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00:00:00,140 --> 00:00:08,630

[Lisa:] So welcome everyone, to our session on Alternative Grading and Assessment Practices as an Aspect of UDL.

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00:00:09,410 --> 00:00:12,590

I'm Lisa del Torto, and Veronica Burns,

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00:00:12,590 --> 00:00:17,969

Meaghan Fritz, Anna Luce and I will be co-facilitating the session today.

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00:00:18,795 --> 00:00:21,045

So before I move on to our next slide,

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00:00:21,045 --> 00:00:29,355

I hope you all have had a chance while we've been waiting to get started to look at the piled higher and deeper comic that's up on the screen.

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00:00:29,775 --> 00:00:41,865

I know that so many of us can relate to this experience of, trying to grade as fairly as possible, and just getting stuck. And that part at the end,

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00:00:42,165 --> 00:00:46,695

I love. It says, "Grading: if only we cared a little less."

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00:00:46,995 --> 00:00:53,175

But we don't, right? We care a lot, actually. And that's why we're here to talk about some alternatives today.

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00:00:53,175 --> 00:00:59,325

So. Let me just quickly go over our plan, our agenda for this session.

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00:00:59,835 --> 00:01:04,665

So, we're going to start with some quick intros.

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00:01:04,935 --> 00:01:11,415

Then we'll talk a little bit about the rationale for reconsidering assessments and grading.

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00:01:11,895 --> 00:01:16,065

We'll then give an overview of a variety of approaches to grading.

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00:01:16,965 --> 00:01:24,945

And, and what we mean in #4 by case studies, is, Megan and Veronica are going to go into a bit more detail,

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00:01:25,185 --> 00:01:30,345

about a couple of aspects of the approaches that they've developed and implemented in their own classes.

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00:01:30,675 --> 00:01:36,825

And then if we have time, we'll take a few minutes for you all to reflect on your own practices.

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00:01:37,095 --> 00:01:40,665

And if not, we'll send you home with some questions that you can consider.

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00:01:41,535 --> 00:01:48,015

And we'll wrap up by showing you some resources that we're providing to you on the UDL canvas site.

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00:01:48,375 --> 00:01:55,875

So, we'll be doing a lot of talking. This session might have a little less engagement than some of the others that you've been to,

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00:01:56,115 --> 00:01:58,545

but we should have some time for engagement at the end,

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00:01:58,545 --> 00:02:06,015

and you can always feel free to throw stuff in the chat if questions come up as as we're talking, and we'll figure out ways to address those.

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00:02:06,712 --> 00:02:09,472

So as I said, Lisa del Torto, she/her pronouns.

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00:02:09,472 --> 00:02:18,322

I've been teaching and grading in a few different kinds of courses, but mostly undergraduate writing courses, for about 19 years.

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00:02:18,322 --> 00:02:23,422

And I've been teaching in the Cook Family Writing Program at Northwestern for almost 13 years.

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00:02:24,472 --> 00:02:33,232

And I'll give three words to, describe how I feel about grading. So: uneasy, excited, and hopeful.

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00:02:33,232 --> 00:02:37,672

I have pretty much always felt uneasy about grading,

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00:02:38,002 --> 00:02:45,772

and now that I have developed and started to implement some new approaches, I feel also excited and hopeful about it.

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00:02:46,612 --> 00:02:50,512

So, Veronica, do you want to go next, and then, Meaghan and Anna?

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00:02:51,412 --> 00:02:55,212

[Veronica:] Sure. My name is Veronica; I use she/her pronouns.

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00:02:55,212 --> 00:02:59,602

And I'm an Assistant Professor of Instruction in Chemistry.

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00:03:00,202 --> 00:03:05,212

So that means that I teach a lot of General Chemistry, big lab classes as well.

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00:03:06,382 --> 00:03:13,102

And so a lot of the grading that I do is done by TAs, not myself.

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00:03:13,642 --> 00:03:19,191

So that creates its own challenges. And then, there are also lab courses.

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00:03:19,192 --> 00:03:27,472

So that's, that's a different sort of type of grading—it's writing, but it's kind of different writing, and a more technical side.

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00:03:29,032 --> 00:03:35,602

So, how do I feel about grading? I would say my first word that comes to mind is "anxious."

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00:03:36,802 --> 00:03:41,601

It always makes me anxious, but I love—I'm going to steal Lisa's word, "hopeful,"

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00:03:41,602 --> 00:03:46,882

because, I feel like we're making—we're starting to make changes in the chemistry

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00:03:46,882 --> 00:03:53,122

department, that, give me hope about how we approach grading as, as a department.

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00:03:54,872 --> 00:03:58,412

So I think we're going to Meaghan next? [Meaghan:] Yeah. Thanks so much.

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00:03:58,442 --> 00:04:05,222

Hi, everybody. My name's Megan Fritz. I use she/her pronouns. And I'm an Assistant Professor of Instruction in the Cook Family Writing Program.

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00:04:05,882 --> 00:04:12,781

I teach probably the opposite side of Veronica's classes, so I'm also teaching a lot of intro-level classes, a lot of first-year writing seminars,

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00:04:12,782 --> 00:04:17,132

but my seminars are really small: 15 or 16 students per.

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00:04:17,462 --> 00:04:21,152

I also teach English 282, which is this writing and speaking in business class.

