

Prof. Palmer's Grading System

The grading scale that I employ is the standard A-F range that you have invariably encountered throughout your academic career. Where this range may differ is in my particular interpretation of the meaning of these grades. To avoid confusion and to ensure that all students enrolled in my classes understand the standards by which their achievement will be measured, I provide here a description of my grading system:

"A" = Exceptional

An "A" is awarded for work that clearly exceeds standard expectations both in terms of substance and presentation. An "A" paper demonstrates that the student has not only fully mastered the essence and implications of advanced concepts, but is capable of applying those concepts in an analytical fashion that is both subtle and, at times, innovative.

"B" = Above Average

A "B" designates work that surpasses the instructor's expectations for a given assignment. In addition to demonstrating that a student possesses a clear understanding of essential issues and ideas, "B"-level work indicates that the student has begun to think more deeply about the implications of concepts presented in class and can apply those concepts critically and analytically.

"C" = Average

The grade of "C" indicates work that meets all basic requirements of the assignment. A "C" is awarded to a student who is able to restate essential concepts and ideas but who has not demonstrated sufficiently an ability to move beyond recitation in applying these concepts and ideas to historical analysis.

"D" = Below Average

A "D" is given for work that fails to meet the instructor's minimum expectations but that contains some redemptive qualities. A "D" may also be assigned to a student who has not followed instructions. (Example: writing an otherwise acceptable essay that does not address the question posed on an exam or assignment.) Contrary to the popular saying "D" does not stand for "diploma." Receiving a "D" is a sign of trouble. It is a sure indication that you should meet with your instructor.

"F" = Failure

A grade of "F" denotes failure to perform at a minimum level of competency. The "F" is usually (although not universally) reserved for students who do not attend (or who sleep during) class, who fail to turn in assignments, and/or who may consider college little more than an extended opportunity to drink and carouse at their parents' (or taxpayers') expense. Such students sometimes operate under the belief that the act of registering for a class entitles them to at least a "C." They are mistaken.

Note:

In addition to the designations described above, the diacritic marks "+" (plus) and "-" (minus) are used to further distinguish the merits of students' work. These marks are typically bestowed as commentary on an assignment's presentation and/or style. Thus, a "B-" might be awarded for work that meets the standards spelled out in "B" above, but that suffers from sloppy editing, spelling mistakes, typographical errors, awkward turns of phrase, etc.

When a number must be assigned for the purpose of tabulating grades, the values of letter grades follow the general pattern:

A+ = 98 / A = 95 / A- = 92
B+ = 88 / B = 85 / B- = 82. etc.

The only exception to this pattern is the "F" which is worth a score of 50.

Disclaimer: Enrollment and regular attendance in any given course does not guarantee that you will receive the grade that you want or "feel" you deserve. However, hard work and dedication to your own education will ensure that you succeed in class at a level commensurate with your abilities. While it is my responsibility to clearly delineate the standards expected of all students enrolled in my courses, it is your responsibility, having been informed of those standards, to meet or exceed them through your own effort.