

The Meaning of Grades. These are my standards of judgment:

“A”: Excellent work demonstrating unusually thorough preparation, genuine comprehension and synthesis, insight and even originality. It is remarkably well-written and presented. The grade signifies not simply very good work but exceptionally fine work.

—in a word, MASTERY.

“B”: Very good, thorough work. The work demonstrates thorough preparation, a grasp of the subject matter and thorough command of the materials of the course. It may not show any special insight or originality, but it demonstrates clear understanding of the material with answers presented in a clear and logically correct style.

—in a word, COMPETENCE.

“C”: The work is acceptable for degree credit. It does not mean “poor” work because we should not award degrees for poor work. The work demonstrates an adequate, though not comprehensive, grasp of the subject matter. Significant information might be overlooked. The work may not display a full appreciation of the meaning or implication of a question. Answers might be too brief to allow sufficient development. An essay might read like a list of facts rather than a well-developed argument. It might appear to be wholly derived from the lecture material, ignoring relevant readings or references to the readings. Though imperfect, the work is, on the whole, of a quality that is acceptable in the sense that the award of the degree for this level of work is warranted.

—in other words, ACCEPTABLE or SATISFACTORY.

“D”: Work that barely qualifies for academic credit. The student has clearly learned something from the course, but the work is shoddy and shows poor or inconsistent preparation. The general impression is of an examination or essay that is inadequately prepared or understood or poorly presented. A student who performs consistently at this level should not expect to be awarded a college degree.

—in other words, POOR BUT PASSING.

“F”: Work that shows little or no preparation or comprehension. Many facts or references are missing or are misunderstood. There is little or no analysis, and the style is poor, confused or incomprehensible. **IT DOES NOT MEAN THAT NO WORK HAS BEEN DONE, NO CLASSES WERE ATTENDED, NO ESSAYS WERE WRITTEN OR NO LEARNING HAS TAKEN PLACE.** A student can attend classes (or at least some or most of them), do the reading (perhaps inconsistently), and hand in the required work and yet receive an “F” if the product does not reflect some minimal command of the materials of the course.

—in a word, UNACCEPTABLE.