Grading What We Value:
A Conversation for Creative Writing

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Abstract: *This essay considers how we might grade creative writing in a way that is better aligned with our values as writers and teachers. The authors, in the form of an active dialogue, reflect on their efforts to develop an alternative grading method, and discuss their experiences putting that method into practice at two different City University of New York (CUNY) colleges. They detail the considerations that informed their "rubric" and its four central values: professionalism, community, exploration, and revision. They also discuss their strategies for putting those values into practice, through collective brainstorming with students, and the development of individualized contracts. Finally, the authors reflect on the successes, challenges, and surprising outcomes of their grading approach, as well as some important pedagogical interventions that were enabled through this "rubric." In addition to these reflections, this essay also includes samples of the assessment materials they developed for these classes. By sharing these materials and stories, the authors aim to open their conversations about grading creative writing to a wider community of creative writing studies scholars.*

The conversation began in a bar.

Or on a train heading to a bar, depending on who you ask.

The conversation took place between two writers, two teachers.

One of them was a poet teaching at a four-year liberal arts school. The other taught at a community college and wrote fiction.

They had traveled from New York to Portland, Oregon to attend the 2019 Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) conference. It was Erika (the poet)'s first AWP. She had overbooked her days, trying to attend every session that fed her interests. Jason, having been to AWP a few times before, was more selective in picking the few panels most tied to their teaching and fiction interests.

They both attended a panel entitled "Easy A: Evaluation in the Creative Writing Classroom," hoping to gain new insights to carry with them into the Introduction to Creative Writing classes they would each teach in the following summer. When the panel was complete, the ideas lingered, begging for further consideration. Some concepts were immediately transformative, while others needed further deliberation and adaptation for the environments where the two taught. Where they had been dissatisfied with their own approaches to grading creative writing, leaving the panel, Erika and Jason sensed new possibilities, and those possibilities demanded discussion. They walked out of the convention center, boarded the Max train, and headed downtown to grab a drink. At some point, one of them produced a notebook and pen, and the conversation began.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Wendy Bishop writes that "Creative writing teachers tend to finesse the issue of grading student work by saying it cannot be done, by putting it off, or by developing an idiosyncratic evaluation method" (157). As teachers of creative writing, we try to avoid these conversations, because none of us got into creative writing to grade it. And yet, the panel we attended at AWP, packed with other teachers and writers, would suggest that we do, as a field, have questions about grading in creative writing. These questions are echoed in recent scholarship—Rachel Peckham's "The Elephants Evaluate," Theune and Broad's *New Method for Evaluating Poetry*, Julie Platt's chapter in *Studying Creative Writing Successfully*, and "Expectations and Assessment," another panel at the Creative Writing Studies Organization's own annual conference in 2016. Our conversation is not an isolated one. Still, as Bishop and Platt both note, 25 years apart, it is a conversation that has scarcely begun, and one with much room for research and development.

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Spurred on by that AWP panel, we began to discuss questions about grading in the context of the Introduction to Creative Writing (Intro CW) classes that we were preparing to teach, and soon they became just as interesting as any other pedagogical problem in creative writing. We were no longer putting it off or saying it couldn't be done.

What we developed through our conversations was what Bishop might call an "idiosyncratic evaluation method"—a rubric and a method of implementing it which was tuned to our own concerns and tendencies as teachers. The obvious critique of such an idiosyncratic method is that it is difficult, even impossible, to transfer to other teachers, and therefore of questionable value to the field. Indeed, in the year since we piloted this grading system in our two classrooms, what remains of most enduring interest to us as teachers is not the way that we devised spreadsheets and weighted grades, but the ways that this evaluation method placed weight on new possibilities in our students' development as writers.

For this reason, we present our idiosyncratic method in the form of a dialogue, hoping that it will invite you into the pedagogical conversations that we had (and are still having) about how we grade Intro CW. We hope you will hear connections to your own experience or teaching, and that you will perceive possibilities beyond what we have done. In the appendix, we provide the rubric we developed, in the different forms that we used it with our students. We hope that you will take it and write in the margins, adapt it, rewrite it, make it something idiosyncratic to your students and you. Perhaps by the time you walk away from this essay, board a train, or sit down at a bar, you'll be joining this conversation, too.