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00:04:21,152 --> 00:04:28,112

It's the writing requirement for the BIP minor. So I teach a lot of, required writing classes, a lot of younger students at Northwestern.

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00:04:28,352 --> 00:04:31,232

I also help assist in directing the Main Library Writing Place,

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00:04:31,232 --> 00:04:38,432

which is Northwestern's peer-to-peer writing center, as another part of my job. Two or three words to express how

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00:04:38,582 --> 00:04:42,901

I feel about grading. I would say before I started using alternative assessment,

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00:04:42,902 --> 00:04:49,441

I felt maybe like "ineffective," or "disheartening" is how I would associate my words with grades.

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00:04:49,442 --> 00:04:53,341

But now, as I've been doing more work and thinking differently about grades,

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00:04:53,342 --> 00:04:56,422

I find them more "creative" and "collaborative," especially among students.

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00:04:57,002 --> 00:04:59,696

So thank you. Anna, you wanna hop in? [Anna:] Yes, thank you.

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00:05:01,925 --> 00:05:06,275

So my name is Anna Luce. I'm a Learning Engineer in Teaching and Learning Technologies.

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00:05:06,275 --> 00:05:11,164

And, I have a lot of background in online teaching in higher ed, and in my role here,

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00:05:11,165 --> 00:05:20,375

I work with faculty on a variety of topics that relate to educational technology, including grading. And my feelings about grading...

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00:05:20,885 --> 00:05:26,044

I would say over the last couple of years, I've felt really "betrayed" by grades, because when I was young I felt really

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00:05:26,045 --> 00:05:30,455

good about grades, and it made me—gave me a big sense of pride that I got really good grades, when I was younger.

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00:05:30,935 --> 00:05:34,535

But now I'm sort of recognizing maybe they didn't mean exactly what I thought they meant.

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00:05:35,585 --> 00:05:41,374

So I feel "betrayed." But I also feel sort of "strategic," because, in some of the research that I've done, and the folks that I've talked to,

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00:05:41,375 --> 00:05:47,405

I've realized that, there are some things we can do with assessment and grading that can have the outcomes that we're hoping for.

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00:05:48,305 --> 00:05:51,214

And yeah, like everybody else sort of on the team today,

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00:05:51,215 --> 00:05:59,195

I feel really hopeful about grading, because there are a lot of changes that we can make, to improve our students' experiences around grading.

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00:05:59,885 --> 00:06:06,845

And I use she/her pronouns. Okay. Sorry, out of order. So, the first thing we wanted to talk about today is: why?

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00:06:06,845 --> 00:06:08,975

Why are we talking about grading differently?

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00:06:09,935 --> 00:06:18,845

And in my opinion, I think rethinking grading and assessment, especially in the light of UDL principles and approaches,

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00:06:19,175 --> 00:06:25,324

is a recognition that our current and traditional systems of grading are not teaching

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00:06:25,325 --> 00:06:31,055

students—or reaching students—equitably, or reaching all students effectively.

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00:06:31,265 --> 00:06:36,484

So the current systems we have were, created hundreds of years ago in a very different educational

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00:06:36,485 --> 00:06:43,025

system, whose primary goal might have been to, turn out folks that were really good factory workers.

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00:06:43,325 --> 00:06:50,285

And so, we're thinking about things differently because we are, hoping to do better than things were in the past.

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00:06:51,005 --> 00:06:53,765

And as you'll see through the initial part of this session today,

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00:06:54,035 --> 00:07:01,325

research has demonstrated that our current grading systems are at first, inaccurate, and second, not so great for learning.

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00:07:08,645 --> 00:07:15,515

Well, to determine if something is accurate, you need to first decide what it is you want it to measure.

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00:07:16,565 --> 00:07:21,605

So why do we give students grades? Do we give them grades to measure what their, their progress—what they have learned?

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00:07:21,845 --> 00:07:24,995

Did they start here, and end up here? Are we grading that progress?

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00:07:26,345 --> 00:07:31,055

Are we, reflecting what they have accomplished? Have they achieved a certain objective?

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00:07:32,135 --> 00:07:36,275

Or maybe we're giving grades to motivate students, to reward them for hard work?

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00:07:38,195 --> 00:07:44,105

Unfortunately, what research has shown is that our current system does not do that effectively.

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00:07:44,645 --> 00:07:49,235

One book I really want to talk about quickly that sort of changed my thinking about grading,

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00:07:52,331 --> 00:07:58,871

And the first part of this book really approaches grading from a factual sort of mathematical approach.

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00:08:00,131 --> 00:08:08,141

And it says, if we're going to grade equitably, if we're going to give students an assessment of their learning or their progress,

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00:08:08,441 --> 00:08:16,661

that is not couched in our personal biases, they need to mathematically represent some things truthfully.

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00:08:17,381 --> 00:08:24,401

And so the book lays out in the beginning, some sort of irrefutable facts about the way we have been grading for many years,

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00:08:24,881 --> 00:08:30,041

and that is that, identical academic performance can yield different grades.

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00:08:31,031 --> 00:08:38,381

And what I mean by that is that students who perform identically on standardized assessments often get different grades in their

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00:08:38,381 --> 00:08:45,941

class, because their instructors are grading them based on participation or based on completing homework or things like that.

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00:08:47,351 --> 00:08:53,291

And the converse is true, that variable academic performance, or behavioral performance—

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00:08:53,651 --> 00:08:59,141

so, students who perform very differently on standardized tests, can yield identical grades.

