

“The university structure that houses the disciplines and jealously guards their boundaries now stands at a crossroads... a choice between the university as corporation and investment opportunity and the university as a new kind of public sphere with a different investment in knowledge, in ideas, and in thought and politics.”

From *The Queer Art of Failure* by Jack Halberstam

WHY go GRADELESS?

Grades create divisions

Grades **reinforce systems of inequity, creating hierarchy** in a space we work to make inclusive.

Grades are a form of **discipline that are a symptom of an imbalanced, racist system.**

Grades **compartmentalize lessons and learning** and as such, **impede that learning.**

Grades **are coercive.** They are cruel- pitting the students against each other.

Grades **discourage difference** and are incapable of measuring a student's willingness to ask questions and reach outside their comfort zone.

Gradeless = allyship

Gradeless makes for a more **inclusive, student centered classroom**.

Gradeless **gives agency to students** in addressing course outcomes.

Gradeless **helps students improve** by using a language of building.

Gradeless has the power to **help instructors see our own implicit bias** and **re-engage us in our own curriculum**.

Piloting Gradeless in FDN

Spring 2021/ Gradeless Pilot

/ what worked

Starting the gradeless conversation day one. Our cohort co-wrote the language on the syllabus and introduced gradeless during the first class.

Building assessment criteria based on course and department outcomes.

Embracing gradeless not as a system, but an extension of an individual's pedagogy.

Utilizing digital platforms like Milanote, the Google Suite, and Canvas for organizing students assessments.

Starting with Low stakes assessments to ensure quality results with larger assessments projects at Midterm and Final

Removing all rubrics and points.

Spring 2021/ Gradeless Pilot

/ what didn't work

Students struggled with proper word choice.

Solution/ Utilize the Department Vocabulary list.

Students struggled to use a diversity of language.

Solution/ Low stakes activities like making word trees based on key concepts.

Too much extra work for faculty.

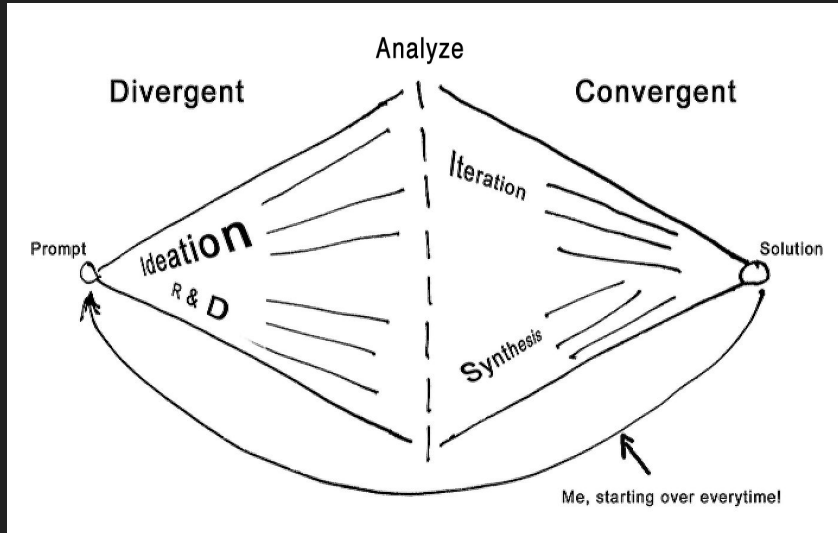
Solution/ Find ways to make the students do the assessment work.

Forcing a system/

Solution/ Gradeless is not a system. My gradeless assessment won't look like your gradeless assessment, any more than my teaching looks like your teaching.

Spring 2021/ Gradeless Pilot

/ what I did



Self Assessment/

Before next class, post your final piece and complete a self-assessment. See example to the right. Self-assessment is in blue.

Silent Peer Assessment/

LIGHT- (sun emoji) Use of value to create light effects

FORM- (cross bones emoji) Use of value to create a believable geometric solid

DESIGN-(picture frame emoji) Use of page, all the surfaces are defined in relationship to each other

MATERIALS AND METHODS-(palette emoji) Careful craftsmanship.



LIGHT- Use of value to create light effects

I think it's clear what angle the light is coming from, and I think the respective value of each side of the shape is clear. I imagined the light as coming sort of from

Final Self Assessment based on Course Outcomes

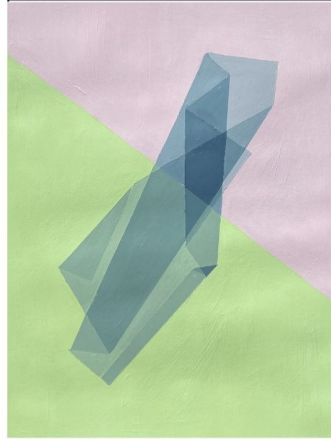
Overview/

Document your work and organize it based on the outcomes listed on the syllabus. Three images must be presented per outcome. Each image must be accompanied by a written explanation detailing how the design fulfills the outcome successfully, and how it does not.

Additionally, you will include a general self-assessment about the term. Keep it short and sweet. Address:

- Technical accomplishments.
- Conceptual accomplishments.
- Areas for improvement.
- Goals for the future.