FROM CONFERENCE TO CLASSROOM

Jason: We taught those courses in the summer of 2019, and now, a year later, we're returning to our notes and memories of them. Before we get into the ways we used our grading method in the classroom, I want to talk a bit about the thinking that we did before the courses started, the way we came to create this rubric, and the educational contexts we were working in. There were so many essential ideas that we took from the panel, and as we developed this grading method, we spent a lot of time thinking about what we valued as working writers, what, as teachers, we felt responsible to give our students, and how these things could be practically implemented at our respective colleges.

Erika: I was teaching at Hunter College (HC) at the time, and you were at the Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC). While they're both part of the City University of New York (CUNY), there are some differences in terms of the degrees offered and the profile of the student body. Hunter College offered four-year degrees and even an MFA in creative writing; BMCC offered a 2-year Associate's degree, and Intro CW was the highest level CW course students could take. That said, at both of our institutions, Intro CW had the same prerequisite: the successful completion of first year composition courses.

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Jason: We had also taught many first year composition courses ourselves, so we had an understanding of what students might have experienced before coming into CW. I think, while there was a lot of flexibility from both schools in regards to how CW could be graded, it wasn't a situation where we could simply give everyone A's. There was a sense that there could be trouble if the "rigor" of our classes was ever challenged, especially if we didn't have a good answer. Our respective department leaders were flexible enough to let us come up with a fair system of grading, but there had to be *a system*.

Erika: We knew that students came into Intro CW with any number of hopes and motivations. It's something Wendy Bishop talks about in *Released into Language*—some may be hoping to find out if they have the writing talent that their high school teachers told them they did, while others may be "shopping for an easy class" (1). By and large, their expectations of Intro CW are shaped by what Bishop calls "myths about writing" (2)—the trope of the moody, romantic genius in search of a muse, and the notion that the goal of any writing class is to test oneself against this bar of the "good" writer, to create "good" writing.

Jason: It's one of those things that we have to unlearn as we progress as writers, but it's also what draws many to the craft—for some reason, some want to embody that writer trope! An important challenge for me as a teacher is to give students a more realistic picture of a writing process without dulling their enthusiasm for being a writer. But then what is that "realistic" picture? How are we defining success in an Intro CW course?

Erika: It was more useful for us to begin by thinking about how we're *not* defining success. It's not about product. I'm not aiming to get students to produce publishable writing—I'm not even necessarily aiming for them to produce "good" writing at all (whatever "good" writing means). That's one of my basic assumptions about an Intro CW class—it's about developing the skills and habits and even dispositions towards writing that might lead to good writing in the future, far beyond the bounds of the semester.

Jason: We wanted to make our grading methods work against that "good writing" myth, against that trope of the genius writer, but still work *with* the diverse range of student motivations for taking our courses. I think our familiarity with the student populations at Hunter and BMCC helped to complicate our understandings of what those motivations could be. Using things we learned from the AWP panel, we started to reconsider what we wanted our grading methods to reflect.

Erika: I remember writing down something one of the panelists said—"what we grade also conveys what we value," which on a lot of levels seems obvious, right? If I tell my students that they will be graded heavily on formatting, they will understand that I value adherence to a set of conventions. They might even come to understand that writing is valued based on "correctness."

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When we started thinking about our rubric, the idea that "what we grade also conveys what we value" pushed me to think about grading in more positive terms and define the goals for my class as both a teacher and a creative writer. I know what I value in my writing classrooms. It's the same as what I value among my own community of professional writers. And if I center my grading around those same values, my students may come to value their writing that way too.

Jason: With these things in mind, we came up with our "rubric," though that word isn't exactly right. It's a framework of four Values used as foundational pillars. It becomes a rubric when students, with our assistance, determine what practices they want to take on in order to demonstrate those values.

I remember that we avoided any values like "Creativity" or "Skill" because they are inherently subjective. We wanted to focus on process over product. You came up with the Values that we ended up using very quickly—Professionalism, Community, Exploration, and Revision.

Erika: It's what I practice myself as a writer, and when I reflected on previous CW courses I had taught, I had always tried to convey those values to students. That was the easy part. But these values also needed criteria that could be demonstrated and documented by students in order to be gradable. Another key principle that the AWP panel proposed was that CW teachers should grade more objective (as opposed to subjective) aspects of student work. I had done a lot of completion grades in the past, and so it made sense to me to think about objective criteria like attendance and punctual submissions as ways to value student work. I liked the idea that these practices would feel more transparent and fair. But you pushed back on that.