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00:08:59,471 --> 00:09:05,171

So, identical performance can yield different grades, and variable performance can yield identical grades.

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00:09:06,191 --> 00:09:11,471

So how could that be an accurate system, if students who are behaving differently, are getting different—

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00:09:11,621 --> 00:09:16,691

are getting the same grades, and students who are performing identically are getting different grades?

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00:09:17,651 --> 00:09:25,061

There's a bullet point on here about omnibus grades. And in the book, there are many different calculations, about different grading scenarios.

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00:09:25,211 --> 00:09:30,161

But an omnibus grade is a grade you get for the whole quarter or the whole term,

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00:09:30,551 --> 00:09:42,221

that measures—gives you a grade based on your participation, and your homework, and your engagement in class, and different assignments.

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00:09:42,431 --> 00:09:49,661

And then it gives you one single letter. So it distills all of this information into one letter or one percentage.

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00:09:50,081 --> 00:09:56,281

And what that does is it sort of hides all of the perhaps valuable information from those different sections of the grade.

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00:09:56,291 --> 00:10:02,711

It says, you got to be in this class, but it doesn't tell you how you performed on those individual measurements.

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00:10:03,701 --> 00:10:08,261

Group projects are really great way to learn, but they're difficult to grade.

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00:10:10,181 --> 00:10:15,041

Working together helps students, help students progress and learn.

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00:10:15,371 --> 00:10:22,181

But, not every student is going to have an identical sort of performance at the end of a group project.

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00:10:22,751 --> 00:10:32,561

And finally, evaluation is subjective, so it's really difficult to give grades that is not based on your personal biases or your hidden biases.

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00:10:33,971 --> 00:10:39,221

So this is just an example of variable, variable performance and identical grades.

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00:10:39,491 --> 00:10:48,101

So one student gets full points for participation, and performs really poorly on the final exam,

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00:10:48,851 --> 00:10:56,561

while Student B does really well on the exams, but doesn't turn in their homework and participation, and they both end up with an 80 in the class.

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00:10:56,591 --> 00:10:58,811

So if you were just to look at those final grades,

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00:10:59,051 --> 00:11:03,911

you would think that these students had comparable performance, when in fact their performance was very different.

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00:11:10,200 --> 00:11:14,250

looking at today is the way that grades have been proven to be bad for learning.

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00:11:15,000 --> 00:11:18,420

And there—behavioral psychologists, motivational psychologists,

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00:11:18,420 --> 00:11:27,264

as well as scholars of education, find that grades can be actually, actually detrimental to student learning in several ways.

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00:11:27,442 --> 00:11:35,511

So grades have been shown to decrease intrinsic motivation for learning and replace it with the extrinsic motivation of getting a grade.

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00:11:35,512 --> 00:11:42,231

So in other words, students become motivated by earning high grades rather than investing in their own learning and growth

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00:11:42,232 --> 00:11:50,842

as students, as—and individuals. Grades reduce the quality of thinking in students, encourages them to think less deeply about course content.

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00:11:50,842 --> 00:11:57,501

So, for example, students might skim readings or just learn what they need to know for the test, but nothing more, right?

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00:11:57,502 --> 00:12:03,172

And so grades kind of discourage critical thinking and questioning, as students tend to focus only on what they

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00:12:03,202 --> 00:12:09,592

think they need to understand to show, for mastery of content, rather than critically engaging with the curriculum.

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00:12:10,882 --> 00:12:14,102

Grades decrease the quality of student learning by decr—

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00:12:14,512 --> 00:12:16,642

Sorry, discouraging students from taking risks.

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00:12:16,942 --> 00:12:24,352

So students have been shown to take the easiest path in order to minimize the chance of failure, get more A's, and keep their GPAs high.

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00:12:24,952 --> 00:12:31,311

This is one of my favorite things that I found in an ungraded system is that students have been

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00:12:31,312 --> 00:12:35,572

telling me in their reflections that they're more likely to take risks in my ungraded system,

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00:12:35,572 --> 00:12:39,592

which is kind of fun to see. We'll talk a little bit more about that. Grades,

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00:12:39,592 --> 00:12:43,251

despite our best efforts as instructors, are just inconsistent.

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00:12:43,252 --> 00:12:45,412

It's kind of built off of what Anna was saying, right,

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00:12:45,622 --> 00:12:51,802

especially when it comes to writing, and other disciplines that require assessment of more subjective skills and assignments.

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00:12:52,222 --> 00:12:58,822

It's also been proven that grades don't accurately communicate very much to students about what they have or haven't actually learned.

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00:12:58,822 --> 00:13:06,112

Students just see the ABCD and internalize that, but it doesn't really communicate to them what they have achieved or what they still need to learn.

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00:13:07,282 --> 00:13:12,382

Many of you, I'm sure, have probably felt this in some way, but grades can harm relationships—not just between teachers and students,

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00:13:12,382 --> 00:13:18,262

but among students themselves, as well. So grades can make teaching feel more adversarial rather than collaborative,

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00:13:18,472 --> 00:13:23,842

especially in high-achieving cultures where grades are really important to students, like at Northwestern.

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00:13:24,472 --> 00:13:28,282

I certainly felt this way before I started using alternative assessment frameworks in my classes.

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00:13:28,972 --> 00:13:32,392

But grades can also foster this unhealthy competition between peers, right?

