



**NEW YORK CITY  
COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY**

# **MINIMAL MARKING / EFFECTIVE GRADING**

WAC City Tech - 4/20/2023

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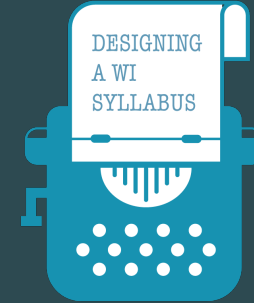
# This workshop is being recorded

- We record this workshop so we can offer certification to faculty members who are getting WI certified asynchronously
- The recordings are password-protected and only available to faculty members who are getting certified
- Feel free to keep your camera and mic off if you don't want to take part in the recording
  - You can still participate using the chat



# Overview of WAC Workshops:

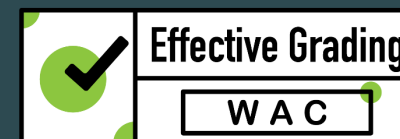
1. Designing Your WI Syllabus



2. Designing Effective Assignments



3. Minimal Marking / Effective Grading



# Overview of this WAC Workshop

- A. Let's grade!
- B. Minimal Marking
- C. Grading Strategies
- D. The Roles of Grading
- E. Conclusion
- F. Portfolio Assignment



# Workshop Goals

- Discuss and reorient grading practices
- Understand how WAC principles can aid in the grading process
- Learn strategies for providing effective feedback and saving time while grading

# A. Let's Grade!

- Grading activity:
  - Read the text provided in the chat and think about how you would approach grading this paper
  - We will discuss after 5 minutes
- [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UtV\\_jodrxTxsaZol\\_jEVm0Bqsa6rwoMNsYjYG8Nq50ttQ/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UtV_jodrxTxsaZol_jEVm0Bqsa6rwoMNsYjYG8Nq50ttQ/edit)



# Discussion

- What would you look for while grading?
- What kinds of marks or comments would you leave for the student?
- What would you find challenging about grading the paper?

Feel free to unmute yourself or put your thoughts in the chat

# A WAC Approach to Grading

- Assigning more writing can be daunting, but there are strategies to reduce workload
- Our grading reflects our pedagogy:
  - Critical thinking
  - Writing-to-learn
  - Informal writing, scaffolding, revision



## B. Minimal Marking

- Minimal Marking distinguishes between higher and lower order concerns, and prioritizes higher order concerns
- Higher order concerns:
  - e.g. “Big picture” issues that influence substantive development of the paper as a whole
- Lower order concerns:
  - e.g. Minor elements that influence the paper at the level of individual sentences or words
- Higher vs. lower order depends on assignment objectives, and may vary between disciplines or between assignments

# An Example of Higher vs. Lower Order Concerns

## Higher Order

- Argumentation
  - Thesis that responds to assignment
  - Coherence, consistency, clarity
- Analysis
  - Understanding of material
  - Quality of insight, ideas, and logic
- Structure of paper
  - Introduction, body, conclusion
  - Logical procession
- Organization of paragraphs
  - Topic sentences, transitions
  - Point, evidence, analysis
- Evidence
  - Appropriate kind and amount
  - Evidence is well-incorporated
  - Sources are indicated

## Lower Order

- Grammar
  - Parts of speech
  - Sentence structure
  - Syntax / word order
- Mechanics
  - Spelling
  - Capitalization
  - Punctuation
- Style
  - Word choice / vocabulary
  - Passive voice
  - Sentence length
- Formatting
  - Font
  - Spacing
  - Margins
  - Citation Style

# Revisiting Grading

- Return to the student's paper
- Keeping in mind the essay prompt, consider how your approach to grading would have addressed higher and/or lower order concerns



# Discussion

- What kind of higher order concerns did you find yourself focusing on?
- Did you include any lower order concerns? If so, how?
- How would emphasizing higher order concerns shift your approach to grading the student's paper?