Jason: I get nervous when I hear about anything in teaching being "objective." I went through school as a student with learning disabilities, a first-generation college student, and I was housing and food insecure. When I started teaching, I saw these experiences reflected in the lives of my students at BMCC. I've had students become homeless while taking my class. Others became the only ones who could financially support their family. Issues of access, equity, and financial security were always part of the classroom experience. Around the time we were teaching these classes, the *New York Times* published a piece on student hunger, drawing on research from the *Hope Center for College* that showed almost half of CUNY students had experienced food insecurity in the past 30 days (Laterman). How can I expect my students to make it to class when they're worried about feeding themselves? When we're talking about grading "objective" criteria such as attendance or assignment completion, I'm also thinking about lived situations. If a student misses class or needs an extension on an assignment, we, as teachers, are the ones who judge which circumstances get excused and which don't. Ultimately, that means even "objective" grading is subjective. I don't know if there's any full solution to this, but I do think it was good that we set up a system where students could decide what they would be held accountable to. If they wanted to be graded on attendance or on-time submissions, they could, but they could also decide if that wasn't realistic, and make other choices.

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Erika: In that sense, what we did might be called contract grading, where each student is held accountable to (and has some input on) an individualized contract that determines their grade in the course. I was familiar with contract grading as one option within a larger movement towards reforming the ways we grade—a movement Jesse Stommel calls "ungrading." One of the goals of ungrading is to decentralize authority in classrooms and grading systems—something that felt particularly important to us in our writing classrooms, knowing the disproportionate impact that those systems have on marginalized voices. Asao B. Inoue, writing about what he calls "assessment ecologies," insists that "grades are the means of discrimination, the methods of exclusion, not inclusion, no matter what else we may think they do for our students" (11). While Inoue's work focuses most explicitly on anti-racist grading practices, this issue is an intersectional one. Traditional grading methods create "multiple exclusions" for students with diverse and non-traditional backgrounds (McConologue 137). We were concerned about what it might mean to use grades in any way that would uphold the standards of the discriminatory systems of power that already exist in our educational institutions—systems that are racist, sexist, ableist, and classist.

So we used the rubric not as a normative method of standardization, but as a flexible framework. That framework allowed you to hone in on your students' individual needs and circumstances, which is really central to your teaching. And it helped me to value and support the individual goals that my students entered the class with, in addition to the goals and plans I had already created.

Jason: We put the rubric into our separate syllabi (Appendix 1) and used it in our Intro CW classes that summer. First, we would use the rubric as a collective brainstorming tool (Appendix 2) to discuss different ways that writers might practice the four values. Then, we'd use it as a framework for students' individualized grading contracts (Appendix 3). Between the two of us, I thought we had planned and anticipated pretty well, and we learned a lot when we tried it out.

PUTTING THE VALUES INTO PRACTICE

Part 1: Collective Brainstorming

Erika: On that collective brainstorming day, I brought in the rubric as a graphic organizer of sorts—with the four values established. I asked students to fill out as many corresponding practices as possible for each value. What could we as writers do to practice Professionalism, or Exploration? I wanted my class to come up with concrete practices that could be documented and ultimately evaluated in an objective way, and I wanted them to lead the discussion as much as possible.

I used all the reliable strategies in my teaching toolkit. I passed out copies of the rubric so that they could brainstorm in hard copy. I seeded some ideas on the whiteboard to help get the

ball rolling—things like "contribute to discussion daily" and "attend a literary event" and "set up a writing date with a peer." In classic think-pair-share style, I had them work in partners before pooling ideas as a class.

Even with all the work I did to scaffold the brainstorming in my class, I underestimated how challenging it would be to get students involved in a conversation about their own evaluation. I could feel the anxiety in the room—they were hesitant to start speaking, to start putting practices on their pages. At the time, I did the sort of prodding and encouraging that most of us do when classroom conversations are slow to begin. But I think I was working against something more complex. I think there was a nervousness about being overheard by the person who will be grading you, and even a nervousness about being responsible for the way you will be graded at all. And I hadn't accounted for that.

Jason: So, as we both know, the mistake that I made was that I did this brainstorming on the second day of class. My class had touched upon some ideas of what writers do in the first class period, but for the most part, I think students needed more mentoring and time to think about our Values before I asked them to come up with their own practices.