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00:13:32,392 --> 00:13:36,502

Especially when students are graded on a curve, or comparatively in any way.

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00:13:37,042 --> 00:13:43,732

This can create stress and anxiety in the classroom, and harm students' sense of community and collegiality in their courses.

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00:13:45,022 --> 00:13:49,821

Grades encourage cheating. When students are worried about grades at all costs, cheating is going to happen.

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00:13:49,822 --> 00:13:52,222

And that's what scholar Susan Blum says.

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00:13:53,362 --> 00:13:57,741

And then again, I think most of us in this room—especially those of you who have participated in the UDL core sessions,

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00:13:57,742 --> 00:14:02,122

especially that first one that's talking all about the stress and anxiety that our students are under these days.

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00:14:02,512 --> 00:14:09,502

Grades stress students out, and they create a lot of unhealthy anxiety and pressure, around learning.

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00:14:09,592 --> 00:14:14,272

So there's all kinds of reasons why grades are not great for our students.

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00:14:14,814 --> 00:14:22,374

[Lisa:] So, in addition to the points that Anna and Meaghan made about the ways that grades fail our students,

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00:14:23,604 --> 00:14:31,014

scholars of writing and language and literacy, among others, argue that grades reinforce systems of oppression.

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00:14:31,417 --> 00:14:42,137

Grades-based assessment practices in courses that have a writing component have been shown to uphold systemic racism and white language supremacy.

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00:14:42,157 --> 00:14:47,377

Because, you know, in spite of instructors', very best intentions,

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00:14:48,217 --> 00:14:54,457

those evaluation systems tend to center the linguistic and cultural practices of white folks, and set

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00:14:54,457 --> 00:15:01,627

those socio-cultural and linguistic practices as a goal that every student should aspire to and reach.

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00:15:01,987 --> 00:15:11,407

And that places some students into a privileged position over others, and reinforces a loop of privilege and oppression.

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00:15:11,977 --> 00:15:16,107

The quote that you're seeing on the screen is one that I appreciate very much.

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00:15:16,117 --> 00:15:23,077

It's from April Baker-Bell's book, \_Linguistic Justice: Black Language, Literacy, Identity and Pedagogy\_.

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00:15:33,783 --> 00:15:41,143

regardless of their starting point, regardless of socio-cultural and linguistic background, to a single goal mark.

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00:15:41,143 --> 00:15:43,183

So what do we do instead, right?

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00:15:43,203 --> 00:15:44,848

That's the question now. I want to show you just a brief statement

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00:15:47,237 --> 00:15:53,207

on decolonizing the classroom, by, the National Council for Teachers of English.

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00:15:53,567 --> 00:16:00,437

And they recommend we design assessments that allow diverse students to demonstrate mastery in diverse ways.

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00:16:00,707 --> 00:16:06,197

So, as you all know, right, this aligns with UDL practices and philosophies.

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00:16:06,587 --> 00:16:13,637

So, if we take again as an example, the kinds of writing classes that Meghan and I teach,

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00:16:13,907 --> 00:16:22,427

quality is going to look different for every student, depending on their unique personal and academic backgrounds.

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00:16:22,847 --> 00:16:33,977

So, we design courses around learning outcomes and assessment practices that, emphasize students' engagement with the course, and with our assignments,

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00:16:33,977 --> 00:16:38,027

and also an individual student's growth, from,

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00:16:38,357 --> 00:16:41,897

for example, one draft to the next, one assignment to the next,

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00:16:41,897 --> 00:16:48,587

and over the course of a full quarter, rather than some absolute quality of a final product.

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00:16:49,637 --> 00:16:58,397

So, there's the "why." Now we're gonna move on to the "how," and Veronica's gonna start our discussion of some approaches.

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00:16:59,207 --> 00:17:05,837

[Veronica:] Yeah. So, grades, absolutely: problematic, inaccurate, for all those reasons that we just talked about.

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00:17:06,257 --> 00:17:14,677

But now we need to know: what do we do about it? We're still expected to enter a grade at the end of the quarter, for, for every student in our class.

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00:17:14,687 --> 00:17:23,627

So, we're gonna go through now, a couple of different examples, and, some definitions of different schools of thought with ungrading.

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00:17:25,547 --> 00:17:32,986

So they might seem like very different approaches that we're gonna outline now, but they—in, in some ways that they are,

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00:17:32,987 --> 00:17:38,787

but, there's a lot of room for overlap and some themes that run throughout.

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00:17:39,137 --> 00:17:42,977

And, I encourage you, as you're starting to think about your own course here,

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00:17:42,977 --> 00:17:48,436

to get creative, and think about how you could combine different ways, or take

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00:17:48,437 --> 00:17:52,607

a little from column A and a little from column B that fit for your classroom.

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00:17:53,237 --> 00:18:01,727

There are even people who do multiple grading schemes in a single class, so, having students elect to be graded

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00:18:01,727 --> 00:18:12,647

in, in one way or another. So the first definition here that we are looking at is: specifications and competency grading.

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00:18:13,817 --> 00:18:23,747

So, this is a model of ungrading that's gonna chart out the entire term, quarter, whatever, with clear and detailed expectations for students.

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00:18:24,077 --> 00:18:30,527

So it's kind of like saying, at the very beginning, "a student earning an A will have these specific qualities,

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00:18:30,527 --> 00:18:34,287

a student earning a B will have these specific qualities, etc."

