, co-facilitators, and collaborative assessors. In doing so, instructors model participatory processes that must be utilized in the field. As Stout (2010) cogently argues, true participatory practice requires three elements: 1) participants who are motivated to collaborate; 2) policies that provide a framework for deeply inclusive procedures; and, 3) structures that foster equitable power dynamics rather than (re)creating inequitable dynamics. This is as true in education as in any other arena of administration.

In this article we focus on changing policies (element 2) to begin shifting underlying structural power imbalances (element 3). Many possible points of intervention could be considered; however, as Bolton and Elmore (2013) argue, "to truly empower students, it is important to critically consider one's assessment policies and practices" (131). For this reason, we focus on one specific policy shift: ungrading. There are many approaches and possible elements within "ungrading" (and a robust debate about what to call this approach);[1] here we focus

on designing participatory assessment policies that foster communication and collaboration between student and instructor, thereby creating more equitable power dynamics while deepening student learning.

A Starting Point: Examining Power Dynamics Within Traditional Approaches to Grading

Recognizing the changes demanded by social justice is the first step—this is often referred to as consciousness-raising (Freire 2005). This can be difficult because those who hold power and privilege within a system "are frequently least aware of—or least willing to acknowledge—its existence" (Delpit 2006, 26). In this instance, consciousness-raising requires acknowledging the power instructors hold *over* students within the traditional structures of higher education (Freire 2005; Shor and Freire 1987), particularly in the form of assessment of student work (Estefan, Selbin, and Macdonald 2023). Thus, any move toward creating socially just classrooms must begin with instructors engaging in critical and honest self-reflection about their own positionality, including the forms of privilege and power they hold vis-à-vis their students (Emas et al. 2022; Gaynor and Lopez-Littleton 2022).

Freire's (2005) work on pedagogy is a helpful place to begin. He argues that within traditional approaches to education, the teacher is understood to hold all legitimate knowledge or expertise (and therefore power). In what he refers to as the "banking" model of education, the role of the student is merely to act as a receptacle of the instructor's knowledge while their own insight based on lived experience, introspection, and prior learning is dismissed. Freire argues that this honors only one kind of knowledge or expertise and devalues all others. In contrast, he calls for a "question posing" pedagogy that centers dialogue and draws upon the unique experiential knowledge of students and the instructor; together, all parties engage in dialogic inquiry to co-create answers to the questions under consideration.

Within public administration, this move toward question-posing pedagogy is well illustrated in the literature regarding facilitating challenging conversations about social justice issues in the classroom (see, for instance, Blessett et al. 2016; Love, Gaynor, and Blessett 2016; Irizarry 2022; Levine Daniel, Fyall, and Benenson 2020; Starke, Heckler, and Mackey 2018). Dialogue-centered classrooms bring all classroom participants—students and instructor—into participatory processes of creating new knowledge *about the content, context, and concepts* (Gaynor and Carrizales 2018). This dialogic process begins to disrupt power dynamics by creating brave spaces that are inclusive of all voices and experiences within the classroom (Love, Gaynor, and Blessett 2016). However, it does not necessarily address policies or procedures beyond dialogic inquiry. As a result, question-posing pedagogy develops important capacity building for democratic dialogue, but often stops short of fully participatory practice. It does not explicitly address the capacities needed to transform the systems in which that dialogue takes place.

For instance, even in classrooms that center co-creation of knowledge, traditional grading continues to represent a significant source of power imbalance between instructors and students (Kohn 2020; Reynolds and Trehan 2000). Regardless of how egalitarian and participatory the dialogue within a classroom may be, students are expected to distill their knowledge into artifacts that demonstrate learning which are then unilaterally evaluated using top-down grading systems (Rapchak, Hands, and Hensley 2023). The teacher—as expert—evaluates how well a student has succeeded in mastering predetermined expectations (Rapchak, Hands, and Hensley 2023). Because the grades on student transcripts can have significant implications for students' lives beyond the academy, traditional grading

1. There is currently a robust conversation around the term "ungrading," perhaps most cogently articulated by Fernandes, Brier, and McIntyre (2023). One critique is that despite using the language of *ungrading*, most of us work in institutions that still require final grades to be submitted and therefore the term is not strictly accurate. Further, a single instructor's decision to utilize alternative assessment practices does not change the system within which grading takes place. It can mitigate harms on the micro-scale of individual classes and students, but focusing only on individual courses can also distract from addressing the systemic harms incurred by students more broadly. We find these criticisms persuasive: we use the term "collaborative grading" rather than "ungrading" on our syllabi and with students in our own courses, and we are mindful of these changes as just one piece of needed systemic transformation. We have purposefully chosen to use the term ungrading in this article because this is the terminology of the body of literature with which we are engaging.

is a form of intellectual and professional gatekeeping (Estefan, Selbin, and Macdonald 2023; Reynolds and Trehan 2000) and thereby recreates the very dynamics we hope for student-administrators to disrupt (Link and Guskey 2019). If we were to apply Arnstein's ladder of participation (Arnstein 1969), traditional grading would occupy one of the nonparticipatory rungs (manipulation, therapy, or informing).

Under these circumstances, it is perhaps unsurprising that traditional grading has been connected to outcomes often associated with disempowerment and oppression. Within traditional grading structures, students, much like oppressed members of other communities, have internalized the implicit and explicit messages of deservingness and worth (Ingram and Schneider 2015; Stone 1980). Having minimal expectations for impacting those processes, they simply follow the rules to the extent needed to get by or disengage completely. Studies show that traditional grading focuses attention on external validation (Blum 2020) and hinders internal motivation, thus disincentivizing learning (Chiaravalli 2020; Deci, Koestner, and Ryan 2001; Kohn 2013; LSI Dylan William Center 2014). This is for both practical and emotional reasons: students know that grades will impact them in myriad ways beyond the classroom (Aufrecht 1997) and they want to avoid the feelings of shame "bad" grades can elicit (Pulfrey, Buchs, and Butera 2011; Schinske and Tanner 2014). Student motivation, therefore, becomes performance-oriented; the focus is on external reward (grades) rather than mastery-oriented motivation (learning) (Bolton and Elmore 2013; Lynch and Hennessy 2017). Indeed, when students receive grades, they are often less likely to attend to instructor feedback (Butler 1987; Rubaii 2016) and more likely to focus on how their grades compare to their classmates (Blanton et al. 1999). Even when students do look to rubrics and feedback provided by the instructor, they often use these tools to earn the grade they want as efficiently as possible rather than as tools to improve learning (Clark and Talbert 2023; Kohn 2013).