The problem, of course, was that there hadn't been enough time for them to develop their understanding of what writers do—their expectations were still shaped by that trope of the genius writer, and the goal of "good" writing. And so, when my class tried to come up with practices for each category, the same pattern kept reappearing. First, they listed practices or ideas I had mentioned in the first class, because they recognized me as an authority on "good" writing. After that ran dry, they began listing ideas that felt like things "good" writers would do, like "listen with an open heart" or "seek inspiration." When I pushed them to make those intangibles more concrete and gradable, they floundered. They retreated into listing tasks that were easier to document, like "be on time to class" and "keep your pages neat." I realize now that in that feelings-driven, intangible stage of brainstorming, they were trying to invent articulations of practices that they hadn't ever tried.

Erika: I saw some of those predictable "safe" goals in my class's brainstorming too. To push past that, I asked students to think about what "above and beyond" would look like, what A level writing practices would look like instead of B level ones. At that point, they began setting their own expectations for themselves, instead of relying on expectations they'd been accountable to in the past. Still, the collective brainstorming was far less genuinely collaborative than I'd hoped. Looking back, I wonder how I might have created a space where students would have felt more comfortable brainstorming openly. Maybe I would have left the room for a bit, so they could talk without my listening.

Jason: I think that giving them more space is a great idea. Next time, I plan on letting student ideas simply exist at this point in the process, whether they're intangible or simplistic.

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The refinement can come later, in developing individualized contracts. In fact, I think some of the ways you scaffolded that contract process in your class worked really well.

Part 2: Individualized Contracts

Erika: Before the class period where they would create their own contracts, I asked my students to journal about what they wanted from themselves as writers—through the remainder of this Intro CW course, and beyond it. After they had some time to think and write, everyone shared one goal with the class. We talked about which types of goals require asking yourself to do something, and which types of goals require help from others in your writing community. This was our transition into thinking more concretely about what practices might support their individual goals.

To help students set individual grading contracts, I printed our rubric out again, but this time in slightly modified form (Appendix 3). On one side, I asked students to list the things they had done already in the semester to practice the values of Professionalism, Community, Exploration, and Revision. I wanted them to see the ways in which they were already doing the work of being a writer, and to be able to carry that forward. Then, on the other side of the sheet, I asked students to list practices (again, aligned with those values) that they wanted to hold themselves accountable to for the rest of the course. This became their individualized contract.

Many students drew on practices that we had come up with in our collective brainstorming, or practices that we had already been engaged in through the early weeks of the class. A fair number also added things that were specific to their individual goals and motivations for taking the course.

Jason: On the day of contract creation in my class, I realized that while it was one thing to ask students in an Intro course to think about practices that reflected Professionalism, Community, and Exploration, it was quite another thing to ask them to do the same thing for Revision. The first three values may have been new for them as writers, but they would have experienced them in other contexts, and they could use that experience from other parts of their lives to invent practices for writing. It was early enough in the course that I couldn't expect them to imagine a diverse array of Revision practices.

Erika: And besides, I think that revision practices were already very much built into both of our courses—through workshop, feedback letters, and portfolios of revised writing, all things that are pretty standard for CW. They were part of what we wanted to teach students, and part of what they would need to know if they went on to take more CW courses. In fact, Rachel Peckham writes about her choice to grade only the feedback that her students give to each other, because that's what she values most in the creative writing workshop. What we did, then, instead of asking students to define their own Revision practices, was to make the practices consistent across our classes, encompassing drafts, feedback letters, workshops, and revised pieces in their portfolio.

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This meant that when my students turned in their contracts, I was focused on how they had defined goals under the other three values: Professionalism, Community, and Exploration. One of the first things that I noticed was the ways that students were categorizing their practices. Some students put freewriting under Professionalism, while others would list it under Exploration. My immediate impulse was to fix it, to reorganize their practices in a more consistent way. I had to stop myself.

What I realized, after I curbed my re-classifying impulse, was that the same practice really might be linked to different values for different students. For example, I had thought of "attend a literary event" as a way to practice Community, because when I go to a poetry reading, I'm supporting writers that I know. But for an Intro CW student who has hardly written poetry before, going to a poetry reading might rightly be considered Exploration instead. Even free-writing, a staple of most introductory creative writing classes, might have different value for different student writers. For some, freewriting regularly may be a form of Professionalism—a commitment to the work of writing. For others, especially students whose normal writing modes are more careful and calculated, freewriting may be a form of Exploration, a way to venture into new writing territory.

