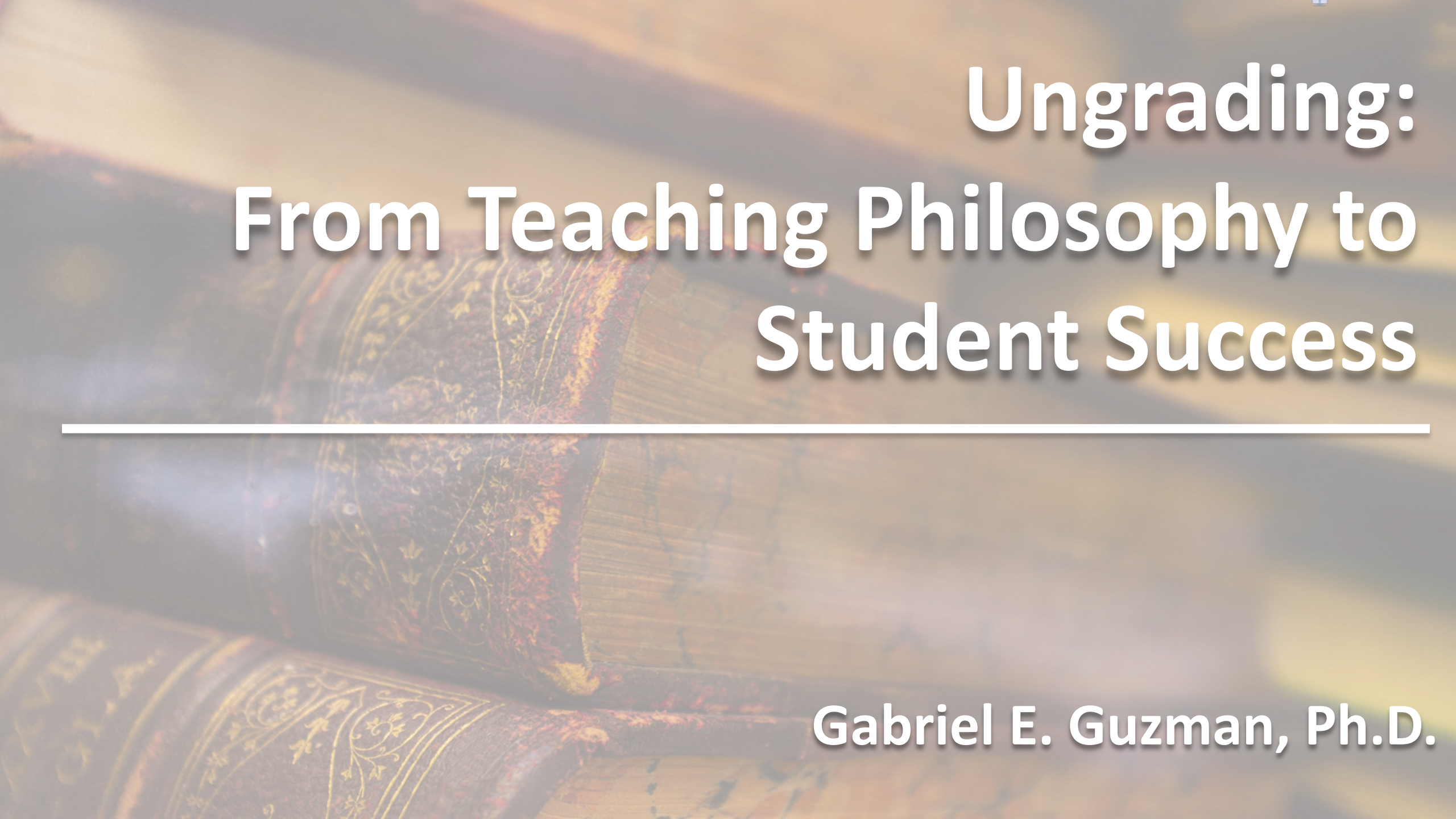


Ungrading: From Teaching Philosophy to Student Success

Gabriel E. Guzman, Ph.D.

My Teaching Philosophy In a Nutshell

CARE

(which already implies relevance)

"Students learn what they care about, from people they care about and who, they know, care about them."

-Barbara Harrell Carson

RECIPROCITY

Teaching and learning are components of a two-way process that cannot happen without the honest interaction between me and my students

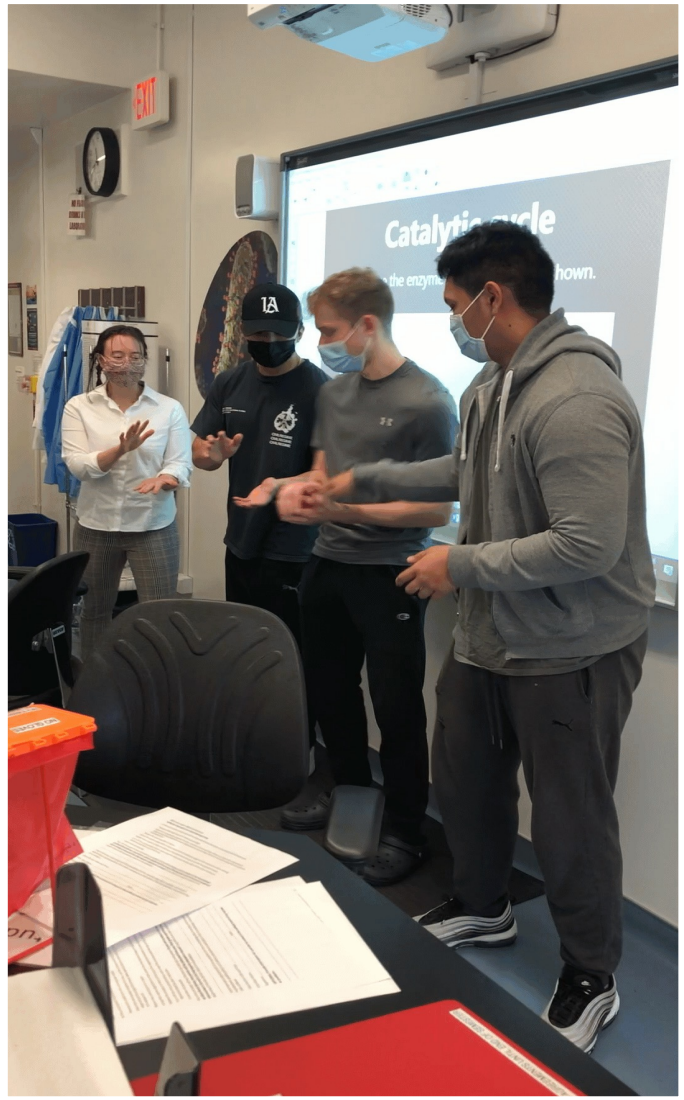
It’s time to show you my HIPs!