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00:18:34,587 --> 00:18:40,906

So, making those goalposts super clear, and super specific, so that students kind of know what

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00:18:40,907 --> 00:18:49,757

they're aiming for, and, know ahead of time the standards that they'll be, compared to. Courses that use

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00:18:49,757 --> 00:18:58,337

specifications grading have built in ways to incorporate revisions, for, for assignments, or resubmissions,

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00:18:58,757 --> 00:19:04,697

so that students can, work to achieve those qualities that they want for their final grade.

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00:19:05,027 --> 00:19:16,247

So if there's those revision opportunities, they can work towards the skill sets that they, that they want, and really build off of their experience.

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00:19:18,117 --> 00:19:26,937

Specifications allow students also to often move along at their own pace, and whatever goal they hit at the end of the term,

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00:19:27,117 --> 00:19:34,937

it's very clear what their letter grade will be. So they can kind of build their own timeline, with their schedule, their progress.

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00:19:34,947 --> 00:19:45,746

They have a lot of control over, how they progress through the course. And they're also able then to move on to more advanced material as they wish.

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00:19:45,747 --> 00:19:50,907

So there's a little bit of flexibility and control given over to the student in that respect.

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00:19:51,327 --> 00:19:59,517

So this model really encourages a growth mindset, because students are kind of tracking their progress to a greater goal,

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00:19:59,907 --> 00:20:04,167

which is one of those expert-level skills that we want all of our students to achieve.

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00:20:05,097 --> 00:20:11,217

And it also reduces that implicit bias in grades overall, because we're comparing to those standards.

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00:20:14,659 --> 00:20:19,219

And, I really like the way that Jesse Stommel talks about ungrading.

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00:20:19,219 --> 00:20:27,529

He says: it's not just not grading; it's questioning the whole system of grades, as an ongoing process.

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00:20:27,889 --> 00:20:31,878

And, there are a lot of ways in which ungrading is implemented.

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00:20:31,879 --> 00:20:40,009

What, what we have up on the slide here are, some general principles that seem to be shared among folks who use ungrading.

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00:20:40,969 --> 00:20:49,579

So one of those, is that we, decenter grades, by keeping grades as far away from students for as long as possible.

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00:20:50,809 --> 00:20:58,729

So, you know, although we have to assign grades at the end of the quarter, maybe we don't put number or letter grades on individual assignments.

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00:20:59,629 --> 00:21:07,009

But we do engage students in discussions about grading and assessment, especially critical discussions.

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00:21:07,489 --> 00:21:16,339

For example, we might talk to them about the grading decision—the grading system that we're using, and how we justify that decision.

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00:21:17,089 --> 00:21:23,449

We might, you know, discuss how it's unfamiliar to them, and sort of help them to become more comfortable with it.

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00:21:25,129 --> 00:21:33,109

Now, at the same time as we're not putting grades on individual assignments, in many ungraded classes,

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00:21:33,379 --> 00:21:40,059

we are giving a lot of qualitative and formative feedback, throughout a course that—and this,

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00:21:40,189 --> 00:21:44,838

you know, should specifically be feedback that students can take action on. For example,

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00:21:44,839 --> 00:21:52,194

to revise an assignment, you know, between drafts, or to transfer learning from one assignment to the next.

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00:21:52,426 --> 00:22:01,396

And, many ungrading approaches I've seen also focus on providing for students multiple kinds and sources of feedback.

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00:22:02,326 --> 00:22:06,286

Again, taking, you know, my classes for an—for example,

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00:22:06,286 --> 00:22:12,316

in addition to getting feedback from me, from the instructor, students are also getting feedback from their peers.

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00:22:12,556 --> 00:22:16,936

They're also using self-reflection, to review their own work and growth.

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00:22:17,746 --> 00:22:25,356

And all of that might come in different forms, like written feedback combined with face-to-face conversations.

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00:22:26,549 --> 00:22:29,969

So there's this, this great book by Susan Blum.

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00:22:29,969 --> 00:22:37,109

I'm sure some of you have read or at least heard of this. One thing I really like about this book is that, it gives perspectives and

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00:22:37,109 --> 00:22:43,109

practices on ungrading from instructors in, in really a wide variety of fields.

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00:22:43,439 --> 00:22:49,229

So, there are faculty from, anthropology, from writing, philosophy, math, chemistry.

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00:22:49,531 --> 00:22:54,391

So we're also seeing a lot of folks grading on engagement and completion.

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00:22:54,961 --> 00:22:59,541

And, as with all of the approaches that we're mentioning, there's overlap here.

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00:22:59,551 --> 00:23:06,151

Right? So you'll—you might see this as, an aspect of ungrading, or contract grading.

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00:23:06,631 --> 00:23:14,171

And this approach, as you can probably imagine, focuses on students just engaging in tasks or assignments.

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00:23:14,611 --> 00:23:18,421

For example, they do a first draft, they engage in peer review,

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00:23:18,901 --> 00:23:24,360

they write some reflection and they do a final draft, and they get full credit for the paper. Again,

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00:23:24,361 --> 00:23:29,761

without focusing on holding everyone to the same standard for that final deliverable.

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00:23:30,901 --> 00:23:37,471

Often in this approach, there might be several ways to complete or engage in a task.

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00:23:37,981 --> 00:23:47,551

For example, a "complete" in participation might come for some students from talking, you know, in the large group discussion with the whole class.