Ultimately, instead of moving things around in the value categories, I focused on giving feedback in places where a practice seemed like it would be hard to grade "objectively"—where it wasn't concrete enough for me to evaluate.

REVISING STUDENT PRACTICES

Jason: Yes—this is something we talked about a lot at the time. My students were still listing writing practices that were mostly intangible—by which I mean they couldn't be documented by the student, or graded by me. Students sensed that "seeking inspiration" was important, but they were resistant to actually determining how they might do that. I remember you had some ways of helping students come up with tangible practices for those more intangible goals.

Erika: It was an unanticipated advantage of the rubric, I think! By the time we were creating their individualized contracts, my students had moved past the myth of "good" writing. Instead, they wanted to achieve particular qualities in their writing—to write with emotion, or with purpose, or with vulnerability. These were qualities that I couldn't possibly grade. But I still wanted the class to be able to support their goals—after all, they were articulating something that reflected what they valued in writing. In the qualities they described I could hear echoes of the type of language they were using in class to talk about poems and stories that they read and admired. I could see them trying to stretch their capacities as developing writers, and I wanted them to be able to get "credit" for that. So, for each of those students that described some intangible quality, I asked them to find 3 mentor texts—3 pieces of writing that modelled the quality they were trying to achieve in their own work. This practice not only gave me something

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that I could grade more objectively, but it gave them something tangible to do as they worked towards their more intangible goal.

Jason: That act of moving towards tangible practices felt so key. For example, when I pushed a student to define how "be disciplined" could be documented as something they were doing in the semester, they decided to write a poem every day. I let them try it, but they came back to me a few days later, feeling overwhelmed. We talked it over, and when they insisted that they still wanted to put pen to paper every day, we agreed that original poems might be just part of it. We added journaling, freewriting, and commonplacing to the list of things they could do to "be disciplined." I think my students really learned a lot when they were given the freedom to fail at certain efforts.

Of course, I don't want to frame a student's inability to complete some kinds of work as a romantic "process of discovery." My students also encountered practical conflicts that required them to adjust their goals. In this semester, one students was having particular trouble completing the practices they had set for themselves. When we talked about why, I found out they had unexpectedly become homeless. This wasn't the first time I had seen something like this happen, but it was the first time I had a grading system that so explicitly opened up an opportunity for them to come and talk to me about how they could still meet the goals of the class. We worked out some alternatives and I was able to connect them with resources on campus. I'm not sure if I would have found out if the conversation wasn't motivated by the flexibility of our rubric.

Erika: I don't think I had ever thought of a rubric as a flexible tool before, but that was one of the advantages I found in our method too. That flexibility allowed me to value the goals that students brought to the class as individuals—the motivations that they had for taking Intro CW in the first place. So when I gave them feedback on their contracts, I looked for ways to use the rubric to help them achieve their goals.

For the student who wanted to work toward publishing a zine, I suggested a number of smaller practices that could support that larger goal: visiting a local zine library, researching publication opportunities, and sharing the draft zine with a peer. Interestingly, this also spread that larger goal across multiple value categories.

The student whose goal in taking the course was to increase their English vocabulary put "learn new words" under Exploration. In my feedback, I suggested a concrete practice that might support that less measurable goal: looking up and annotating new words in our readings each week, and choosing one to use in their own writing submission.

And because these "assignments" were practices tied to students' own motivations, I saw some really amazing follow-through. At the end of the semester, I tabulated grades based on writing practices that ranged from daily freewrites, to compiling writing playlists, to

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translating a Bengali fairytale. It was admittedly a bit cumbersome, but I also felt confident that my students completely understood what they were being graded on. It was, without a doubt, the least ambiguous grading system that I had ever done for CW.

More exciting than the confidence I had in those grades, though, was the work my students had pushed themselves to do. There were students who set themselves the challenge of outlining novels, writing sonnets, screenplays, or songs. These were not things that I could possibly have taught them in a single Intro CW course, but they were the types of interests that had drawn the students to the class. And focusing on practices rather than products meant that they better understood how they might continue this work in a meaningful way beyond the course.