High Impact Practices that I have used to increase engagement, and success (ALL are WIPs!)

Active Learning

- Allows for different ways of expression
- Empowers students
- "Wires" neurons after "firing" them with information
- May lead to instructor panic as they need to relinquish control to students
- Allows students to communicate with other students in 'their own language'

Concept Enactment

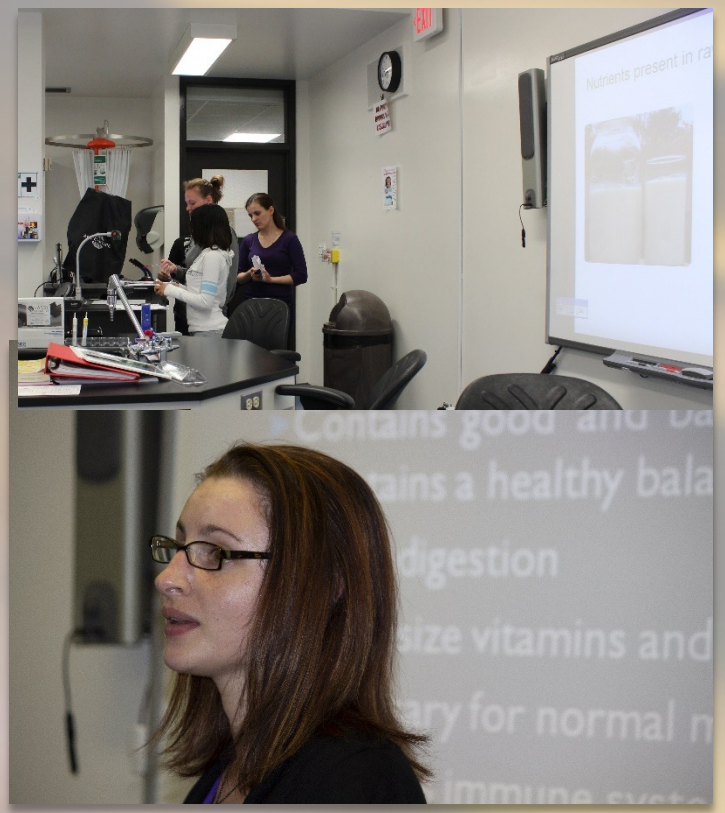


It’s time to show you my HIPs!

Active Learning

Sketching

Building

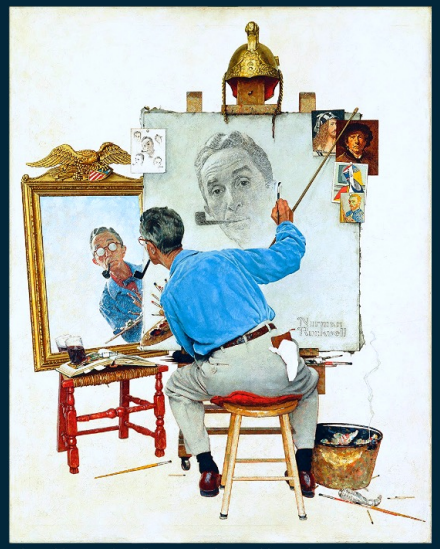


Classroom Debates

Metacognition

What is it really?

Two levels of activity



Adapted from Josh Walker. Center for Teaching and Learning. The University of Texas in Austin

Painting

Touch of the brush to the canvas

"Meta-Painting"

The painter's awareness and regulation of the painting

- Reflection about the painting
- Reflection about the knowledge of color contrast, etc. (technique)
- Discerning on when to apply different techniques
- Management of the process of painting
- Monitoring of progress of the painting, and constant evaluation of the work