These impacts are most amplified when students already feel culturally marginalized within the classroom (Estefan, Selbin, and Macdonald 2023; Mackey 2017) or are precariously situated due to preexisting trauma (Branson 2019; Miller, Yohn, and Trochmann 2024). Further, traditional approaches to grading are designed in accordance with "white, middle-class ideals of learning" (Rapchak, Hands, and Hensley 2023, 89) and have been found to deepen achievement gaps by reinforcing existing structural inequities (Feldman 2018). These gaps are exacerbated further when grades are based on points-accumulation systems that tend to disproportionately reward students with prior subject knowledge, who are neurotypical, or who have institutional know-how to play the game (Clark and Talbert 2023), particularly when opportunities to revise are not available. For all students, but especially those who repeatedly earn low grades (Butler and Marinov-Glassman 1994), this can lead to a spiral of confidence loss and increase in anxiety, less risk-taking, and ultimately less learning (Moreno 2010).

Ungrading: Disrupting Power Dynamics Through Participatory Processes

Ungrading expands the dialogic process to encompass the assessment of student learning. This process utilizes *self-regulated* learning in which students "actively and intentionally set goals for their learning to monitor, regulate, control, and evaluate their cognition, behavior, motivation, and environments to achieve these goals" (Huh and Reigeluth 2017, 247). To achieve this, ungrading emphasizes the co-creation of learning goals, outcomes, and assessments in ways that break down traditional power structures, disrupt the anxiety-apathy cycle, and create an environment that emphasizes student learning. It directly challenges the typical instructor-student hierarchy, empowering students to engage with the material and self-reflection without fear of grading reprisals. Whereas traditional grading represents the lower rungs of Arnstein's ladder (1969), ungrading emphasizes citizen-controlled methods of engagement thereby building capacity to engage in consensus-based collaborative processes in which the expert public administrator (e.g., the instructor) is "on tap" rather than "on top" (Stout 2013). These assessment practices therefore also model ways students can manage organizations and work with their denizens and constituents as public and nonprofit leaders.

In contrast to the problems with traditional grading outlined in the prior section, a meta-analysis of studies on gradeless assessment suggests that "such alternatives have generally positive results" (Kjærgaard, Mikkelsen, and Buhl-Wiggers 2023, 557). Removing grades from student work can lessen the emotional stress that can interfere with students' ability to focus on course content,

attend to instructor feedback, and prioritize learning (Kohn 2020; McMorran, Ragupathi, and Luo 2017; McMorran and Ragupathi 2020). Anecdotal evidence from our own courses supports these findings. For instance, in anonymous course evaluations, students in our courses have shared observations such as, "*My classmates and I don't talk about grades at all! If anything we talk about the concept again or reference the content together and it is so much more focused on what I understand rather than how well can I perform my understanding."* Another student shared, *"The lack of traditional grading . . .relieved the pressure to achieve perfection and allowed me to focus on engaging with the material to the best of my ability. This flexible grading system facilitated my success during a demanding semester*."

Some studies also find that students who receive written feedback *without* an associated grade perform better on subsequent tasks—both quantitative and problem-solving—suggesting that they engage with feedback more critically when not distracted by the grade ranking (Schinske and Tanner 2014). Again, student evaluations in our courses have demonstrated that students take note of this shift. One student reflected that, "*the feedback . . . in leu [sic] of grades motivates me to work harder and do better than traditional grades."* Additionally, when students participate in the assessment of their own work, they have a sense of ownership in the categories and expectations used in that assessment (Estefan, Selbin, and Macdonald 2023). As one of our students noted, "*The consensus grading style challenged me to learn the material because I genuinely wanted to and not because I wanted to get a certain grade."*

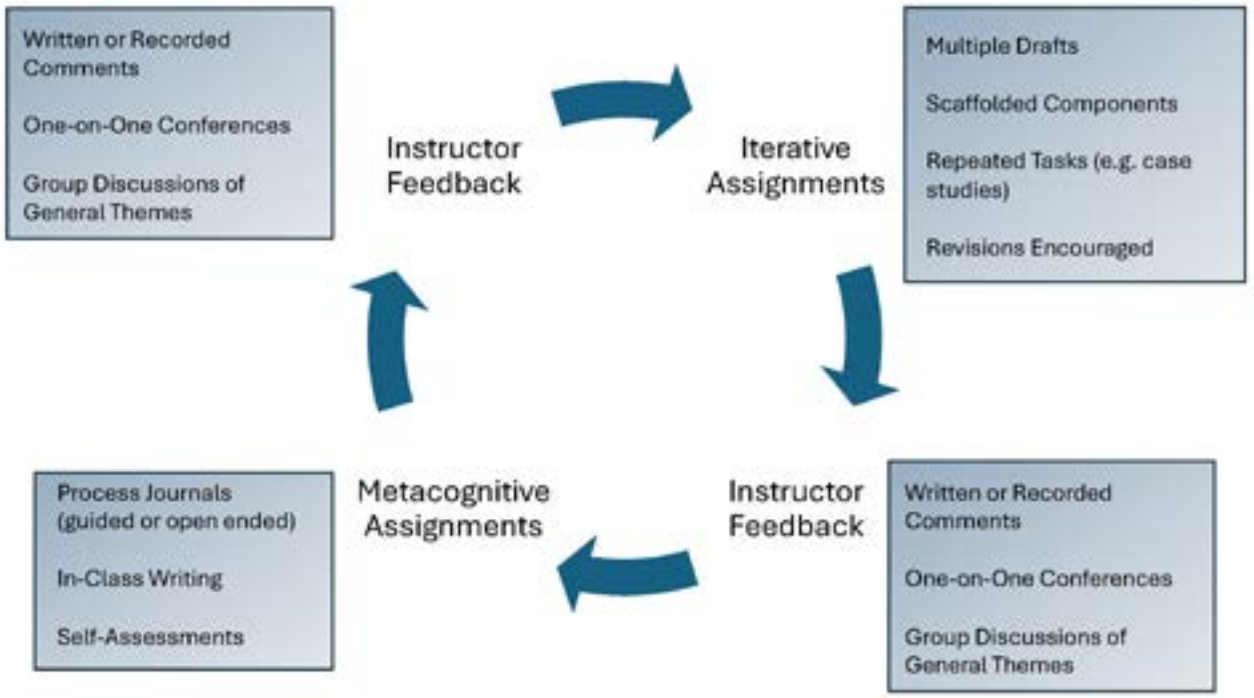
A core component of ungrading is metacognitive journaling which encourages students to reflect not only on *what* they have learned but *how* they learn, something few students have experience with, but which—when incorporated with proper supports—can be incredibly beneficial (O'Loughlin and Griffith 2020). One student noted that journaling *"made me reflect on my journey as a student and this reflection pushed me to develop better study habits."* Another shared, *"I am enjoying the process journal, because it is free form in terms of writing style. It gives me time to reflect on the course's contents and choose moments that resonates* [sic] *with me. I wasn't sure how I felt about the grading policy in the beginning, but it allowed a sense of autonomy and ownership of my learning without the stress of thinking what my grade would be. However, it was a* sneaky *way to motivate me to keep on top of my work because if you are honest with yourself at the end of the day what you put in is what you will take away."*