REFLECTIONS ON THE RUBRIC PROCESS

Jason: When going through their portfolios and journals, I was also moved by how the class had become folded into my students' everyday lives. Students had written poems for their children that were never brought up in class. One student who worked in real estate had taken to creating written portraits of the properties they were selling. However, I think my favorite parts of those portfolios were the photos students included to document their practices. Without my involvement, students in that class organized visits to museums, poetry readings, and the New York Aquarium together—they had built a Community.

Of course, you could argue that the flexibility of this rubric as we employed it makes it less useful as a system of valuation. As I mentioned earlier, I wound up changing some contracts midway through the semester to accommodate students, which may be seen as a lack of rigor. And, because many of the practices were self-reported, students could have manufactured the evidence of their work at the last moment. The students who wanted to write in museums could have got their tickets and never walked in. The student who claimed they would write every day could have stayed up the night before the journal was due, creating entries.

I'm not sure it matters. The student who took the class for the grade can have it—the work still happens. Using this rubric, students knew what they needed to do to succeed in class. They were also the ones who determined which practices were valuable to them. If I compare that to the vague, subjective or arbitrary grading systems I experienced as a young writer, then this certainly feels like a step in the right direction to me.

Erika: In the introductions to their final portfolios, I asked students to reflect on their writing practices. When I read those introductions at the time, like most of us do, I paid attention to which things they had picked up from my lessons, what compliments they paid me as a teacher.

But a year later, reading back over those introductions, I noticed the ways that students wrote, not about me and my lessons, but about themselves. Many of them used the word

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"confidence," and wrote with a sense of ownership over their writing practice. As they described their accomplishments, they didn't mention the quality or polish of their writing, despite the fact that they were asked to turn in a portfolio with revised work. Instead, their reflections emphasized the quantity or range of what they were able to produce—many expressed surprise at themselves, and their ability to write more, or differently, than they had before.

They also wrote about goals that they had for their own future writing—goals that were articulated with more precise language, motivation, and potential for action than any they had articulated within the confines of the course, or even, with my feedback, in their individualized contracts. When we were creating this rubric, I remember one of our main concerns was that intro level students would be unable to define meaningful, practical goals for themselves as creative writers. It turns out that's one of the things we taught them to do.

Jason: My students' journals archived the work that they did in the semester and the discoveries they made toward becoming writers themselves. Because Intro CW was the highest level CW course my students could take at BMCC, I was pleased that I felt like they could go on to write in any number of course contexts or schools and find success. And like your students, they were more confident about their writing and how they might talk about themselves as writers.

Erika: I think we both wound up feeling pretty good about what our students would be able to transfer forward from this grading experience, whether towards future creative writing classes or other endeavors. But what do we want to transfer forward to other teachers? If we acknowledge that our system, even applied across two courses by two teachers at two colleges, is an idiosyncratic one, then I think we're certainly not hoping that others will replicate everything we did. But I am hoping that we've given other teachers some language, and a framework that they might use to start thinking about their own values in creative writing, and how they might align their students' writing practices, and their grading practices, with those.

We started the process in our classrooms with collective brainstorming, and that's where I want to end it as well—in the appendix are copies of our rubric as we used it at each stage of the process. We hope you'll add your writing practices to this space too.

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[i] Chapters in Anna Leahy's Power and Identity in the Creative Writing Classroom: The Authority Project (2005), though less recent, also contribute to this discussion.

[ii] We are grateful to Michelle Burk, Ángel García, and Jake Skeets, who helped us to expand this conversation in a 2021 AWP Panel titled "Grading the Ungradable: Reimagining Assessment in the Creative Writing Classroom." Their contributions have helped us as scholars to consider how different identities and institutional contexts inform our approaches to assessment, and their insights have helped us to imagine new ideas and approaches to take into future classrooms.

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APPENDIX 1: THE RUBRIC PRESENTED IN THE SYLLABUS

What are you graded on?

Writing is a practice, and therefore, in this class, your grade will be based on the *practices* that you demonstrate in your daily class participation, in-class and out-of-class writing assignments, and final portfolio. Every writer's practice is unique, but throughout this course, we will work together to develop and refine a set of writing practices that engage the following values:

Values	Practices
Professionalism - treating writing with professional respect and commitment; fulfilling obligations to yourself, your peers, your mentors, and your craft.	e.g. submissions are proofread
Community - contributing to and relying upon your creative community; supporting, engaging, and connecting with peers and the broader writing and arts communities.	e.g. contributing to a recommended reading list
Exploration - taking creative risks, seeking out challenges, and going beyond what is familiar to you in both your own writing and the writing you engage with.	e.g. writing in an unfamiliar or uncomfortable form
Revision - developing writing through continual refinement and reinvention; seeking, considering, and thoughtfully integrating feedback, and constructively responding to the work of your peers.	e.g. use a prompt presented in class to reinvent as established piece

A Note on Practices:

Early in the semester, we will brainstorm a range of ways that we can practice each of the values above, which will serve as a collective rubric for our class community.