Knowing vs Not Knowing

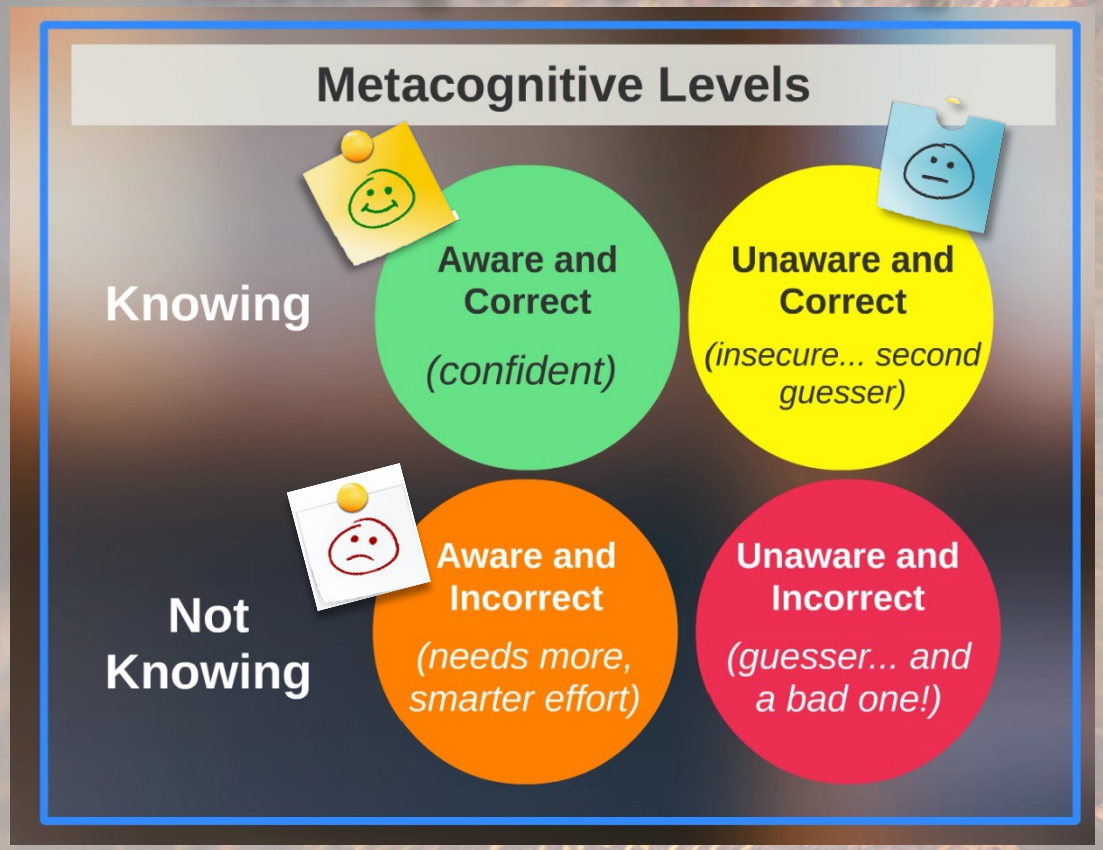
Metacognitive Levels

Knowing	**Aware and Correct** *(confident)*	**Unaware and Correct** *(insecure... second guesser)*
Not Knowing	**Aware and Incorrect** *(needs more, smarter effort)*	**Unaware and Incorrect** *(guesser... and a bad one!)*

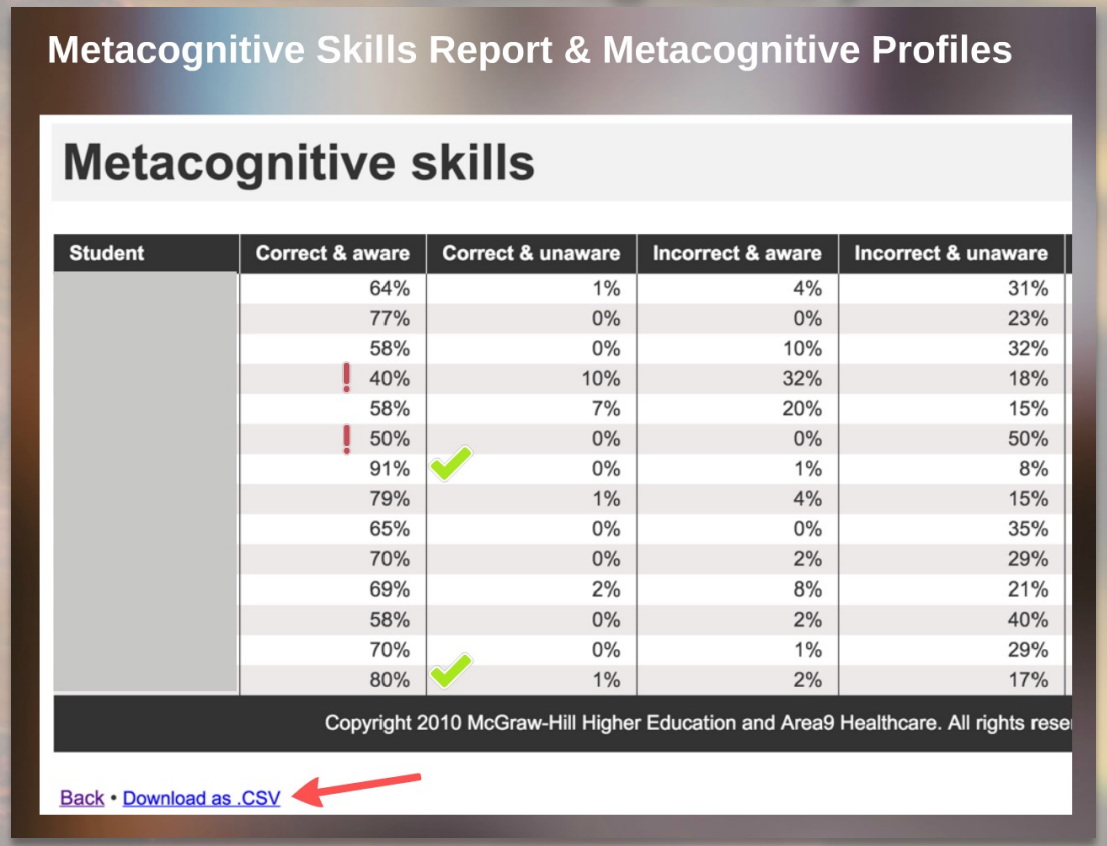
Metacognition

Using Adaptive Learning Technology to develop metacognition

Knowing vs Not Knowing



Individual metacognitive profile



Metacognitive Skills Report & Metacognitive Profiles

Metacognitive skills

Student	Correct & aware	Correct & unaware	Incorrect & aware	Incorrect & unaware
	64%	1%	4%	31%
	77%	0%	0%	23%
	58%	0%	10%	32%
!	40%	10%	32%	18%
	58%	7%	20%	15%
!	50%	0%	0%	50%
✓	91%	0%	1%	8%
	79%	1%	4%	15%
	65%	0%	0%	35%
	70%	0%	2%	29%
	69%	2%	8%	21%
	58%	0%	2%	40%
✓	70%	0%	1%	29%
	80%	1%	2%	17%