Finally, the collaborative approach to ungrading can also help to minimize the implicit biases that are inherent in traditional approaches to grading (Feldman 2019). This also supports inclusion and accessibility for vulnerable students. For instance, one student shared, "*My learning disability makes it hard for me to complete work on time, and makes me very insecure about my work when it is time to turn it in. I tend to overthink and drive myself crazy after an assignment is turned in while I anxiously wait for my grade to come in. Throughout my time in Dr. Love's classes those anxieties have eased incredibly, although there is no cure for ADHD of course, having courses where the professors make self-grading possible makes that course more accessible for people with learning disabilities such as myself."*

What Ungrading (Can) Look(s) Like

Our purpose in this section is to focus on the elements that reinforce our goals of building capacity for social justice and equitable participatory practice. We also aim to demonstrate some of the many entry points through which to incorporate ungrading into existing teaching approaches. Ungrading itself leaves course design largely unchanged in terms of content and substantive assignments; thus, for social justice pedagogy, it is important to incorporate ungrading for capacity building alongside the attention to content, context, and concepts discussed earlier. Additionally, this collaborative approach in ungrading does not mean loosening standards or not assigning work. In fact, as Burtis (2023) notes in her introduction to Stommel's (2023) work, "You can't ungrade away a broken assignment. You can't ungrade away a lack of care for your students. You can't ungrade away pedagogy that is rooted in wielding power over students" (xii). Rather, ungrading incorporates an iterative process in which students receive, absorb, and act on feedback while also engaging in dialogue, reflection, and metacognition. As Blum's (2020) edited volume illustrates, there are many ways to incorporate ungrading into a course. We use a combination of iterative assignments, dialogic feedback, and metacognitive reflection that form the basis of what we call the ***ungrading reflexive learning loop*** (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Ungrading Reflexive Learning Loop



Iterative assignments allow students to improve their performance based on received feedback and revision. These could take the form of: 1) an ongoing assignment consisting of multiple drafts and a final version; 2) X number of the same assignment type, such as two or more case memos, where the topics may change but the criteria and expectations are consistent; (3) opportunities to revise and resubmit the same assignments multiple times for additional feedback until the student is satisfied with the results.

In the ***dialogic feedback*** (aka consultation) portion of the loop, student submissions receive a status designation accompanied by substantive written and/or oral feedback on creativity, comprehension, idea development, and effectiveness of communication. Status designations we have used include bimodal (complete or incomplete) and trimodal (complete, revision recommended, incomplete) options. Rather than a summative evaluation marking the close of a particular unit of learning, this feedback is a component of an ongoing conversation meant to inform self-reflection and revision. See Appendix 1 for sample syllabus language explaining this approach to feedback and "conference" grading policy.

Reflexive assignments allow for structured guidance in reflection (thinking about experience) and metacognition (thinking about thinking) (Silver 2013). Two ways we operationalize this are process journals and a final reflection. Process journals encompass both reflection and metacognitive self-assessment at several points throughout the semester. These can be structured in a variety of ways; two types of journal assignments we have used are less-formal prompts with two or three short-answer questions or extensive guidance in a structured worksheet (see Appendix 2 for an example of a structured worksheet). Regardless of the structure implemented, these journal assignments are for private reflection and only visible to the instructor and the student. These journals serve several purposes: they provide insight into students' own understanding of their learning processes as well as outcomes, are a mechanism for ongoing dialogue between student and instructor, and allow for accountability and tracking throughout the semester.

This ongoing dialogue provides the foundation to build trust, and allows students a place to ask for, and be directed to, learning supports they might need. While students often will not disclose intellectual, emotional, and material challenges that negatively impact their learning outcomes during class or office hours, we find

they will do so within the space of private journals. This can elicit deeper discussion about specific content with which students are struggling and allows the instructor to connect the student with supportive resources at the university they may benefit from. Perhaps most importantly, it demonstrates care and builds trust, and thus provides a robust foundation for trauma-informed pedagogy (Miller, Yohn, and Trochmann 2024). This holistic approach can be deeply meaningful for students' sense of belonging: *"It was all of the little things like checking in on us during the semester and seeing if we needed help or resources from the university that really put Prof. Love over the top in my eyes. It's nice to see so clearly that your professor cares about not only the class materials so much, but also cares about you as a person."*

The final reflection is, essentially, an extension of the process journals and creates an opportunity for students to convey what they have learned. The final grade justification can be a part of this reflection or a separate deliverable. In this exercise, students must comment on their performance regarding each of the key components of class (engagement, assignments, process journals), and offer up and justify a final grade recommendation. (Appendix 3 provides examples of final reflection/grade justifications.)