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00:23:47,851 --> 00:23:57,930

For others, maybe it's contributing to a small group discussion, or posting responses to the discussion board on Canvas for yet others.

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00:23:57,931 --> 00:24:01,801

It's some combination of those tasks, that gets them the complete.

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00:24:03,275 --> 00:24:07,505

And next, I want to talk briefly about grading contracts.

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00:24:07,895 --> 00:24:12,395

Again there are, a lot of different kinds of contracts.

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00:24:13,235 --> 00:24:16,445

The way that we're using the term "grading contracts"

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00:24:16,715 --> 00:24:23,165

here, comes largely from the work of Peter Elbow, Asao Inoue, and Jane Danielewicz.

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00:24:24,237 --> 00:24:31,007

So most contracts will identify expectations about requirements for each potential grade—

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00:24:31,017 --> 00:24:35,477

almost like an assignment rubric, but for the broader course grade.

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00:24:36,597 --> 00:24:47,097

And those grading contracts are really one more way to bring students into the conversation about grades, by having them participate actively

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00:24:47,097 --> 00:24:56,217

in reading and acknowledging the details of the grading system, and also to indicate shared understandings of the assessment system.

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00:24:56,667 --> 00:25:00,567

Many contracts are based on engagement and completion.

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00:25:01,287 --> 00:25:06,087

So, for example, I've seen a lot of contracts that say something like: complete seven of these nine

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00:25:06,087 --> 00:25:12,267

quizzes, and you get an A, or you get full credit for the quiz portion, of our class. Or,

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00:25:12,267 --> 00:25:19,377

you know, do five Canvas discussion posts over the course of the quarter and you get full credit for asynchronous participation.

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00:25:20,307 --> 00:25:28,167

And then there's also many that will combine engagement with something like accuracy or standards-based assessment, as well.

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00:25:28,497 --> 00:25:34,107

So, Meaghan now is gonna talk about a couple more definitions.

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00:25:34,506 --> 00:25:40,055

[Meaghan:] Yeah. Thanks so much. So, independent learning plans are another tool that instructors might use to

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00:25:40,056 --> 00:25:45,366

increase equity and student agency in their learning. And, individual learning plans,

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00:25:45,366 --> 00:25:52,086

individual development plans—they have different acronyms. These are basically self-reflective documents that are designed to help students consider

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00:25:52,296 --> 00:25:59,015

how goals for a particular course or program of study, fit into their larger educational,

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00:25:59,016 --> 00:26:03,236

professional, personal, or extracurricular goals. So ILPs are kind—

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00:26:03,426 --> 00:26:08,886

That's what I call them: ILPs. Independent learning plans are increasingly used in business contexts, as a way for

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00:26:08,886 --> 00:26:13,536

professionals to articulate the trajectory of their career goals, at their different companies.

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00:26:14,166 --> 00:26:19,176

I've seen them used in—for incoming PhD and med school students, to kind of articulate

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00:26:19,176 --> 00:26:23,466

their larger career and personal life goals, for entering these big programs of study.

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00:26:24,396 --> 00:26:30,276

Individual education plans also have a long history that exists in primary and secondary education contexts,

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00:26:30,276 --> 00:26:36,005

especially in relation to special ed. But in both kind of professional and academic terms,

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00:26:36,006 --> 00:26:43,866

the ILP is a document that exists in collaboration with an instructor or mentor, and is revised throughout the term or course of study.

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00:26:43,986 --> 00:26:49,895

And this is something that I use in my classes, and that I'm going to talk about, in just a few seconds, in more detail. So we can go ahead

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00:26:49,896 --> 00:26:57,066

and flip onto the next big component of many alternative assessment plans in class.

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00:26:57,066 --> 00:27:03,006

And this, these kind of hinge on a combination of self-assessment and self-reflection.

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00:27:03,246 --> 00:27:10,026

And both of these tools, again, are really helpful in increasing equity and student agency in the classroom.

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00:27:10,656 --> 00:27:13,356

So they're slightly different, but of course completely related.

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00:27:13,356 --> 00:27:20,106

So, self-assessment is this reflective process, whereby students are evaluating their own writing or learning

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00:27:20,106 --> 00:27:23,946

in a course. So this method shares instructional power, right,

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00:27:23,946 --> 00:27:28,446

as it assumes that students are the experts of their own learning and can explain

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00:27:28,446 --> 00:27:32,286

and describe what they've learned in more personal ways than their professor could,

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00:27:32,496 --> 00:27:35,526

if we were just grading for them, and assessing for them.

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00:27:36,546 --> 00:27:41,675

And then self-reflection is the pedagogical tool, in which students reflect on both

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00:27:41,676 --> 00:27:46,176

the processes and products of their learning, and about themselves as learners.

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00:27:46,686 --> 00:27:51,515

For me, I kind of use them in tandem, right? So students self-assess their work, but as they're doing so,

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00:27:51,516 --> 00:27:56,856

they write a self-reflection on what they've learned, as they are assessing the final product that they're, that they're

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00:27:56,856 --> 00:28:03,696

submitting. And reflection's been proven to help students learn more deeply, both about the concepts of the course,

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00:28:03,696 --> 00:28:08,886

but about, about themselves as learners, and how they learn, and what works for them as they're learning, and

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00:28:08,886 --> 00:28:11,945

what doesn't—which is really kind of valuable information, especially for me.