Back • Download as .CSV

Metacognition

Using Adaptive Learning Technology to develop metacognition

CASE STUDY
TRITON COLLEGE

Digital Solution Leads to Increase of Two Letter Grades on Exams

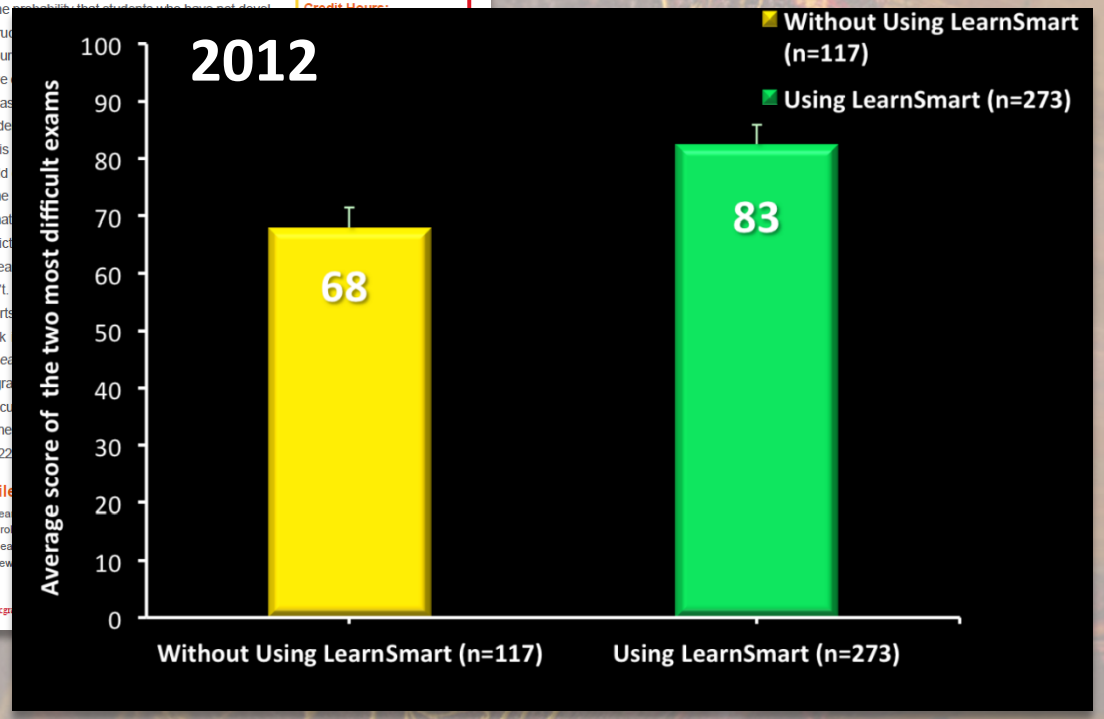
Professor Gabriel Guzman recognized that one of the main challenges for his students is to develop the intellectual behavior essential to learning. He incorporated *LearnSmart* into his Microbiology course to increase the
oped solid or well-stru
content. With his cour
taxonomy of cognitive
to develop the two bas
(knowledge) and unde
His hypothesis
Smart modules would
to learn and retain the
ter understand the mat
for exams. His predict
LearnSmart would ea
than those who didn't.
Guzman report
including two 8-week
students who used *Lea*
to achieve a letter gra
on the two most difficu
use *LearnSmart* earne
earned 83 points, a 22

Digital Product in Use:
Connect® Microbiology

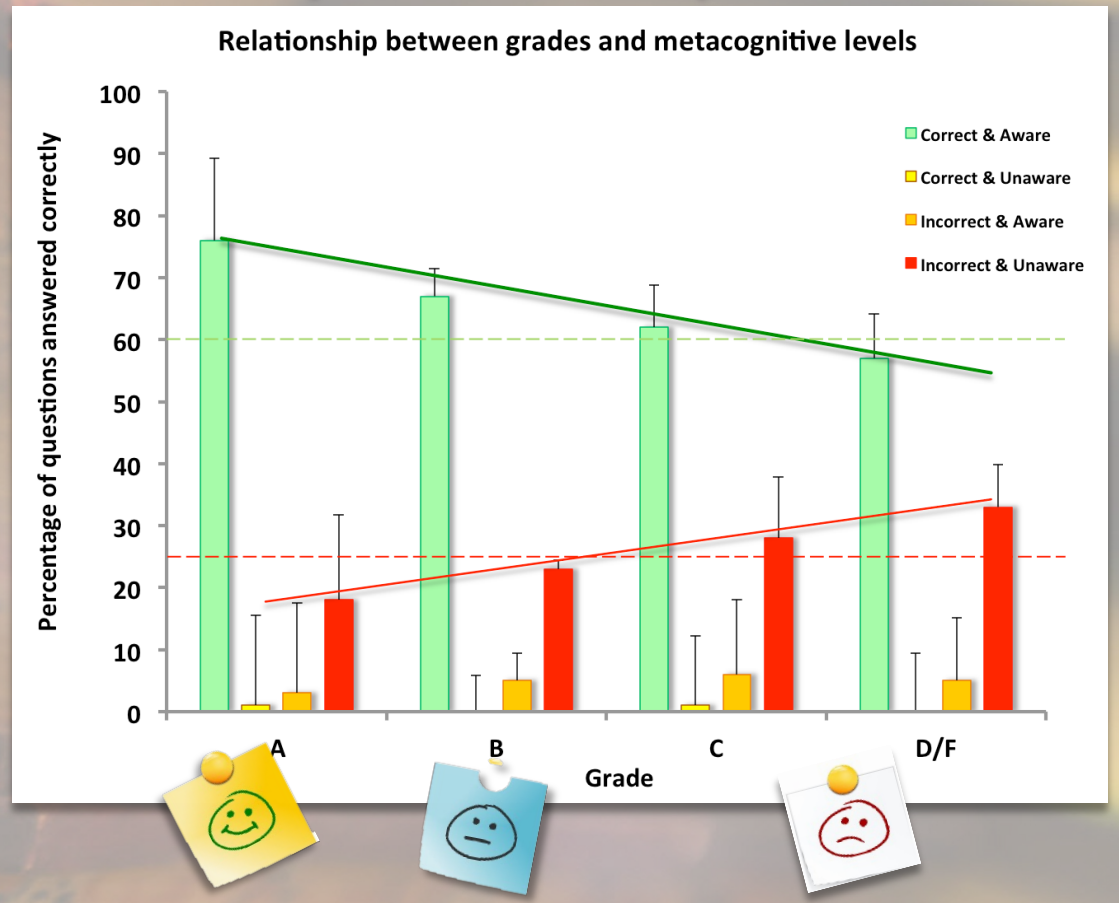
Course Name:
BIS 122 Introductory Microbiology, Lecture and lab

Course Type:
Traditional (face to face)

