

SUBJECT: Spring 2005: Grading the ENGH 0990 Shared Assignment

DATE: 6 May 2005

The purpose of this memo or research report is to provide the results of our holistic grading of the shared assignment – the multiple-source papers – for ENGH 0990 classes. The holistic grading of the shared assignment, moreover, has this purpose: To suggest to our students, ourselves, and accreditors that we have shared standards for grading a multiple-source paper in ENGH 0990.

Background & Leaving Four Problem Areas Behind

Previously, we holistically graded ENGH 0990, multiple-source papers during the spring and fall semesters of 2004. Regarding the spring of 2004, five problematic areas were identified:

1. Assigning point values, not grades, to the multiple-source papers.
2. Having single papers written by a group of students, not by individual writers.
3. Missing grade sheets for some sections.
4. Having an English teacher assign two grades, not one, to a paper that made determining “splits” impossible.
5. Having only one teacher, not two teachers, grade the “shared” assignment.

The first and second problem areas did not exist last fall or this spring. Although the fourth and fifth problem areas existed last fall (one section per problem area), this spring semester both problem areas did not exist. Overall, in other words, we have improved our holistic grading of the multiple-source papers with each consecutive semester.

To conclude here, 16 of 17 sections this spring provided useable data for analysis. One ENGH 0990 section missed participating in the holistic grading of the multiple-source papers.

Fall 2004 and Spring 2005: Analysis of “Splits” Regarding the Shared Assignment (ENGH 0990)

In the fall of 2004, two ENGH 0990 teachers “split” on their grades for 45 of the 271 multiple-source papers. A split is defined as two grades for one paper being at least a full letter grade apart. For example, an A grade and a B grade for one paper represent the minimum threshold for a split. In the fall of 2004, furthermore, two ENGH 0990 teachers agreed on the grades for 83% of the papers, a little bit above the minimum threshold of 80% for inter-rater reliability.

To compare, in the spring of 2004, two ENGH 0990 teachers split on grades for 37 of 237 multiple-source papers, so teachers agreed on 84.5% of the papers’ grades, a slight improvement in comparison to the fall of 2004. This improvement may be attributed to teachers being more experienced at holistic grading and to teachers being “calibrated” during a faculty meeting during the fall semester of 2004. Calibrating raters is a way to say having participated in a “norming” session.

Regarding the spring of 2005, 6 of the 16 ENGH 0990 sections fell below the minimum for inter-rater reliability (see Table 1.).

Recommendation: Perhaps, the next time – or from existing papers – we can create a set of “anchor” A, B, C, and D multiple-source papers. These papers – when two teachers assign the same mid-range grade to a paper, for example one paper receiving a B grade from both teachers – may be used during faculty meetings for the purpose of calibrating teachers during a norming session. Or, at the very least, these anchor papers may be provided to teachers in the future to help teachers prior to their holistically grading the multiple-source papers and to help resolve any splits after the papers have been holistically graded.

Table 1. Inter-Rater Reliability for the Spring of 2005

Sections At or Above the Minimum 80% Threshold		Sections Below the Minimum 80% Threshold	
ENGH 0990-011	100%	ENGH 0990-004	77%
ENGH 0990-005	100%	ENGH 0990-006	75%
ENGH 0990-X01	100%	ENGH 0990-012	75%
ENGH 0990-003	100%	ENGH 0990-602	73%
ENGH 0990-601	93%	ENGH 0990-013	64%
ENGH 0990-001	90%	ENGH 0990-010	52%
ENGH 0990-X02	87%		
ENGH 0990-009	86%		
ENGH 0990-007	85%		
ENGH 0990-002	80%		

Spring of 2005: The Nature of the Splits

Of the 37 splits, 28 (75%) were resolved so that the “final” or negotiated grade was in-between the two previously assigned grades. This finding is positive in two ways:

- (1) As suggestive that teachers truly negotiate the final grade.
- (2) As representative of teachers reinforcing shared standards.

Recommendation: Of the 37 splits, 30 (81%) involved B+, B, and B- grades. This finding may suggest that we use range-finder papers for the B+ and B- papers if we again calibrate ourselves during a faculty meeting. Adding to the strength of this concern of awarding “B” grades is the realization that 54% of all of the ENGH 0990 multiple-source papers receive a B+, B, or B- grade.

Spring of 2005: Stratification of the Final Grades for the Multiple-Source Papers

The holistic grading of the ENGH 0990 multiple-source papers creates final grades for each paper. Grade categories stratify these final grades. So each of the following percentages represents how many papers received that grade. To explain by example, 5% of the holistically graded multiple-source papers received an A grade.

A	5%	B+	16.5%	C+	11%	D+	2%
A-	8.5%	B	19%	C	12%	D	1%
		B-	18.5%	C-	6%	D-	.5%

Said another way, we may add these percentages – B+ 16.5%, B 19%, and B- 18.5% – to realize that 54% of the papers received B+, B, or B- grades. This stratification of grades may be the basis for further discussion among faculty members and may represent that, as a group, faculty members do not hastily award an A or A- to the multiple-source paper.