

Participation Grades

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The following criteria will be used to determine your participation grade.

- X : the frequency with which you attend class.
 - $X = \frac{A}{T}$, where A is the number of classes you attend and T is the total number of classes for the semester.
- Y : how well you participate during class.
 - This is the hardest quantity to define. In general, Y ranges from 0 to 1. If you speak at least once during each class, $Y = 1$. If you speak less than once per class, it could still be the case that $Y = 1$. That depends on how difficult it is for you to speak up in class (shy people shouldn't be punished just for being shy), how helpful and on-point your contributions are, and so on.
 - Things that lower your Y score include
 - being on your phone,
 - sleeping,
 - using your computer for anything other than notes and course readings,
 - skipping class.
- Z : how well you work with others in group activities.
 - Z ranges from 0 to 1. A score of $Z = 0$ means that you did not talk with the other members of your group, or that you did not contribute at all to the work that your group produced, or that you dominated discussion to the point where it was difficult for others to speak, and so on. A score of $Z = 1$ means that you were a reasonable participant in your group's activities.
- M : whether or not you meet the mandatory requirement of attending office hours at least once during the semester.
 - If you attended office hours at least once, $M = 1$. Otherwise, $M = 0$.
- N : whether or not you conduct yourself appropriately during philosophical conversations.
 - N ranges from 0 to 1. A score of $N = 0$ means that you were mean, nasty, rude, domineering, and so on. A score of $N = 1$ means that you were a reasonable human being.

Your participation grade will be determined by a somewhat complicated formula. I like this formula for the following reason: it implies that your participation grade can only help – not hurt – your overall grade.

To compute your grade for participation, I start by computing two quantities: your 'preliminary participation grade', and your 'non-participation grade'. The formula for your preliminary participation grade is as follows.

$$\text{Preliminary participation grade} = 10 \cdot (X + Y + Z + M + N) \quad (1)$$

As mentioned on the syllabus, participation is worth up to 50 points. So if you get perfect scores on X , Y , Z , M , and N —that is, if you get a 1 for each of those quantities—then your preliminary participation grade would be a perfect 50.

Your non-participation grade is just the grade you would get for the course if there were no participation component. For example, suppose that apart from participation, your grade for the course depends on just two papers. Suppose you get an 80% on one and a 90% on the other. Then your non-participation grade would be 85% (assuming that the papers are weighted equally).

With all that as background, here is the formula for your participation grade.

$$\text{Participation grade} = \max(\text{preliminary participation grade, non-participation grade}) \quad (2)$$

In other words, your participation grade is the *higher* of (i) your preliminary partition grade, computed according to equation (1), and (ii) the grade you *would* get for the course if participation were not graded. Equation (2) ensures that participation will only help you; it will not hurt you.

Of course, sometimes exceptions need to be made. That is, sometimes a student's circumstances require that their participation grade be computed in a manner differently from the one just described. So I reserve the right to change individual students' participation grades, if the circumstances warrant.