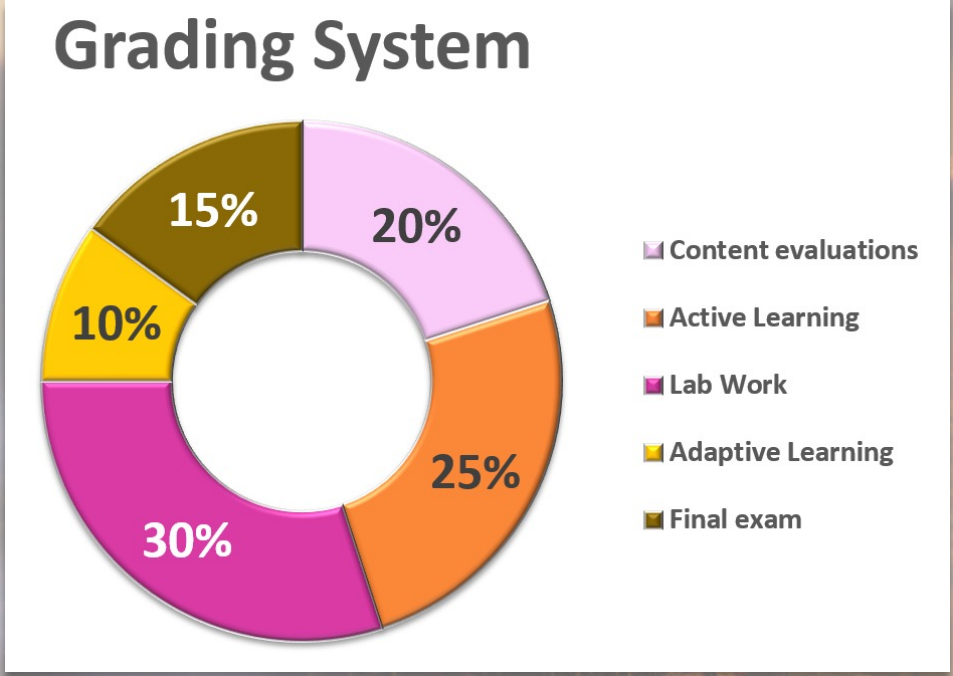
Institution Profile
Triton College is a two-yea
Over 17,000 students enro
tion courses are offered ea
current job skills, learn new



2012-2015 (>500 students)



Ungrading



Non-Laboratory Work		% of Grade
Content Evaluations (minimum of 3)	Graded as **Completed** (satisfactory, or unsatisfactory), or **Not Completed**	**20%**
Active Learning		**25%**
Pre-Classroom Quizzes (variable number but more than 3)		
Group Quizzes		
Discussion Board Participation (at least 2 scientific papers)		
Active Learning Activities, Discussion Board engagement		
Laboratory Work		**30%**
Skills demonstration (Lab Practicum)		
Virtual Labs, Laboratory Reports		
Laboratory Final Exam		
Adaptive Learning (SmartBook™ - 12 modules, 10 pts/ea.)		**10%**
Classroom Debates		**15%**
Total		**100%**

- More emphasis on active learning and lab work (the 'doing stuff' instead of summative assessment
- Easy to understand and follow throughout the semester
- Easy for students to calculate their grade at any point in time
- I still deal with the end of semester begging… for extra credit, more opportunities to submit late work, extension, etc.

Ungrading

The reality of grading

- Research shows that grading has three predictable effects: less interest in learning, a preference for easier tasks, and shallower thinking.
- The fixation on grades leads to cheating, corner cutting, gaming the system, and a misplaced focus on accumulating points rather than on learning.
- Grades encourage extrinsic motivation and when that is dominant, that leads to a loss of intrinsic motivation.
- Grading leaves no room for student agency to breathe in a system of incessant grading, and scoring.

Ungrading

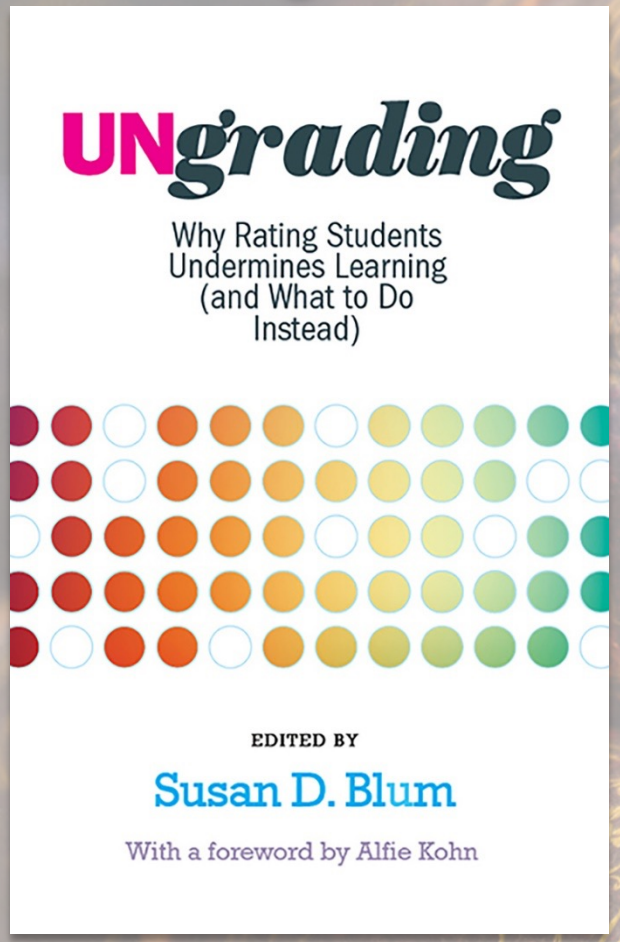
Why would I do ungrading?

- May remove the stress of focusing on grades
- May create a positive atmosphere without fear and threat and focused on learning
- May eliminate the 'end of semester begging'
- May shift the student mindset from fixed to growth
- May shift the mindset from grade seeking to knowledge/learning seeking
- May shift their motivation type from extrinsic to intrinsic
- May make students actually enjoy coming to class!