Halfway through the semester, you'll submit a midterm assessment where you outline the practices you've demonstrated within each value so far, and set individualized goals for the remainder of the course. You'll get feedback from me on those goals, so that we have a mutual understanding of what is expected for you to excel in this class.

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APPENDIX 2: THE RUBRIC FOR COLLECTIVE BRAINSTORMING

Values	Sample Practices from Intro CW students
Professionalism - treating writing with professional respect and commitment; fulfilling obligations to yourself, your peers, your mentors, and your craft.	• Attend every class. prepared • Be punctual • Submissions are proofread • Keep a writing diary • Make sure submissions are neat • Research publication opportunities
Community - contributing to and relying upon your creative community; supporting, engaging, and connecting with peers and the broader writing and arts communities.	• Plan an outing for the class • Attend a literary event • Learn everyone's names and use them in class • Bring snacks to share • Make an Instagram account where people can promote their poems
Exploration - taking creative risks, seeking out challenges, and going beyond what is familiar to you in both your own writing and the writing you engage with.	• Do extra research about the assigned readings • Write in a new form • Read two authors suggested by class-mates • Go to a museum or watch a foreign film every week • Go somewhere new with classmates
Revision - developing writing through continual refinement and reinvention; seeking, considering, and thoughtfully integrating feedback, and constructively responding to the work of your peers.	• Participating in workshops and consider-ing feedback for later drafts • Writing feedback letters to a peer • Integrating suggestions from peers and making substantial changes to earlier drafts

Your turn...
How do you employ *professionalism* in your craft?
How do you participate in your writerly *community*?
How do you incorporate creative *exploration* into your writing process?
What practices are essential to your *revision* process?

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APPENDIX 3: THE RUBRIC FOR CREATING INDIVIDUALIZED CONTRACTS

NAME: _Sample Student_

In this assessment, you'll list the practices you've demonstrated within each value so far, and set individualized goals for the remainder of the course. You'll get feedback from me on those goals, so that we have a mutual understanding of what is expected for you to excel in this class.

> *Feedback in the form of marginal notes aimed to help students make practices concrete and achievable*

What have you done so far to show PROFESSIONALISM?

- showed up on time and attended every class

- came prepared (readings done) and took notes in class

- responded to assigned peer review in a timely manner

What have you done so far to show COMMUNITY?

- Read my poem aloud in class

- Got a copy of a book recommended by a peer

- Contributed to class discussions

- Created a class suggested reading list for others to contribute to

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What have you done so far to show EXPLORATION?

- Wrote poetry, a style I've never really written before

- Researched the writers we've read in class

- Read new styles of writing (e.g. ekphrastic)

What have you done so far to show REVISION?

- Looked back and edited my first drafts to sound cohesive

- Made notes on my pieces so I can revise them later

- Pulled ideas from in-class freewrites to incorporate in new pieces

Now you have the opportunity to define the practices that you want to hold yourself accountable to for the remainder of the course. Some of them may be things that you have been doing and will continue to do. Some of them should be additions or new practices that you want to work towards. Each practice should be specific and action-oriented (meaning something you can do and document, not a generalized mood or attitude).

PROFESSIONALISM

1) Turn in peer review early (by Sunday night)

2) Freewrite every day

3) Thoroughly research a topic to advance my writing

4) _____

5) _____

You can include research notes in your portfolio!

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COMMUNITY

Aim for 4 – you can talk to me about how to get started!

1) Research publication opportunities

2) Contribute to the class reading list each week

3) Set up writing dates with classmates

4) Curate & share a writing playlist

How many?

5) _____

EXPLORATION

Talk to me about your plan!

1) Translate a piece of writing

2) Articulate thoughts into writing so reader feels what you felt

3) Attend a literary event

4) Read something recommended by a peer

5) _____

Find 3 pieces of writing that model this

REVISION

Demonstrated by drafts, feedback letters, workshops, and revised pieces in your portfolio.

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