Together, these elements create the ongoing feedback loop that allows students to take in information from the course, distill elements of their understanding into various activities or projects, receive feedback from the instructor (and potentially peers), engage in reflection on their own learning processes and outcomes, receive additional feedback, and then try again—starting the process anew. As Clark and Talbert (2023) note, feedback loops are fundamental to how humans learn, but traditional grading cuts the student out of this loop. In contrast, the ungrading learning loop emphasizes multiple ongoing dialogues: student-to-designated-audience (assignment), instructor-to-student (feedback), student-to-self (metacognitive journaling), student-to-instructor (reflective journaling and self-assessment), instructor-to-self (reflection on teaching). In this way, assessment fulfills the goal of "assessment *as* learning" wherein both student and instructors are learners and teachers (Earl, quoted in Lynch and Hennessy 2017, 1751). Eliminating traditional/numeric grades from this process has been shown to lessen student stress around instructor assessment (McMorran and Ragupathi 2020; McMorran, Ragupathi, and Luo 2017); increase creativity and willingness to take risks (McMorran, Ragupathi, and Luo 2017); encourage developing new learning habits (Gibbs 2020); allow for deeper learning (Altahawi et al. 2012; Dahlgren et al. 2009); improve communication between instructor and students; and, open up new course design possibilities (Gibbs 2020). Finally, unlike traditional grading, this iterative process provides mechanisms for acknowledging and rewarding student growth (Clark and Talbert 2023).

Scaffolding: Where to Begin?

Converting a course to being fully ungraded can seem like a daunting task. However, many instructors already incorporate elements of ungrading without realizing it. For instance, there may already be low-stakes assignments in a course that are graded complete/ incomplete, or a course may already incorporate multiple drafts on some assignments or the ability to revise others. Delving further into the process of ungrading can be done by progressive scaffolding, in which you cede control to students within a known framework of traditional grading. For example, pick one course component, such as student engagement, and have the students suggest and justify their own grades rather than doing it yourself (see Appendix 4 for an example).

For those who want to expand the ungrading components of their courses, there are many excellent resources. Jesse Stommel, for instance, is a prominent voice in the ungrading community with around 20 years of experience to draw from. His blog post "How to Ungrade" (2018) provides a range of approaches to consider: grade-free zones; self-assessment; process letters; minimal grading; authentic assessment; contract grading; portfolios; peer assessment; student-made rubrics. His book (2023), *Undoing the Grade: Why We Grade and How to Stop*, provides pedagogies and practices with multiple entry points from which to access ungrading. The edited volume *Ungrading: Why Rating Students Undermines Learning (and What to Do Instead)* (Blum 2020) provides examples of varying approaches to incorporating these techniques across education levels and academic disciplines. Catherine J. Denial (2024) provides excellent suggestions for piecemeal incorporation of ungrading in her book *A Pedagogy of Kindness.* While it takes careful planning and ongoing reflection, our experiences implementing ungrading in over 20-course sections anecdotally corroborate the positive findings outlined earlier—that ungrading can

yield excellent results for students' learning experiences and learning outcomes and is well worth the effort. When students are encouraged to interact with feedback through iterative revising and reflecting, with the punitive aspect of grades removed, they choose to push themselves for the value of their own learning.

Common Concerns

In sharing this approach to student assessment with colleagues, we have noted two recurring themes in the concerns we hear: 1) some colleagues like the idea of ungrading but have hesitations about implementation; 2) others fear that ungrading will undermine student motivation and learning. Those in the former camp tend to have concerns that center around class content, class size, and the increased demands on instructor time. Those in the latter camp tend to emphasize a belief that punitive consequences—such as the threat of low grades—are necessary to provide students with "real world" expectations, reinforce work ethic, and ensure subject mastery. Each of these concerns is well-taken as stemming from concern for student success; however, we argue that these divergent responses say more about our own fears and biases than about students' true capabilities and motivation (Gannon 2023; Stommel 2017; Supiano 2019). We concede, however, that for ungrading to become more widespread, we must address both sets of concerns.

As with any course overhaul, implementing ungrading takes research and mindful planning. We will begin by addressing some common concerns of those who are interested in ungrading but unsure *how* to adapt it to their courses and teaching needs. To do so, we draw from the growing resources available. When considering course subject matter, there is often an assumption that ungrading cannot be implemented in quantitative courses. However, students in STEM courses such as math (Chu 2020) and organic chemistry (Sorensen-Unruh 2020) can benefit greatly from the "critique-driven" learning central to ungrading along with having multiple opportunities to revise their work on quantitative problems (Riesbeck 2020). By providing constructive feedback explaining where the student's work has gone astray and asking probing questions, both learners and instructors have more robust opportunities to understand *why* a student got a problem incorrect (Crespo 2000). Further, offering guiding feedback rather than corrected answers provides students the opportunity to continue learning through meta-cognition and revision, both of which are correlated with successful problem-solving (García et al. 2019). This mimics the practice of providing consultation in public processes that blend community problem-solving and creative visioning with input from experts to provide feedback on feasibility.

Similarly, sympathetic colleagues are generally hesitant to attempt ungrading in large course settings. This is understandable; the idea of providing detailed written feedback to 200 or 300 students is indeed daunting! However, Stommel (2020) offers some ideas for modification in larger classes. For instance, rather than writing individual responses to all metacognitive journaling, instructors can note prominent trends in student work and reflections and write a summarized overview distributed to the entire class. This reserves energy for reaching out individually to the students who need additional support. This process models mechanisms for ensuring meaningful community engagement and support, scaling processes to meet the size and needs of the public.

Regarding concerns about the increase in instructor workload, we must concede that this approach to teaching is work-intensive. However, the results are well worth the effort. We have found the process of reviewing and commenting on student work goes faster and is far more enjoyable with ungrading than with standard grading practices, the former of which allows us to focus on engaging in conversations with students about their work and ideas rather than assigning points. Using alternatives to written feedback, such as recorded voice memos, can also lessen time spent on giving feedback while further supporting different learning and communication styles. Metacognitive journaling does add to the overall number of assignments for both students and instructors, but the benefit of these greatly outweighs any additional time commitments; both of us have found these journals to be among the most gratifying student writing we've ever encountered. Students also seem to genuinely enjoy these; they take the process incredibly seriously and often have meaningful insights into their own learning processes as well as sharing ideas on ways we, as instructors, can improve our courses and teaching practices.

There are, however, those who are skeptical of the pedagogical merit and rigor of this approach to student assessment and these concerns require attention as well.