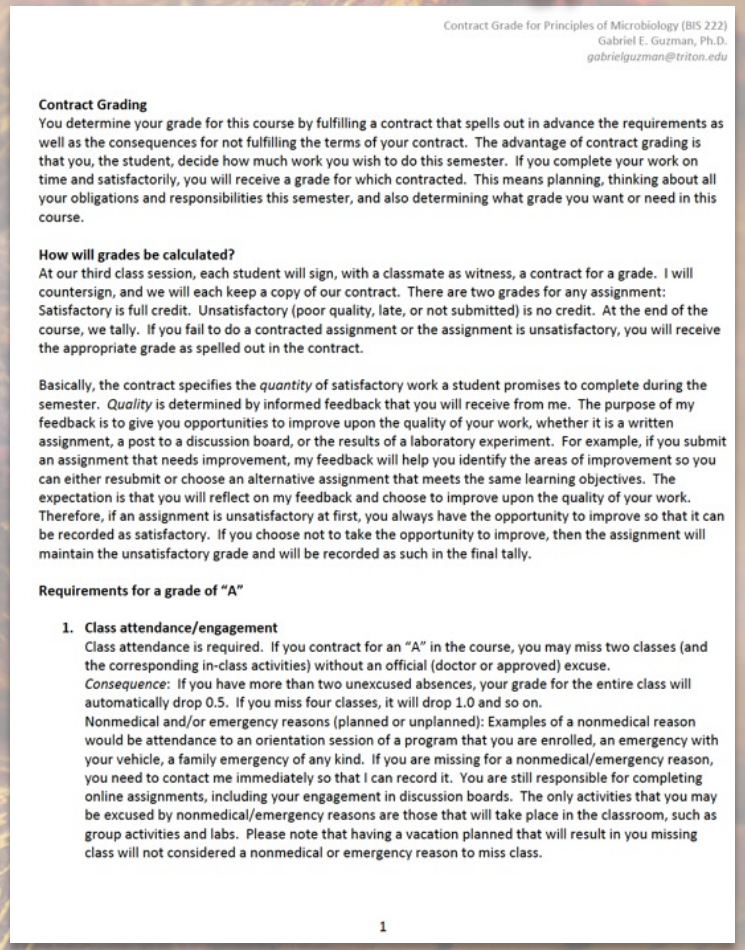
Ungrading

How to implement ungrading?

This is a good start



Select a strategy



Contract Grade for Principles of Microbiology (BIS 222)
Gabriel E. Guzman, Ph.D.
gabrielguzman@triton.edu

Contract Grading

You determine your grade for this course by fulfilling a contract that spells out in advance the requirements as well as the consequences for not fulfilling the terms of your contract. The advantage of contract grading is that you, the student, decide how much work you wish to do this semester. If you complete your work on time and satisfactorily, you will receive a grade for which contracted. This means planning, thinking about all your obligations and responsibilities this semester, and also determining what grade you want or need in this course.

How will grades be calculated?

At our third class session, each student will sign, with a classmate as witness, a contract for a grade. I will countersign, and we will each keep a copy of our contract. There are two grades for any assignment: Satisfactory is full credit. Unsatisfactory (poor quality, late, or not submitted) is no credit. At the end of the course, we tally. If you fail to do a contracted assignment or the assignment is unsatisfactory, you will receive the appropriate grade as spelled out in the contract.

Basically, the contract specifies the *quantity* of satisfactory work a student promises to complete during the semester. *Quality* is determined by informed feedback that you will receive from me. The purpose of my feedback is to give you opportunities to improve upon the quality of your work, whether it is a written assignment, a post to a discussion board, or the results of a laboratory experiment. For example, if you submit an assignment that needs improvement, my feedback will help you identify the areas of improvement so you can either resubmit or choose an alternative assignment that meets the same learning objectives. The expectation is that you will reflect on my feedback and choose to improve upon the quality of your work. Therefore, if an assignment is unsatisfactory at first, you always have the opportunity to improve so that it can be recorded as satisfactory. If you choose not to take the opportunity to improve, then the assignment will maintain the unsatisfactory grade and will be recorded as such in the final tally.

Requirements for a grade of "A"

1. **Class attendance/engagement**
   Class attendance is required. If you contract for an "A" in the course, you may miss two classes (and the corresponding in-class activities) without an official (doctor or approved) excuse.
   Consequence: If you have more than two unexcused absences, your grade for the entire class will automatically drop 0.5. If you miss four classes, it will drop 1.0 and so on.
   Nonmedical and/or emergency reasons (planned or unplanned): Examples of a nonmedical reason would be attendance to an orientation session of a program that you are enrolled, an emergency with your vehicle, a family emergency of any kind. If you are missing for a nonmedical/emergency reason, you need to contact me immediately so that I can record it. You are still responsible for completing online assignments, including your engagement in discussion boards. The only activities that you may be excused by nonmedical/emergency reasons are those that will take place in the classroom, such as group activities and labs. Please note that having a vacation planned that will result in you missing class will not considered a nonmedical or emergency reason to miss class.

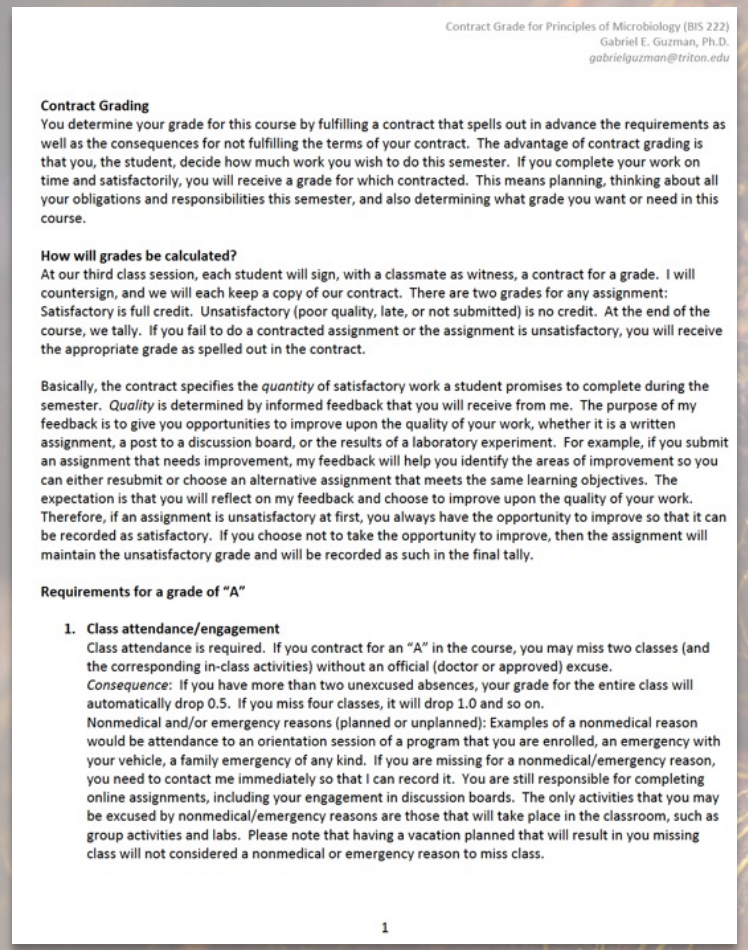
1

- **Involve your administration (i.e. ask for permission!)**
- **Don't jump without a parachute! (don't do it if you don't feel ready to try)**
- **Anticipate questions from students and administrators**
- **Have a plan-B if you need to switch your strategy mid-course**
- **Be willing to develop new activities and modify/eliminate your current ones**
- **Be willing to accept when some things just didn't work**

