What The Grades Mean
(including numerical values of "slash" grades)

**A+ to A (4.3 to 4): Excellent**
The paper or test that receives an A+ or A is one that combines a solid grasp of the material with a spark of originality, thereby offering a unique insight into the materials of the course.

A paper receiving one of these grades not only has no defects in grammar and punctuation—it "sings." It is a pleasure to read. The paper makes an original contribution to the subject matter that is substantive and thoughtful. The thesis is clearly stated, the supporting evidence presented in a logical and coherent manner.

A test receiving an A+ or A clearly indicates a solid grasp of the material; test questions are approached squarely and honestly, with no effort to spin a partial understanding into something greater than it is. A test receiving an A+ or A also reveals that felicitous spark of insight attainable only by one truly engaged in the subject.

A+/A: 4.15
A/A-: 3.85

**A- to B+ (3.7–3.3): Very Good**
The paper or test that receives an A- or B+ gives evidence of a strong grasp of the material of the course.

A paper receiving this grade has no defects in grammar or punctuation; the thesis is clearly stated, the supporting evidence presented in a logical, coherent manner. It has all of the virtues of the A or A+ paper, but misses something of the elegance or wit of the superior paper.

A test receiving an A- or B+ indicates a solid grasp of the material, though it does not as boldly address the more subtle implications in the course material as does the A+/A test.

A-/B+: 3.50
B+/B: 3.15

**B to B- (3.0–2.7): Good**
The paper or examination that receives a B or B- indicates a good grasp of the material of the course.

A paper receiving this grade has few defects in grammar or punctuation; those few that do appear are not major, but they are significant enough to indicate a certain lack of care or ability. The paper does have a recognizable thesis, but it lacks distinction or comprehensiveness. Frequently the problem lies in a failure to recognize the full implications of the thesis. Often there are related difficulties in marshalling and presenting evidence; however, these problems are not severe enough to undermine the argument of the paper.
A test receiving a B or B- is one that indicates a good grasp of the course material: the student has clearly attended to class discussion and is able to elaborate in a limited way on the salient points of class material. The test answers rarely venture beyond the strictest parameters of the test question, but there are recognizable flashes of a mind at work.

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B/B-</td>
<td>2.85</td>
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<tr>
<td>B/-C+</td>
<td>2.50</td>
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**C+ to C- (2.3–1.7): Satisfactory**

The paper or test that receives a grade in this range demonstrates an understanding of the coursework but doesn't pursue the larger implications of the material.

**Papers** receiving a C-range grade usually have an incomplete thesis in which important complicating factors are either not acknowledged or inadequately discussed. The paper has defects in grammar and punctuation, some serious, but not so severe as to hamper communication. Evidence is presented in a perfunctory manner; transitions are frequently *pro forma* (or incomplete); the failure to recognize the implications of some statements may lead to contradictory assertions. (These problems are more severe in the C- paper than in the C+ paper.) The ratio between plot summary and analysis sometimes tips threateningly toward plot summary, but not so completely as to give the impression that the writer is avoiding real thought.

**Tests** receiving a C-range grade answer the questions in an accurate but narrow fashion. There may be a sense, at times, that information is being regurgitated without complete digestion.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C+/C-</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C/-D+</td>
<td>1.50</td>
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</tbody>
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**D+ to D- (1.3–0.7): Poor**

The paper or examination that receives a D-range grade barely rises to a basic grasp of course material.

A **paper** receiving such a grade often reproduces the "highlights" of class discussion without demonstrating a clear understanding of what makes the material important; a frequent result of this problem is the "non-thesis thesis" (i.e., *Oedipus Rex* reveals the folly of avoiding destiny; *The Narrative of Frederick Douglass* tells of the horrors of slavery; the servants' actions in *The Taming of the Shrew* help move the plot along. All of these observations are true—obviously true. They don't need to be proven and hence make poor theses.). There are significant and/or repetitive defects in grammar and punctuation, some serious enough to render passages incomprehensible. Plot summary prevails over analysis. Transitions are absent or inadequate.

A **test** receiving a D-range grade barely addresses the questions on the exam; information is reproduced in disconnected fragments without a sense of how the material coheres into a unified whole.
D+/D: 1.15  
D/D-: 0.85  
D-/F: 0.35

F (0): Failing  
A paper or examination may receive a failing grade for a number of reasons, not all of them necessarily resulting from an inability to grasp course materials.

A paper will receive a failing grade if: 1) it has no thesis; 2) its thesis results from a misreading of the topic; 3) it contains serious misinterpretations or misrepresentations of textual fact; 4) it has significant and persistent errors in grammar and punctuation.

A test will receive an F if it indicates a deep misunderstanding of course materials; if it contains misstatements of textual fact that indicate an unfamiliarity with course materials; and/or if answers to essay questions seem excessively vague.

The following circumstances/performances also merit F:

failing to hand in an assignment;  
handing in an assignment one week past the due date without having arranged in advance for an extension;  
failure to take an examination;  
missing 20% or more of class meetings (F for attendance/participation);  
failure to participate in assigned in-class work (i.e., group discussions and/or presentations);  
plagiarism.