# Reflection

- Think about an assignment in your own course
- Given the learning objectives of that assignment, what might be some higher order concerns? Some lower order concerns?
- <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eJZd6abpqzeLW2Ax3Ax-tepNiBp0TNXvz-uE4j0uFdo/edit>

# C. Grading Strategies: Grading as a Process



Set clear expectations at the outset



Provide feedback on early drafts



Create opportunities for revision and peer review

# Rubric Example 1: Detailed Criteria

From Bean's *Engaging Ideas*,  
Ch. 12

<b>Introduction and Thesis Statement</b>											
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	0
Explains problem to be addressed; provides necessary background; ends with contestable thesis statement; thesis answers question			Problem statement missing; problem poorly focused; thesis unclear, not contestable, and/or does not fully answer question				Paper begins without context or background; paper lacks thesis statement; reader confused about what writer is attempting to do				
<b>Quality of ideas and argument</b>											
20	18	16	14	12	10	8	6	4	2	0	0
Strong insights; remains focused on question; effectively links course materials to question; good historical reasoning			Some good insights; loses focus on question or gaps in argument; connections between question and course materials vague; unsupported generalizations				Fails to adequately answer question; contains no clear argument; descriptive rather than analytical; tends to summarize course materials				
<b>Use of evidence</b>											
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	0
Excellent use of different course materials to support argument; effectively provides relevant examples, evidence, and appropriate quotes			Uneven use of evidence and examples; evidence not always directly relevant; over-reliance on a single source; significance of quotes not readily apparent				Lack of evidence and examples; evidence, if provided, not related to overall argument; limited reference to course materials				

# Rubric Example 2: Single Point Rubric

*Essay 1 will be graded according to the following categories:*

<b>CRITICAL FEEDBACK</b>	<b>CRITERIA FOR GRADING</b>	<b>EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS</b>
<i>In this column, I'll make specific suggestions for improving your skills in this area...</i>	<p><b>Thesis</b></p> <p>Clear, unified, one-sentence thesis that's a non-obvious, specific argument <i>about the text</i> based on evidence. Ideally, the thesis makes clear what it's arguing <i>against</i>.</p> <p>Points: __ /10</p>	<i>In this column, I'll note what's working particularly well in your essay...</i>
	<p><b>Analysis</b></p> <p>The essay investigates textual evidence throughout with focus, analyzing assumptions, implications, formal choices, and their effects. Claims made throughout. Analysis closely informs the thesis.</p> <p>Points: __ /25</p>	



# Early Feedback

- Low stakes
  - No marking
  - Have a conversation
  - Ask questions
- High stakes
  - Make limited, focused comments
  - Avoid marking all errors
  - Use “models feedback” on short assignments
  - Selective line edits & develop a key

# Peer Review - Possibilities

- Goals:
  - Identify and suggest instead of correct
  - Not as copy editing
- Effects:
  - Minimize grading
  - Improve students' writing
- When: As a scaffolded assignment instead of right before the due date
- Where: In class/as homework
- What to look for?
  - Strength & Weakness
  - Higher order concerns
- How to guide students?

# Peer Review Template

- Side comments (focusing on higher order concerns)
- One paragraph feedback
  - Present/paraphrase writer's thesis
  - Strong point(s)
  - Weak point(s) and *how to improve*
  - Optional: Clarity/grammar/format

# Peer Review Template

## **ANALYSIS & ARGUMENT (40%)**

1. Which sentence best represents the thesis of the essay? Identify it by highlighting it and making a comment that says “THESIS.”
2. Paraphrase the thesis in your own words below:
3. A strong thesis has the following qualities: 1) is an argument, not a fact; 2) is derived from analysis of evidence, not speculation or opinion; 3) is specific rather than vague or general; and 4) is not obvious. In your opinion, does the thesis have these qualities? Elaborate below:

# Alternative Grading Strategies

There's more than one way to use grading in an assignment—or even in an entire course. If you're able, experiment with different grading to meet both the course objectives and your time constraints.

- Contract grading
- Self-grading
- Ungrading

# D. The Roles of Grading

What are the roles of grading?

