

*Specifications Grading: Restoring Rigor,
Motivating Students, and Saving Faculty Time*
--Linda Nilson

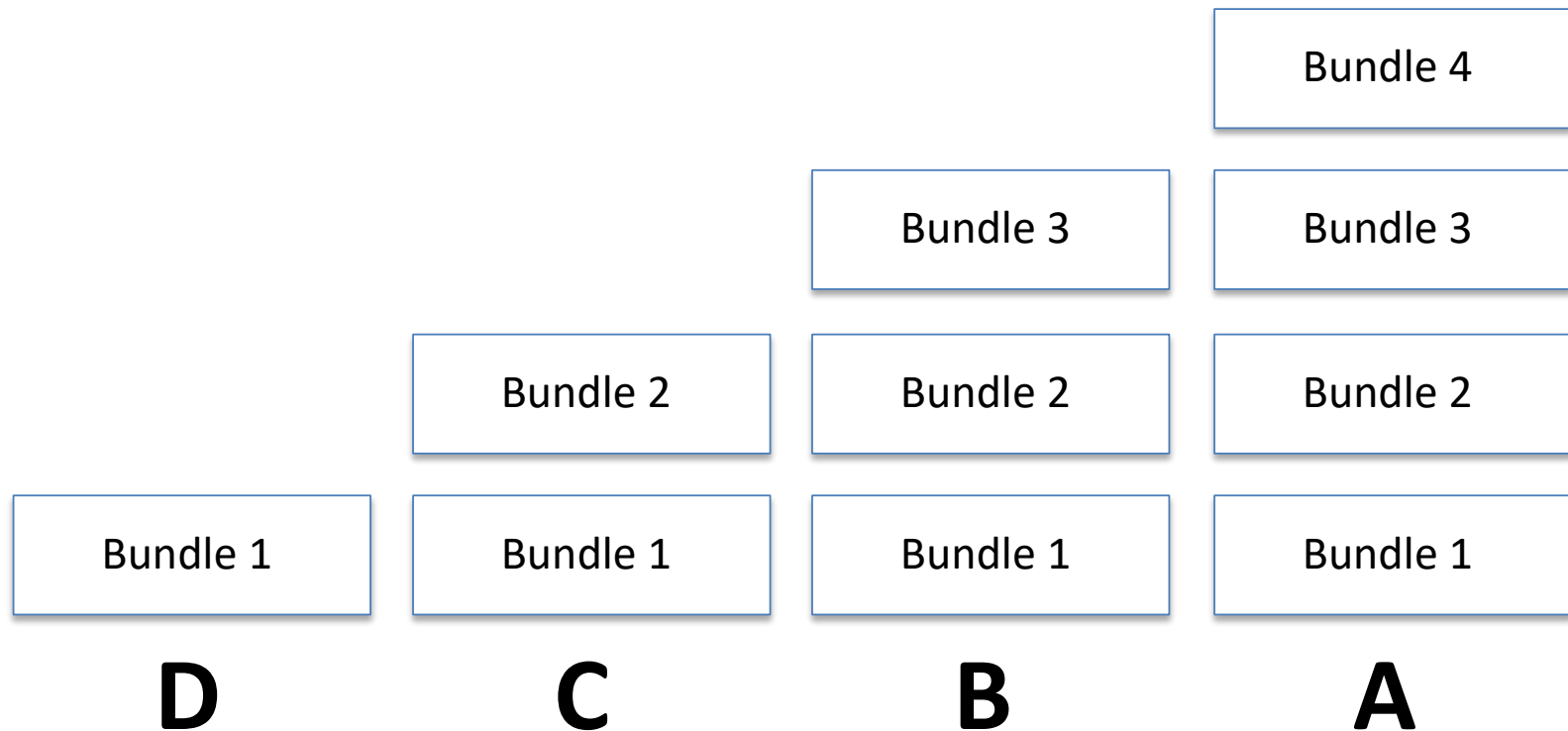
Overview

- Sets high standards for work performed.
- Students are assessed on the amount of work performed.
- Students are given options for final grades
 - (bundles or points)
- Students become invested in their work.
- Grading shapes the course during the semester.

Method

- Assignments are tied directly to course outcomes.
- Assignments are pass/fail. No partial credit.
- Assignment sheet must be explicit and detailed.
- Provides ample opportunities for success.
- Work = Grade

Assessments organized in bundles, each associated with a specific grade.



(adapted from Nilson, 2015, pp. 129-131)

Points based (AUA)

- Assignments are pass/fail ('B' >=level)
- Assignments are 'optional.'
- Students are responsible for gaining points.
- Assignments are repackaged as opportunities rather than requirements.
- A variety of assignments of varying sophistication and skill sets: tied to Outcomes.

E&C 121: British Literature

- **Evaluation: Final Course Grade.**
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- **950-1000 points: A**
- **900-945 points: A-**
- **875-899 points: B+**
- **850-874 points: B**
- **800-849 points: B-**
- **775-799 points: C+**
- **750-774 points: C**
- **700-749 points: C-**
- **600-699 points: D**
- **0-599 points: F**

Assignments submissions)	Points	Opportunities (Possible number of	[max points/semester]
Creative Project:	200	Two	[400]
Synthesis Essay:	200	One	[100]
Short Essay:	100	One	[100]
Explication Essay	100	One	[100]
Midterm Exam	100	One	[100]
Final Exam	100	One	[100]
Critical Summary	40	Four	[160]
Context Response	30	Fourteen	[420]
Close Reading Response	15	Thirty Five	[525]

E&C 121: Close Reading/Context (basic skills)

- a. Discuss and interpret* a variety of texts from English literature orally and in writing.
- b. Identify* and discuss the use of form, language, and figure of speech as used by a text or author.
- c. Interpret* works of English literature through close reading, discussion, and writing.

E&C 121: Explication, Summary, Short Essay: (Intermediate skills)

- *Distinguish* and compare the styles and varieties of English in the works of various British authors
- *Interpret* the works of authors of different periods in light of their political, historical and cultural contexts.
- *Investigate* works and ideas through research and the sound application of secondary sources.

E&C 121: Creative Response, Long Essay: (Proficient skills)

d. Interpret works of English literature through close reading, discussion, and writing.

f. Investigate works and ideas through research and the sound application of secondary sources.

g. Apply critical tools and conceptual frameworks to analyze and compare human experience and its cultural manifestations in the works various English authors.

preliminary results

- Close reading responses (shape the course)
 - due before discussion
 - use in planning classroom work
 - involve student responses
- Friendly competition (engagement)
 - Research Summaries: No repetition
 - Exposure to Academic writing
 - Who can get a comment/question in the mix
- Tokens – second chances.

The actual grading

- pass/fail
- Cut and paste comments
- Instructor therapy (my methods)
 - missed assignments, less stress (for me)
 - Direct feedback from students
 - Always have student material to work with
- Time – specifications only

future ideas: 121 course

- More use of Moodle discussion to share ideas.
- Research Summaries: fewer points
- Exhibition of creative responses
 - points for exhibiting
 - Fewer points for project itself
- Specific skills seminars during course
 - incorporating quotations
 - APA and secondary sources