When we have shared our approach to ungrading there are always those who worry that ungrading does not adequately prepare students for working in organizations and/or that students will not engage in honest and rigorous self-assessment. In response, we submit that the elements of ungrading often reflect the workplaces in which many of our students will find themselves upon graduation better than traditional grading. Direct assessment through hierarchical mechanisms does occur in the workplace but traditional grading is not an accurate simulation of how such assessment functions, particularly in organizations that center on equity. Employees are often expected to be "self-starters" and managers anticipate that their team members will be able to document and critically assess their own work (Bolton and Elmore 2013). Feedback from colleagues—of superior, equal, and subordinate rank—often takes the form of collaborations and dialogues, both formal (meetings, 360-degree reviews) and informal (hallway conversations). Even formal performance evaluations by superiors, which may utilize a rubric and use a grade-like evaluation scale, are frequently done within the context of a larger conversation between employer and employee about strengths and weaknesses in performance and goal setting for the future. Further, by shifting from hierarchical to consensus-based assessment, ungrading models mechanisms for assessment that are becoming increasingly prominent as organizations seek to flatten their structures, improve organizational inclusion efforts, and promote cultural competency.

This still leaves the question of whether students will be honest participants in the process. We will admit that we also wondered whether self-assessment would truly work, but our students have dissuaded us from this concern again and again. We suggest that this common objection is rooted in prevalent assumptions about student motivation: students are expected to be uninterested in learning in itself; to learn material only to receive points; and to seek the maximum grade for the minimum effort. As a result, the logical conclusion is that if students are left to determine their own grades, they will simply give themselves "A" grades and do little if any work. However, as noted earlier, studies show that it is traditional grading itself that leads to some of the feared outcomes. Assigning grades to work has been shown to: decrease student interest in course content; incentivize doing the least amount of work for the most reward; and decrease capacity for critical thinking (Deci, Koestner, and Ryan 2001; Kohn 2013). Thus, reasoning that traditional grading is required to counter lack of student motivation may be an outcome of traditional grading rather than a justification for it—a phenomenon Dobrow, Smith, and Posner (2011) refer to as the "grading paradox."

In contrast, when students are invited to take co-ownership of the assessment process, they rise to the occasion (Estefan, Selbin, and Macdonald 2023). They are also often incredibly transparent about the ways they grapple with determining their final grade. For instance, in a final self-assessment, one of our students shared, "*Though initially, I wanted to give myself a much lower score, final season mood getting to me. I also wanted to treat myself with grace. Something this course and Dr. Levine Daniel has encouraged, because I know, I know, I worked hard. I know that given my current capacities and limitations due to stress and other classes, I gave this class all I had to give. And while maybe, all I had to give is not all I wanted to give, because I truly and genuinely believe that you get what you give when it comes to classes; especially a class as great as this one where the teacher so genuinely cares about her students and what she is teaching. I can rest comfortably knowing that I did give it my all, and that I am proud of myself for doing all that I could for this course."* Students also are very cognizant of when they haven't put their best effort into a course and will hold themselves accountable. One former student justified giving themselves a D in one of our courses with this: *"I would give myself maybe a D, I know I wasn't a great student. I'm sorry for that."*

Finally, ungraded courses are every bit as rigorous in their content and expectations as traditionally graded courses, if not more so. Rigorous courses should challenge students to expand their knowledge of the world and themselves through engagement, critical thinking, creativity, and risk-taking, rather than serving as a form of gatekeeping (Aufrecht 1997). Creating logistical barriers does nothing to improve actual student learning outcomes (Gannon 2023) and they often harm our most vulnerable students, including those with disabilities, financial precarity, and other life challenges (Miller, Yohn, and Trochmann 2024; Pryal 2022). Further, such "performative badassery" (Gannon 2023, para. 13) is unnecessary; ungraded courses retain structure in terms of assignments, due dates, rubrics, and feedback. Students are still held accountable for the work they produce and their learning outcomes. What changes is

that they are accountable *to themselves* as well as to the instructor, thus modeling the ethic of shared responsibility in participatory decision-making (Kaner et al. 2014).

If we truly want to achieve rigor in our classrooms, we feel Stommel provides cogent advice: "start by trusting students" (quoted in Supiano 2023, para. 1). Even if some follow a "trust but verify" approach, the self-evaluation process students complete at the end of the semester is itself a rigorous reflection on the work they've completed and justification of their proffered final grades. As one of our former students cogently argued, "*I think it is important for educators to have a method to assess whether a student has grasped the content of their course. But I question whether traditional grading systems are the best way to do that . . . [the] feedback on all my assignments was incredibly helpful because they didn't contain a grade. . . Furthermore, the feedback motivated me to want to continue thinking about the material. In classes where my work is graded on a traditional system, I find that my focus is almost exclusively on what the final grade of the work is. If I get an A or a B then the work is disregarded and filed away with a sigh of relief that I've passed. If the grade is low, then I am anxious about how the negative grade will impact me long-term in the class.*

We acknowledge that the concerns regarding negative outcomes are not completely unfounded. Students are human, and not all willfully engage with the ungrading process—thereby violating element 1 of Stout's triad outlined earlier (motivation to collaborate). However, we also recognize that this outcome is not due to inherent laziness but is often a learned behavior to "game" the system of traditional grades (Blum 2016; Kirschenbaum et al. 2021), or a symptom of more complex social and emotional factors underlying student disengagement (Miller, Yohn, and Trochmann 2024). In either scenario, ungrading emphasizes the relationship-building and flexibility essential to trauma-informed pedagogy (Denial 2024; Miller, Yohn, and Trochmann 2024) and incorporates the key factors shown to improve student engagement: "(1) the provision of meaningful classwork, (2) support for student agency, (3) support for the de-velopment of student competence, (4) the promotion of positive peer relationships, and (5) the establishment of positive teacher-student relationships" (Pino-James et al. 2019, 104).

Lessons Learned

We realize that, like other participatory processes, shifting to ungrading can be daunting for both instructor and students initially. Instructors worry about students' willingness to engage with the process and ability to honestly self-assess. Students may initially mistrust an unfamiliar grading schema and may enter the process with past academic traumas. These concerns are understandable and perhaps unavoidable as one embarks on such a profound shift; however, clarity is found—and these anxieties are assuaged—through the process itself. The only way through it is to do it, and then to reflect, revise, repeat. Again, we have seen this reflected in student evaluations: "*At first I was hesitant about this course because of the format but I feel that it relaxed me regarding worrying about the grade itself and actually had the space and time to learn about the material.*"

As with any significant restructuring of a course, shifts to ungrading will take time and multiple iterations to determine what works best under the constraints of any given class: course content, class size, student demographics, technology, institutional support, and so forth. We recommend identifying where there are already some forms of ungrading in your courses: low-stakes complete/incomplete assignments; student journaling; self-grading of group projects; and peer review. Then, build from there.