# The Roles of Grading

Evaluation

Communication

Motivation

# Instructor Feedback:

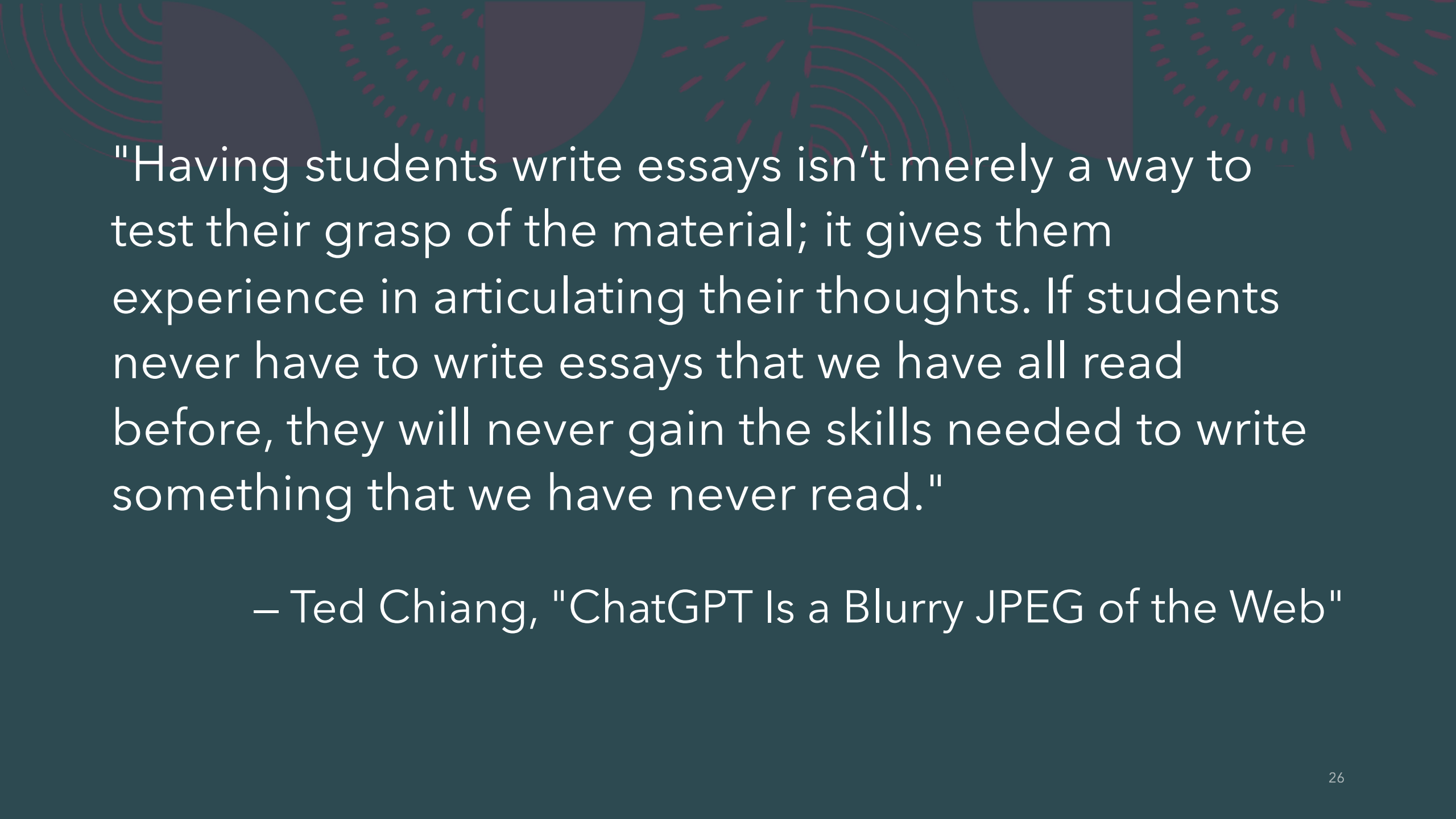
- Coach vs judge
- Encourage student autonomy
- Recognize that students interpret most feedback from instructors as criticism
- Frame comments in a forward-looking way





# Types of Feedback

- Supportive
  - You've done a great job at finding facts and quotes
- Revision-Oriented
  - Your supporting arguments need some development
- Informational
  - But in the US it is more common, do you feel that all such laws are wrong?
- Technical
  - Your use of verb tenses is often confused. Review paragraphs 1 and 2 where I commented on them and apply them to the rest of the paper



"Having students write essays isn't merely a way to test their grasp of the material; it gives them experience in articulating their thoughts. If students never have to write essays that we have all read before, they will never gain the skills needed to write something that we have never read."

– Ted Chiang, "ChatGPT Is a Blurry JPEG of the Web"

# E. Conclusion

Plan  
ahead

Prepare effective assignments & grading rubrics

Consider

Consider what higher order learning objectives you have for students

Mark

Mark minimally and supportively

# F. Portfolio Assignment for WI Certification

- Create a grading strategy for one low stakes and one high stakes assignment, indicating what kinds of minimal marking techniques you could implement for each
- If applicable to your class or assignment, draft a peer review plan
- Feel free to reach out to your writing fellows directly with questions or a draft

# Reminders for WI Certification

- May 1<sup>st</sup>: Portfolio due to fellow via email
- May 20<sup>th</sup>: Revised portfolio (including a cover letter/ blog post) due to coordinators



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& EFFECTIVE GRADING**