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00:28:11,946 --> 00:28:19,145

I teach a lot of, first-year students. I'm constantly trying to get them to pay attention to how they're learning, and what makes sense for them as

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00:28:19,146 --> 00:28:24,966

they're learning, so that they can take those, skills, and those understandings with them into courses down the line.

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00:28:26,406 --> 00:28:29,556

Okay. I think we're going to switch now into some case studies.

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00:28:30,246 --> 00:28:36,036

So, this is–I hope this will be kind of fun. So, as Veronica kinda of mentioned in her introduction,

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00:28:36,276 --> 00:28:41,645

there's a lot of different ways that instructors can implement alternative assessment into their classes.

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00:28:41,646 --> 00:28:45,996

And you can do it in bits and parts and column A, column B, a little bit of everything.

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00:28:45,996 --> 00:28:52,086

And I think Veronica and I both use pretty different kind of approaches, so it'll be fun for us to kind of compare a little bit.

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00:28:52,356 --> 00:28:54,664

I'll start, and then, and then hop over to Veronica.

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00:28:57,333 --> 00:29:03,993

So, my students, assess their work throughout the quarter, using a combination of an individual learning plan,

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00:29:04,113 --> 00:29:09,183

and then these weekly self-reflection letters that they write to me at the end of each week, that I call "Sunday summaries."

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00:29:09,603 --> 00:29:10,744

So at the beginning of the quarter,

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00:29:17,783 --> 00:29:21,533

if they want to—the course learning objectives that I've created for the course.

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00:29:21,803 --> 00:29:27,143

So it invites students to reflect on their critical reading, writing, thinking, and research skills,

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00:29:27,143 --> 00:29:31,073

among other course goals, in terms of their perceived strengths and weaknesses.

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00:29:31,073 --> 00:29:37,612

And this helps them to think about where they are now academically and where they are hoping to go academically,

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00:29:37,613 --> 00:29:43,283

both through the course of my class, but also it invites them to think about their longer trajectory at Northwestern.

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00:29:43,849 --> 00:29:48,829

And I ask them to create their own goals that will kind of articulate where they want to grow in these different areas.

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00:29:49,219 --> 00:29:52,549

And my ILP also asks students to think critically about letter grades.

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00:29:52,729 --> 00:30:00,679

So students invent their own individual grading scales and criteria to rate their progress toward their learning goals, according to their own values.

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00:30:01,339 --> 00:30:04,639

At the end of the ILP document, this is a really fun exercise.

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00:30:04,639 --> 00:30:12,649

I really try to encourage students to be creative with it, and to challenge, and really dig deep to figure out what does an A mean to them, that,

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00:30:12,649 --> 00:30:15,598

you know, they've been given A's or whatever their entire lives.

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00:30:15,599 --> 00:30:20,479

This is their chance to define what it is for themselves, which is kind of a fun exercise.

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00:30:20,479 --> 00:30:25,639

So I have students do this big document in the first week of the quarter. At the midterm,

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00:30:25,849 --> 00:30:30,979

they revisit it, and I ask them to revisit three different sections of the ILP, whichever ones they want,

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00:30:31,189 --> 00:30:34,759

and kind of give an update, do a reflective paragraph on where they've grown.

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00:30:34,939 --> 00:30:38,359

Now that they understand how the class is working, where might they tweak some goals?

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00:30:38,359 --> 00:30:44,959

Where might they get more specific about their goals? So they revisit the ILP itself, at the midterm.

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00:30:45,349 --> 00:30:49,879

And, as they write the—you know, at the end of the quarter, students will write a final reflection,

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00:30:49,879 --> 00:30:52,819

which looks a lot like their ILP, but instead of setting their goals,

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00:30:52,819 --> 00:30:56,659

they're evaluating how they grew and progressed towards their goals in different areas,

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00:30:56,899 --> 00:31:02,689

and ultimately assign a grade to their efforts, that we talk about in a final conference.

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00:31:02,989 --> 00:31:08,329

And through it—that's kind of how the ILP works, broadly. But to keep them on track, because it's such a big document—

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00:31:08,329 --> 00:31:13,998

it's not a thing that I want them to just write at the first week at the quarter and then never look at again, because it requires a lot of work but

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00:31:13,999 --> 00:31:17,929

then a lot of reflecting, a lot of emotional, critical thinking, reflective work.

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00:31:18,349 --> 00:31:27,109

So I have them write these Sunday summaries, which are, these kind of weekly self-reflection letters, right?

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00:31:27,109 --> 00:31:36,229

So students, will—I'll, I'll give them some kind of prompt, where I ask them to reflect on some element of learning we've done throughout

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00:31:36,229 --> 00:31:44,028

the week, and tie it back to the goals in their ILP, and how they're learning or making progress, towards those goals.

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00:31:44,029 --> 00:31:52,849

So I use this combination of this big, big, big learning plan, plus these weekly self-reflections that help keep students in check.

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00:31:54,269 --> 00:31:57,569

Okay. I think that's enough for now. I don't wanna take up too much time. Veronica, you want to hop in?

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00:31:58,109 --> 00:32:08,098

[Veronica:] Sure. Yeah. So, from the other side of campus, I am working in general chemistry, as I said, in the lab courses.

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00:32:08,099 --> 00:32:18,269

So myself and my co-lab-director, Katie Gesmundo, developed a new way of of grading within these courses, and our constraints.

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00:32:18,449 --> 00:32:24,419

You know, going into this or that, we have between 150 and 450 students in a classroom.