We would also like to share some of the lessons we have learned:

1. ***Successful ungrading requires mindful planning, deep reflection, and patience:*** As Follett (1998) explains, "We all need not merely opportunities to exercise democracy, but opportunity for training in democracy" (207). The unfamiliarity of power-sharing in the classroom means ungrading can initially be anxiety-provoking for students if not done with careful planning and scaffolding (Koehler and Meech 2022). Supports for students to practice metacognition and clear guidelines for expectations are essential; years of traditional grading practices leave students reliant on external validation from instructors and atrophies their ability to evaluate their own work through participatory processes (Bolton and Elmore 2013; Kohn 2013). This also means that if ungrading is implemented without clear structure and carefully crafted scaffolding, students can—and likely will—disconnect from the

course content and may end up simply "making up" their grade at the end of the semester.

2. ***Be transparent with students about why you don't assign grades:*** Most students have been graded on performance their whole lives; it is the system that is familiar. We recommend taking time at the beginning of the semester to not only explain the *how* but also the *why* of ungrading. As an illustration, both of us use a simple exercise on the first day of class.[2] We ask the students to write down the first thing that comes to mind when they hear the word "grades" and then to categorize the sentiment as positive, negative, or neutral. Student responses consistently skew negative with a significant plurality (if not majority) identifying mental health impacts such as anxiety as the primary association with grades. The exercise opens an honest discussion about grading, effectively illustrates the emotional impacts of being graded, acknowledges how anxiety can disrupt the capacity to learn, and sets a tone that centers student well-being and perspective.
3. ***Metacognitive journaling throughout the semester is essential***: Metacognition provides students the opportunity to engage with ideas in an informal way, ask questions, identify support needs, and become more reflexive learners. Metacognition requires ongoing opportunities for practice and metacognitive assignments should scaffold toward the final self-assessment. As such, instructors may want to make timely completion of these metacognitive assignments a prerequisite to completing the final self-assessment. Because the purpose of the assignments is reflection, flexibility can encourage timely and thorough reflection by allowing students to use methods of communication that are most effective for them (writing, voice memo, video, etc.).
4. ***Experiment to find what works***: What works for one instructor might not work for you. What works in one class may not make sense in another course. We have provided some examples of our prompts in the appendices, but carefully consider your student population and your learning objectives. Experiment with content-based assignments as well—Denial (2024) provides some excellent guidance here. Ungrading opens the possibility for instructors and students to think creatively about new ways to engage with course materials. The emphasis on reflection and revision minimizes the riskiness of trying new forms of analysis and communication that may allow students to delve more deeply into content and enhance learning.
5. ***Stay attentive for implicit biases that can undermine the process:*** Both students and instructors enter classrooms with implicit biases that can impact even self-evaluation; thus, ungrading without careful attention to equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging can potentially create a space in which students undervalue their own achievements and instructors reaffirm lower grades than are merited (Dyer 2024). Ungrading must be implemented within a carefully constructed framework that includes not only addressing the first three C's (content, context, concepts) through a social justice lens but, like any course utilizing social justice pedagogy, requires faculty to engage in ongoing reflective introspection and planning (Gaynor and Lopez-Littleton 2022).
6. ***Carefully consider your own institutional context*:** We must acknowledge that implementing ungrading will be more or less risky depending on a range of variables: institutional rigidity and adherence to hierarchically imposed expectations around student assessment; political environment of higher education in one's state or institution; job security of individual faculty members; and preexisting conditions of discrimination against faculty with marginalized identities.

This last point merits brief elaboration. We are two white, abled, straight, cisgender women with tenure track appointments in states that have not passed DEI gag laws. These factors impact our experiences with ungrading in our institutions and with our students. As with other forms of social justice pedagogy, instructors with marginalized identities are not only more likely to carry the emotional and intellectual burden of the work, but they can also face additional challenges in the classroom. Deeply embedded cultural stereotypes shape

2. This exercise was prompted by a suggestion from *Ungrading: Why Rating Students Undermines Learning (and What to Do Instead)*(Blum 2020).

student perceptions of faculty (Rios et al. 2021) and this can frequently emerge in academic contrapower harassment in which students bully faculty (Burke et al. 2020), and these biases can be amplified when faculty implement unfamiliar grading practices (Craig 2021). Such dynamics create increased psychological and professional risk when engaging in critical pedagogy (Rapchak, Hands, and Hensley 2023) which can compound chronic environmental stressors due to existing discrimination within individual university administrations and academia writ large (Baraka 1997). There are a variety of reasons why pushing back against hierarchical power dynamics of classroom structure and traditional grading may be more perilous for some than for others, and we believe the uneven burden of these realities must be recognized.

Taken together, the lessons above reflect the need for purposeful integration of flexibility and structure that supports student learning (Supiano 2023) in a way mindful of social justice implications of the classroom and across the university.

Conclusion

Socially just administrative practice must attend to power dynamics and seek to foster participatory processes for collaborative advantage (Stout and Keast 2021). To this end, public affairs students need to be provided with myriad opportunities for the *capacity building* needed to facilitate these processes. Important strides are being made to deepen students' knowledge of existing systems of inequity through expanding and decolonizing the canon (content), to enhance their understanding of how these systems have been created and continue to be maintained (context), and to hone their skills to analyze power dynamics within organizations, community, and broader society (concepts). Similarly, there have been excellent recommendations for transforming service learning in the community in ways that facilitate capacity building for participatory democracy (Stout 2019). However, if we fail to embed participatory practices across all aspects of our teaching, our pedagogy can become misaligned with our social justice values. By incorporating participatory democracy within our course policies—including assessment of student work—we can provide students spaces that allow them to build the essential *capacities* for practice in a supportive environment. By doing so in ways that purposefully incorporate universal design we can model deeply inclusive and trauma-informed participatory engagement. If we hope to prepare practitioners who have the skills and courage to create spaces for radically democratic public engagement, to work effectively with publics that have been historically marginalized and may hold generational trauma, to see themselves as administrative collaborators and co-learners with various communities, we need to mirror these processes in radically democratic classrooms.

