

## Memorandum

To: Sports COM 205  
From: Dr. Brian Carroll  
Re: Grading

One of the feedback remarks stated, "I wish I knew how my grade is going to go. I feel like each week my grade is up in the air."

Fair enough. Maybe I can help. Basically, I'm looking for two things: Good ideas and clear, artful expression of those ideas. That's it. To elaborate, I'm looking for substantial reflections on the things we're reading and doing, and I'm demanding (largely) mistake-free writing in communicating that substance. Do these two things and you are golden. If there are deficiencies in either or both, the grade will come down. If you're not sure which it is that pulled your grade down, please ask me. I've got no secrets. If I haven't called you out on your writing, it's probably more about substance.

There is one variable you can't know from week to week, which is what everyone else wrote. Thus, that bar for a perfect 10 might in fact move a little, but not a lot. When I read the 10, I know, "That's it! That's the bar." You can't see that bar. I've given you some examples of 10-level work. And I can give you more.

That said, virtually everyone is in the 8-10 range, or As and Bs, so the range is fairly tight.

To improve in the area of substance:

- Avoid straight summary (remember I assigned the reading; I've read it)
- Avoid lots of personal testimony and anecdote (a little is fine; a lot takes space and attention away from substance)
- Integrate and synthesize past readings, discussions, principles (the A-level work does this, and does it meaningfully)
- Show thoughtful consideration of the author's argument, and all the way through that argument, not just the first few pages
- Move the overall class discussion forward with both your takeaways and your residuals. This should keep you away from trivial residuals and toward those that fundamentally matter.
- Stop by my office. I'm here ALL THE TIME. There need be no mystery at all.