

Effective Grading Book Discussion Group

SESSION 2 (FEB. 11): DESIGNING ASSIGNMENTS & EXAMS

Walvoord and Anderson begin this middle section of the book by arguing that “the way to save time, make every moment count, and integrate grading, learning, and motivation is to plan your grading from the first moment you begin planning the course.” This week, we will focus on planning a course around the assignments, rather than around the content, and on making those assignments reflect our objectives for the course.

❖ **Reading:**

- Ch. 3: “Making Assignments Worth Grading”
- Ch. 4: “Fostering Motivation and Learning”
- Appendix B: “Types of Assignments and Tests”

❖ **Some questions to think about as you read:**

- On p. 22, the authors state that, “Some research indicates that many faculty do not achieve a good fit between the learning they say they want and the tests and assignments they actually give.” Looking at your own courses, how would you describe the fit between your tests and your course goals?
- Chapter 3 refutes conventional wisdom about “teaching to the test,” arguing that “if the test is right—if it really tests the central learning goals of the course—then we should teach to it. In fact, it seems criminal not to.” In what ways do you “teach to the test”? How do the assignments you give shape what you do in class?
- The authors challenge us to rethink the use of class time. When do students get their first exposure to material in your course? When do they do their processing part? How might you restructure your own use of class time and out-of-class time?
- Appendix B lists many different types of assignments and tests. Which of these have you tried? With what result? Which ones are you interested in trying?

❖ **Bring with you:**

- Goals and a course skeleton for the course you are focusing on.

❖ **Looking ahead:**

- Session 3 (Feb. 18): Defining criteria for grading (ch. 5, 6, & appendix C)
- Session 4 (Feb. 25): Grading and giving feedback (ch. 7, 8, & 9)