In closing, dedication to social justice pedagogy compels us to find ways to enact equitable practices in all areas of our classrooms and, ultimately, our academic institutions writ large. In short, we cannot effectively teach *about* social justice if we are not teaching *with* social justice. If true participatory practice requires a combination of participant motivation, deeply inclusive policies and procedures, and systemic transformation of power dynamics (Stout 2010), this needs to be reflected in the structure, policies, and processes of our own classes. In other words, we cannot empower our students to critically analyze power dynamics in the world outside the academy while actively disempowering them within the classroom and academia. Ungrading in our courses may not fundamentally shift the overall power dynamics within academia to be fully radically participatory (Fernandes, Brier, and McIntyre 2023); however, it can effectively shift the power dynamics within any given course from a place of top-down informing to co-creative partnership on Arnstein's ladder. Such a shift at the micro-scale can meaningfully mitigate some of the harms of the current grading system for individual students, and the importance of these micro-impacts should not be minimized. Finally, the process of ungrading enhances student understanding not only of assessment itself but builds capacities necessary to engage in authentic self-reflection and fully inclusive participatory democracy—both of which are essential to social justice work.

***

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Jeannine M. Love (she/her/hers) is a Professor of Public Administration and Director of the Political Science and Social Justice Studies programs at Roosevelt University in Chicago. Her research focuses on integrative processes that foster racial, social, and economic justice through radical democracy—in governance, social movements, organizations, and the classroom.

Jamie Levine Daniel (she/her/hers) is an Associate Professor at the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University. Her research interests focus on nonprofit resource acquisition and service delivery within a context of power, policy, process, and practice.

Appendix 1. Explaining Conference Grading

This class follows a conference style methodology, aka consultation style. Each assignment submission receives a *grade* of "complete" (missing submissions receive "incomplete"). Each assignment receives *feedback* from me.

I don't get it. What's wrong with points, percentages, and letters? Excellent question. Grading is a sorting mechanism that incentivizes "product over process," prioritizes what the teacher thinks (not you, the student), and is ultimately subjective, arbitrary, and inconsistent. Grades do not actually convey what you have learned.

So how does this conference thing work? Another great question. On its surface, this class looks like any other with assignments and due dates. However, instead of me assigning a score, I will give you feedback that highlights strengths and provides suggestions for improvement. In some cases, you will also receive feedback from your peers. The assignments are designed to be iterative so you can incorporate feedback into subsequent assignments.

Ok, but I need a letter grade of some sort for my transcript. How does that get assigned? I get it, you want to know the mechanics. *You* will submit a recommendation for your final grade, based on an honest assessment of your work that takes into account the feedback you receive from your classmates and me.
The class comprises two types of assignments (as described above):

- Course (engagement, Twitter, lit review)
- Self-assessment (process journals, final reflection)

Figuring out your grade
This whole process may feel intimidating. I provide a suggested breakdown of assignment weights below to help guide your reflections. In the event someone does not submit a final reflection, I will use this breakdown to calculate their final grade.

- Engagement 30%
  - Class (15%)
  - Nonprofit (15%)
- Literature Review 25%
- Midterm 15%
- Process Journal 20%
- Final Reflection 10%

100%

Appendix 2. Sample Process Journal Worksheet

Think Back over the Material of Module 2

Ideas That Resonate: What concepts *from* Module 2 have been most interesting?	
Speed and Organization of Course: How is the course going for you so far? Is the pace too fast or too slow?	
Areas of Confusion: What concepts or readings are still unclear? (Use this space to ask a question and I *will* answer it)	

Now Consider Your Engagement in the Class Thus Far

Attendance and Participation: How many class sessions have you attended/missed? How is your engagement? Do you participate in class discussions? Do you find yourself attentive or easily distracted?	
Discussion Boards: There have been **6** discussion boards so far. How many discussion board posts have you completed? Are you interacting with classmates in discussion threads? How would you describe the quality of your contributions to online discussion? Do you substantively add to the conversation?	

Self-Assessment and Goals

Module 1 Feedback/Grade: Did you turn in the Worksheet for Module 1? **If yes:** • Summarize the feedback you received from me on the first worksheet in your own words. **If no:** • Did you contact me for an extension? Based on the above, give yourself a grade on this assignment. Do you plan to revise?	
Overall Grade: Based on your assessments of your participation, discussion boards, and the Module 1 worksheet, what is your grade in the course *right now*?	
Goals: Are you happy with this grade? If so, how do you intend to keep this grade? If not, how might you improve it?	

Reflect on Your Strengths, Areas for Improvement, and Needs for Success

Identify Your Strengths: What do you think you are doing well so far? How might you build on that?	
Identify Your Areas for Improvement: Where are you having some difficulty? What do you think could use improvement and how might you work toward this?	
Identify Your Needs: What supports (from me or the university) would help you better achieve your goals?	

Appendix 3.1. Final Self-Assessments

Example 1

Assignment	Reflection	Grade (optional)
Discussion Boards (18pts) There were 18 discussion boards: • How many regular discussion posts did you submit? (provide an exact number) • Did you interact with classmates in discussion threads? • Did your posts just meet the two-sentence minimum, or were they more substantive?		
Module 1 Worksheet (10pts) • Did you complete this assignment? • Did you revise this worksheet? • Summarize the feedback you received and provide your own assessment of the worksheet.		
Module 2 Worksheet (10pts) • Did you complete this assignment? • Did you revise this worksheet? • Summarize the feedback you received and provide your own assessment of the worksheet.		
Module 3 Worksheet (10pts) • Did you complete this assignment? • Did you revise this worksheet? • Summarize the feedback you received and provide your own assessment of the worksheet.		
Module 4 Worksheet (10pts) • Did you complete this assignment? • Did you revise this worksheet? • Summarize the feedback you received and provide your own assessment of the worksheet.		
Self-Assessments (12pts) There were 4 self-assessments during the semester. How many did you complete? (Please give an exact number)		

Assignment	Reflection	Grade (optional)
Participation (5pts) How many class sessions have you attended/ missed? How is your engagement? Do you participate in class discussions?		
Essay Rough Draft and Peer Review (5 pts) • Did you submit a rough draft? • Did you provide written feedback to your group members on the discussion board prior to class? • Did you attend the peer-review class session? • Did you come to class prepared to discuss classmates' papers?		
Final Project (20pts) • Did you complete this assignment? • How did you use feedback from the peer-review process to revise your paper? • Please summarize the feedback you received and provide your own assessment of the final paper.		
Overall Assessment: Reflect on your learning progression throughout the course. • How have you achieved your learning goals for the course? • What learning goals have you fallen short on? • What achievements are you most proud of?		
• What are your main takeaways from this class?		
Final Grade: Considering all of your answers above, what is your final grade in the course?		