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00:32:25,139 --> 00:32:35,008

And so TAs are the ones who evaluate the assignments. So it makes it a little bit tricky, to, have individual attention for students on that level.

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00:32:35,009 --> 00:32:40,199

So we selected more of a specifications model, with a few modifications.

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00:32:40,199 --> 00:32:47,129

So that's my cheeky little title there. But what we've done is, broken down our course,

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00:32:47,129 --> 00:32:55,198

our lab course, into very specific and transparent levels of mastery that we want students to, accomplish.

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00:32:55,199 --> 00:33:01,049

And we describe to them what that looks like for, an A, for a B, for a C.

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00:33:01,259 --> 00:33:06,779

So within all of those categories of the skills we want them to leave with,

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00:33:06,839 --> 00:33:14,819

they basically get a grade. And then every student has the opportunity to make progress towards the mastery.

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00:33:14,819 --> 00:33:18,478

It's completely independent of all the other students in the class.

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00:33:18,479 --> 00:33:21,118

So, it's not like we're comparing students to each other.

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00:33:21,119 --> 00:33:30,989

We're moving away from the, the curve, sort of model that you see often in STEM courses. And students are definitely not compared to each other.

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00:33:31,559 --> 00:33:40,229

So, the next slide is a picture of the document that we actually use and give to students.

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00:33:40,499 --> 00:33:47,699

And students are tracking their own grades throughout the course, so they're submitting these post lab assignments that are all writing,

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00:33:48,359 --> 00:33:56,668

but we break down the assignment into specific skills, that we want them to have.

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00:33:56,669 --> 00:34:00,749

So every assignment has a question that's about safety or techniques.

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00:34:01,169 --> 00:34:04,619

Every assignment has a question that's about experimental design, etc.,

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00:34:04,619 --> 00:34:11,519

etc. So we have these skills listed, and then students receive feedback about,

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00:34:11,909 --> 00:34:17,249

each of these skills and how they've, discussed the techniques of the week.

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00:34:18,479 --> 00:34:26,909

So they get a grade of "excellent," "good," or "not quite" for every week, and they can track their progress as they go.

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00:34:27,689 --> 00:34:31,289

And so maybe they see, "Ah, safety and techniques.

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00:34:31,289 --> 00:34:37,049

I've been seeing a lot of feedback that tells me I'm thinking about this in an excellent way.

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00:34:37,049 --> 00:34:45,538

Great. Maybe I can put my focus on the the data analysis next week."

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00:34:45,539 --> 00:34:53,698

So it tells them essentially, what skills they are mastering effectively, and what skills need more help.

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00:34:53,699 --> 00:35:02,189

So, if they're tracking their grade along, as the course goes on, at mid-quarter, they can come into office hours and say,

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00:35:02,489 --> 00:35:10,919

"You know, I'm really happy with my, my analysis of the techniques, but I'm not happy with how I've been analyzing data."

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00:35:11,189 --> 00:35:17,759

And so that starts a conversation that's a lot more productive than, "I got five points off here.

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00:35:17,909 --> 00:35:29,758

Why." Right? It's decentering, that, grade-grade-grade mindset, and turning it more into, getting them focused on the skills that we want to see

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00:35:29,759 --> 00:35:41,338

a Gen. Chem. student, leave our courses with. So, the end of the quarter, they wind up with a little bit of feedback for each skill, and they even see,

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00:35:41,339 --> 00:35:45,629

you know, maybe they, they improve their data analysis,

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00:35:45,629 --> 00:35:53,338

but they know that they're moving on to organic chemistry, needing to work on the presentation of results—whatever it is.

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00:35:53,339 --> 00:35:58,769

But they, they are getting feedback on the skills, and then they can carry that into their next courses.

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00:35:59,189 --> 00:36:09,329

So that's sort of the, the idea that we implemented, and it, it is doable with the, the use

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00:36:09,329 --> 00:36:18,239

of TAs, as, being the people who assess on a, "excellent," "good," or "not quite" sort of scale.

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00:36:20,356 --> 00:36:24,316

[Anna:] So sort of reflect on your own teaching practices, your grading practices.

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00:36:25,276 --> 00:36:33,016

And is there one change that you might think of implementing in the next year to make your system—your grading and assessment systems more inclusive?

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00:36:36,012 --> 00:36:42,612

we want to point you to some resources that we've posted on the, on our Canvas page.

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00:36:42,720 --> 00:36:47,460

So, some additional resources for grading and evaluating writing.

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00:36:48,270 --> 00:36:55,280

The module that Meaghan shared with you is there, and that has links to all kinds of additional resources in it.

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00:36:55,560 --> 00:36:59,820

So, that has links to, like examples of grading contracts.

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00:37:00,480 --> 00:37:08,370

It has a couple of big reading lists. It has examples of, like syllabus statements that you might use.

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00:37:08,670 --> 00:37:15,360

And then Veronica has added a grade tracker, as requested.

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00:37:15,360 --> 00:37:21,163

And then, there's some other resources as well, some readings that we mentioned here.

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00:37:21,307 --> 00:37:26,886

So I want to just wrap us up here by saying that this is really an ongoing project for all four of

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00:37:26,887 --> 00:37:34,117

us who were part of this session today, and also for the units and fields that we're situated in.

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00:37:35,017 --> 00:37:36,996

So, it's something that we're really excited about,