Outcome 2

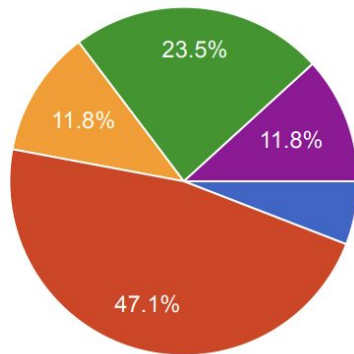


This project helped me improve my color mixing skills and deepen my understanding of hue, value, and chroma. Working with two colors composed of mostly white and finding middle mixes between those light colors and dark blue, I learned that what may seem to be the correct ratio of each color, sometimes is not correct depending on the color's pigmentation.

A link to my CTL Gradeless [Milanote Board](#) will be placed in the chat

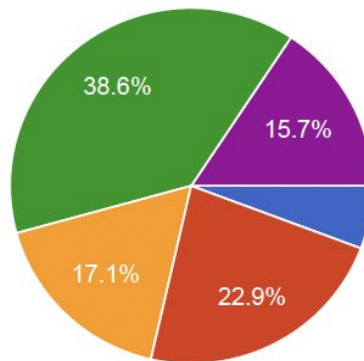
From the student perspective

Which response most closely reflects how you feel about grades?



- I love them, and can't live without them.
- I like them, but I don't get hung up on them.
- I don't have much of an opinion.
- I don't like them, but I am fine with them.
- I hate them, and I wish there was another way.

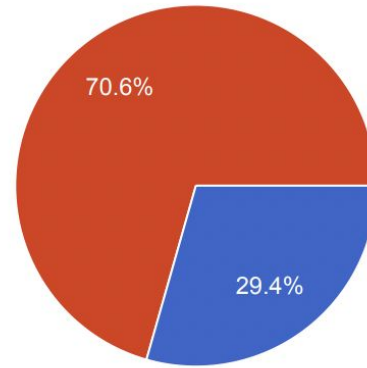
AY 20-21



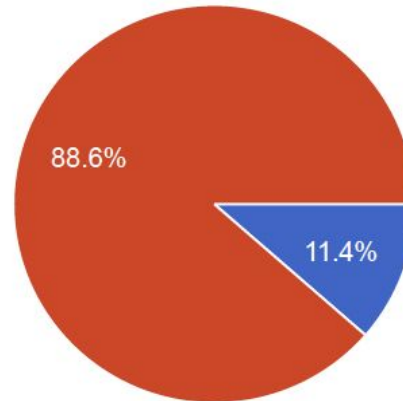
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AY 21-22

Is it more important to receive a good grade or to gain proficiency in course outcomes?



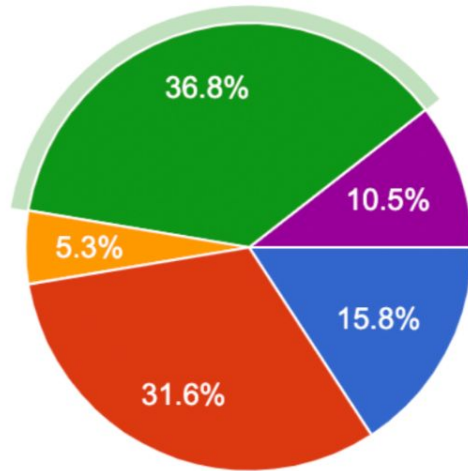
AY 20-21



AY 21-22

Having finished your first gradeless semester what form of assessment listed below would you prefer moving forward?

19 responses



- Traditional Letter Grades
- Self-grading
- Pass/Fail
- No form of grades, but rather a system of self/peer/professor assessments and personal accountability.
- Nothing but self-assessment and personal accountability.

AY 20-21

Fall 2021 / Gradeless Pilot expanded

11 professors

Sharing time together to workshop ideas and create a community several times a year.

4 FDN cohorts

Working closely to coordinate language and approaches to create consistent experience across the three courses.

70+ students

Bravely embracing a new way of thinking and generously sharing their thoughts and experiences.

How does **GRADELESS** factor in
FDN Department Mission and
Outcomes?

FDN Mission /

*Pratt Foundation is a yearlong experience that transforms incoming students into an **inclusive community** of aspiring artists and designers. Immersive studio courses introduce fundamental concepts through individual and collaborative creative processes. This year of interdisciplinary research and experimentation prepares students to enter specialized majors, **fosters self-discovery** and social engagement, and **instills a practice of seeing and critical inquiry** that will endure throughout their lives.*

FDN Department Outcomes /

- Core Concepts and Language / Gain fluency in use and understanding of fundamental visual principles and elements
- Making / **Experiment** with conceptual strategies, analogue and digital tools, and **iterative processes** to achieve intended outcomes and inform unexpected solutions.
- Inquiry / Develop conceptually rigorous works through research, **ideation**, and **exploration** of cultural and historical sources.
- Reflection / **Analyze and evaluate one's own work and the work of others through speaking and writing.**
- Synthesis / **Apply knowledge and experience to assigned and self-directed projects through sustained intellectual and visual process.**
- Community / Responsibly engage both independently and collaboratively with one's faculty, class, cohort, and larger communities to promote safety, sustainability, and sensitivity in the 21st century classroom.

Gradeless Breakout Session

Using the Zoom Whiteboard feature or the Zoom Chat complete the prompts below:

In one word, **define what a grade is.**

-discuss

Name a characteristic of **a learner in one word.**

-discuss

You will have 15 minutes in the breakout session. Be sure to designate a group member to save your whiteboard or chat to share with the larger group.

After, we will come together for 15 minute discussion as a larger group.