Ungrading

My experience in detail

Contract Grading



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1

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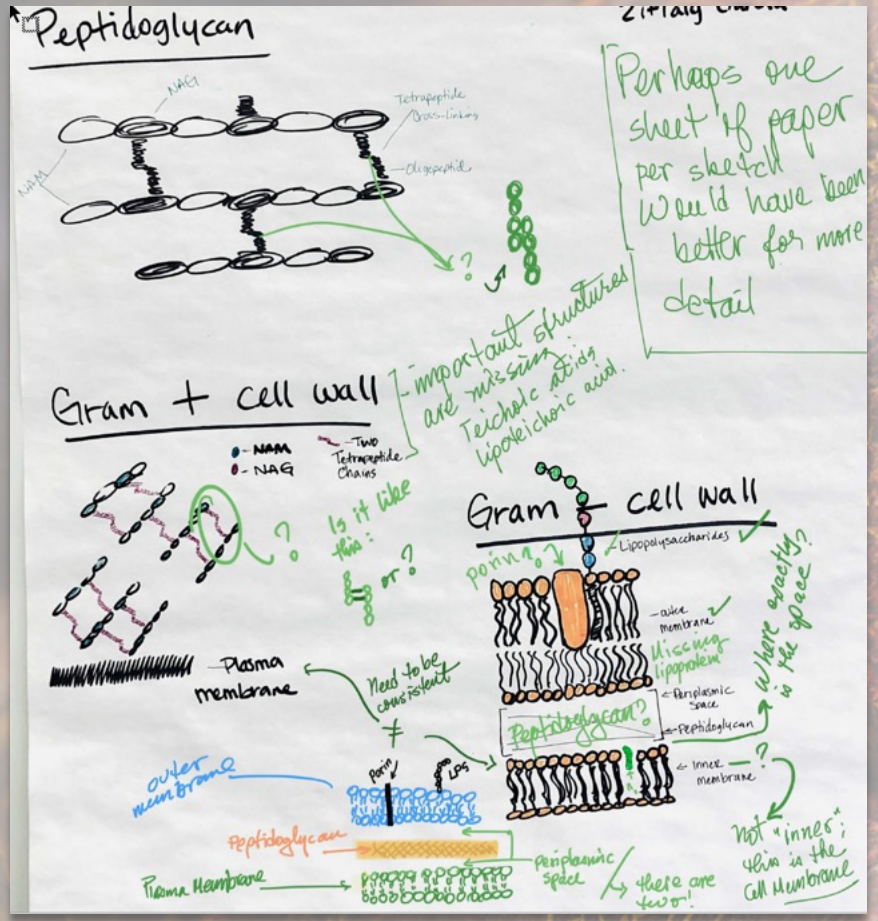
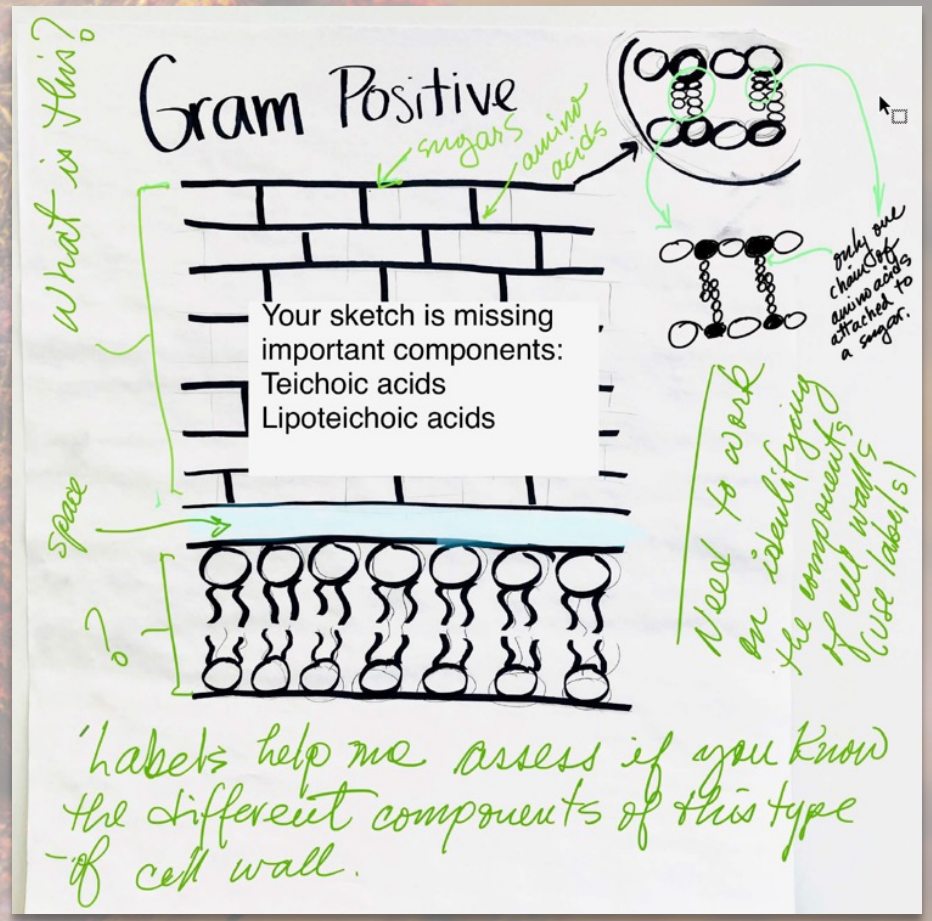
- If they complete their work on time and satisfactorily, they receive a grade for which they contracted. This means planning, thinking about all their obligations and responsibilities during the semester, and determining what grade they want or need in my course