Appendix 3.2. Final Self-Assessments

Example 2

Final Reflection and Grade Recommendation

Section 1: Course Reflection
You have the opportunity to think about the course overall, your own engagement, and a plan for future development. Your comments may inform future iterations of this class, as well.

To be considered complete, your reflection **must** include a reference to at least 3 resources we used in class. One reference must come from the *Reframing Nonprofit Organizations* text. The others can come from any other resource (readings, videos, exercises from class, guest speakers, etc.).

You may answer each prompt below separately, or you may combine your answer in a way that addresses each prompt. You may submit your answers in written form (short answers, bullet points, diagrams, etc. are all acceptable), or you may record your answers (i.e., voice memos, videos, PowerPoints, etc.).

You will be judged on completeness of your answers, not content—as long as you answer all parts of each question and reference the course materials, your reflection will be considered complete.

a. How has this class changed your understanding of our approach to public affairs? What was your favorite topic? What topic made you think the most? Think critically about this class: What did you expect coming into the class? What exceeded your expectations?

b. What fell short? What activities worked well? (both in-class and asynchronous activities outside of class.) What suggestions do you have? How were you able to be successful in this class? What tips/advice would you give to future students on how to approach/prepare for/succeed in SPEA-V 521? Knowing what you know now about the class, is there anything you would have changed about your own approach?

c. Having completed the class, what academic and/or professional benefits have you gained? In what ways might you improve your knowledge and/or civic engagement moving forward (either professionally and/or personally)?

Section 2: Final Grade Recommendation

Assignment	Comments/Reflections	Letter Grade (optional for all except the last row)
Engagement – Consider your attendance, participation in large and small group class discussions, communication with the professor, emailing an author, providing your peers with formal and informal feedback.		
Twitter – Did you complete the weekly Twitter assignments through October (when we paused it)?		
Process Journals – did you complete all 4? To what extent did you take feedback from (an) early submission(s) to inform later submission(s)?		
Midterm – How would you assess the effort you put into the midterm? What was your original intent? To what degree did the final project reflect your original designs?		
Literature Review – To what extent did you engage with the literature in your chosen topic? To what extent did you take advantage of feedback opportunities (submitting your topic, rough draft, etc.)? How did you incorporate the feedback you received from your peers into your final project?		
Final Grade Recommendation – Given your overall reflection and your comments in this table, what is your final grade in this course?		

Appendix 4. Self-Graded Participation

Classroom Policies: Attendance/Participation

This class is intended to be interactive. As graduate students, I expect you to be professional and serve as a valuable resource to one another. You will be held accountable and responsible for the quality of class sessions. I will also push you to make connections between the course material and your own professional experiences. When contributing, be sure to be respectful of your instructor and your peers. This includes remaining focused, not monopolizing conversation, and observing proper classroom decorum (minimizing laptop use, turning off your cell phone during class, etc.).

Attendance/Participation counts for 20% (200 points) of your grade and includes face-to-face and online engagement. [Note: Participation in Zoom sessions is not a factor, since these sessions were not required. In this case, online engagement includes participation assignments and communication with classmates/your professor.]

A (≥ 93%)	Consistent (~90% attendance) high-quality contributions.*
A– (90%–92.9%)	Reasonably frequent (~80% attendance) high-quality contributions.
B+ (87%–89.9%)	Reasonably frequent (~80% attendance) contributions, but not always of high quality.
B (83%–86.9%)	Sometimes contributes but not always high quality or occasional (~60% attendance) high-quality contributions.
B– (80%–82.9%)	Occasional contributions, but not always of high quality.
C+ (77%–79.9%)	Contributes once in a while, but not always of high quality.
C (73%-76.9%)	Does not take part in class discussion unless specifically asked to do so.
D (60%-72%)	Is present but takes no part in discussions.
F (< 60%)	Fails to participate, does not contribute.

*A high-quality contribution reflects that a student responds to other students as well as the instructor, volunteers illustrations from personal experiences about subjects under discussion, has prepared prior to class, and listens actively in class.

Appendix 5. Explanation of Deadlines

Late Submissions

My default is to be flexible with deadlines to the greatest extent possible. However, assignments serve different functions in learning and flexible deadlines are not possible when late work will impact your classmates. Below I provide explanations for varying flexibility in deadlines.

Assignments accepted until the last day of class with unlimited revisions

Reading Responses: These are due along with the self-assessment journals they coincide with. These are meant to be completed as we work through the semester. It is advisable that you turn them in within a day or two of the due date and then revise as needed.

Facilitation Reports: These are due by the end of the day the Sunday after you facilitate discussion. If you need a few extra days to complete this, the deadline is flexible.

Assignments with some leniency

Reflection Journals: These reflection journals are spaced out in a way that allows for periodic reflection throughout the semester. Because the journals are cumulative, journals are only accepted until the next reflection journal is due.

Final Paper: Due to the tight timeline at the end of the semester, flexibility is limited for final papers. Extensions must be arranged with me as early as possible.

Assignments not accepted late

Discussion Board Posts: Discussion forums are meant to get us talking to one another *before* class starts. If you post late, you are not contributing to that dialogue. Therefore, discussion posts submitted after class starts will not be given credit.

Facilitation Materials and Questions: These need to happen as scheduled, unless a change of dates is agreed upon by fellow group members (i.e., you get someone to swap days with you). Your materials need to be posted 24 hours in advance in order to provide your groupmates with time to look at your materials before class.

Final Self-Assessment: This determines your final grade for the class. Remember, this is your chance to help determine your grade for the semester. If you do not submit a timely final self-assessment, I will calculate your grade based on the work that has been submitted and the weighting scale given in the grading section.