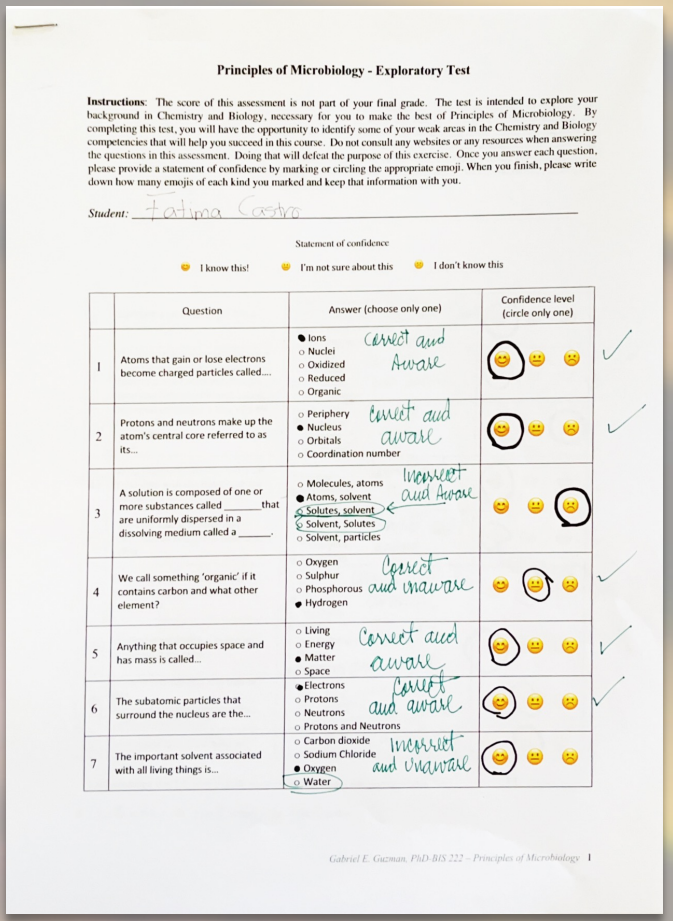
Ungrading

How do I grade without grading?

Detailed feedback; no letters, no numbers







Principles of Microbiology - Exploratory Test

Instructions: The score of this assessment is not part of your final grade. The test is intended to explore your background in Chemistry and Biology, necessary for you to make the best of Principles of Microbiology. By completing this test, you will have the opportunity to identify some of your weak areas in the Chemistry and Biology competencies that will help you succeed in this course. Do not consult any websites or any resources when answering the questions in this assessment. Doing that will defeat the purpose of this exercise. Once you answer each question, please provide a statement of confidence by marking or circling the appropriate emoji. When you finish, please write down how many emojis of each kind you marked and keep that information with you.

Student: Fatima Castro

Statement of confidence

I know this! I'm not sure about this I don't know this

	Question	Answer (choose only one)	Confidence level (circle only one)
1	Atoms that gain or lose electrons become charged particles called....	● Ions ○ Nuclei ○ Oxidized ○ Reduced ○ Organic — correct and Aware	
2	Protons and neutrons make up the atom's central core referred to as its...	○ Periphery ● Nucleus ○ Orbitals ○ Coordination number — correct and aware	
3	A solution is composed of one or more substances called _____ that are uniformly dispersed in a dissolving medium called a _____.	○ Molecules, atoms ● Atoms, solvent ○ Solutes, solvent ○ Solvent, Solutes ○ Solvent, particles — incorrect and Aware	
4	We call something 'organic' if it contains carbon and what other element?	○ Oxygen ○ Sulphur ○ Phosphorous ● Hydrogen — Correct and unaware	
5	Anything that occupies space and has mass is called...	○ Living ○ Energy ● Matter ○ Space — Correct and aware	
6	The subatomic particles that surround the nucleus are the...	● Electrons ○ Protons ○ Neutrons ○ Protons and Neutrons — Correct and aware	
7	The important solvent associated with all living things is...	○ Carbon dioxide ○ Sodium Chloride ● Oxygen ○ Water — incorrect and unaware	

Ungrading

Preliminary results (74% response)

Robust survey

88% agreed that knowing the grade they would get from the beginning helped them stay motivated throughout the course.

95% agreed that not having to worry about the grade of assignments helped them complete them without stress.

53% admitted that they still to complete some assignments at the last minute

Only one student (**4%**) felt that ungrading was not for them and prefer to work for a grade/score, even if the grade is low in the end. Four students (**18%**) remained neutral about whether ungrading was for them or not.

94% agreed that I tried to understand how they see things before I suggested how they should they work.

Ungrading

Preliminary results (74% response)

Robust survey

Interestingly, in a self-reflection survey, only **41%** of responders thought they deserved the grade they contracted for, even when **91%** met ALL the terms of their contract.

27% of students that contracted for an "A" said that they probably deserved a "B" based on their effort and commitment throughout the semester; **32%** felt they deserved a "C" grade. Note that All students that contracted for an "A" met the terms of their contract.

More than half the students show a combination of identified regulation/external regulation (extrinsic motivation) despite having experienced less stress and declaring that they felt more focused on the value of activities than their grade.

Ungrading

Some of the comments volunteered by students

- *"I liked having the ungraded course because it allows some of us to learn and ask questions in a different, yet efficient way. This way it won't affect our grades and we are still able to show what we learned."*

- *I am very grateful for the experience to be in an "ungraded" course. I was able to focus more and learn, rather than being stressed and worried about the percentage I was going to receive particularly on exams. Thank you for the second attempts as well. "*

- *I felt more free to focus my learning on aspects of the content that I either fun interesting or felt it would be likely to be applicable to my future life and plans, rather than memorizing details I will not be likely to need to chase a grade."*

Ungrading

Some of the lessons learned

- My ungraded course seemed to have removed the stress of thinking about grades in favor of a concerted effort to engage in the activities for the sake of learning

- At least in half of the students, their motivation is still between identified regulation (students understand the benefits of focusing on what they can learn from the activities) and external regulation (students complete the activities because they have to); both types of motivation signal extrinsic motivation as opposed to intrinsic motivation.

- I cannot change, in one semester, all the years that my students have been in the ranking, punitive and transactional education environment, but maybe the main lesson for them is that when the focus is on learning, the grade (whatever grade they may wish) will follow.


Thank you!