

FDC HAPPENINGS

August 29, 2022

Welcome to the FDC! Professor Uttara Manohar



Join us in welcoming the newest member of the FDC! Professor Manohar joins us over the 2022-23 school year as the FDC's Faculty Fellow for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. She has been hard at work putting together programming

for this year, including the [Equitable Educators Learning Community](#) featured on page 3.

About Professor Manohar

"I am an assistant professor in the School of Communication, Media & Theatre Arts. I was born and raised in India and moved to the United States in the year 2009 to pursue my graduate studies. I earned my M.A. and Ph.D. in Communication Studies from the Ohio State University. My identity as an international faculty member, and a woman of color, has shaped my journey in higher education. Advocacy is an integral part of my role as an educator, scholar, and a member of the EMU community."

Learn more about Professor Manohar's work [here](#), and watch for more DEI programming coming up!

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CAMPUS HIGHLIGHTS: YOU GOT THIS!

APPLY THOSE GOOD OL' LOAS

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The beginning of the academic year can bring excitement and/or anxiousness as students start to arrive on campus and prepare for their first day of classes. These feelings and emotions can be heightened for our students with disabilities

From the Disability Resource Center

A very common statistic shared amongst disability services offices is that 19% of undergraduates in 2015-16 reported having a disability, of which 18% identified as Hispanic and 17% identified as Black. At Eastern Michigan University (EMU), we serve approximately 750 registered students with disabilities, which equates to approximately 5% of our student population. These numbers do not account for the many students at EMU that have not self-disclosed their disability or sought services from our office. Around this time, instructors will start receiving emails from students with their letters of accommodation (LOA) attached. Providing accommodation can be intimidating for both students and their instructors. Have no fear, you got this! The DRC has provided 3 steps for instructors to assist with addressing accommodations.



A young man sits at a table using a laptop computer and reading a book in braille.

Step 1: Acknowledge and Address

When receiving LOAs from students, it is important to acknowledge receiving the LOA and then address it with your student.

- Acknowledgment - Students can provide their LOA to instructors as an email attachment or a paper copy. Upon receiving the LOA, we suggest that instructors immediately schedule a meeting with the student to address the accommodations detailed in the LOA.
- Address - The most important aspect of applying accommodations to your course is understanding the details provided in the LOA. For example, a student can have a letter with ten accommodations listed, and how those accommodations are applied may look different in different courses based on how instructors have structured a class. This means that in one class, all ten accommodations may apply, while in another, a student only utilizes a few to support their access in a course.

Addressing the LOA allows the instructor and student to discuss the LOA in detail and how the accommodations should be applied in the course.

Step 2: Follow up and Follow Through

Once the LOA has been acknowledged and addressed, follow up with your student via email.

- Sending your student a detailed follow-up email detailing the agreed upon application of the LOA applied to your specific class is a great way to provide clear communication and accountability to both parties.
- If you and your student have any future questions about their accommodations, the detailed email that you created can serve as a reference to your conversation.

Step 3: Apply

Once you and the student are clear of the expectations of the accommodations applicable in your class, it is now time to apply them. Would you like to learn more about the many faculty resources the DRC has available, from frequently asked questions, faculty handbook, to our 4 part faculty development video series? If so, please visit our faculty resource link at www.emich.edu/drc

UPCOMING EVENTS

READING IN
PRINT?

scan the QR code to
access the links in
this issue



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Holman Success Center Open House

August 31, 2022

11am-4pm, Eagle Study
Tables - Halle Library

Enjoy complimentary coffee and donuts, enter a raffle to win Eagle Rewards prizes, check out the new and improved student planners, and get to know the Holman Success Center team! Open to all members of the EMU community. Learn more [here](#).

New Faculty Learning Community

First meeting

September 23

2pm-3:30pm in 109 Halle

In this learning community for first year faculty, we'll discuss how to lay the groundwork for a successful EMU career, in terms of teaching, research, and service, and how you find the right balance. Together, we will support one another as we dive into an unknowable but exciting future. Learn more or register [here](#) by September 15.

LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Teaching and Learning Together

Applications due September 2

This learning community will focus on moving student-faculty partnerships forward on our campus. We are seeking [faculty](#) and [student](#) fellows for the 2022-23 school year. We invite you to read more about this community [here](#).

Equitable Educators Learning Community

Applications due September 15

Led by the FDC's new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion faculty fellow, Uttara Manohar, this group will bring together educators who want to develop cultural humility and commit to creating inclusive spaces and equitable outcomes for students. Apply or learn more [here](#).

General Education Professional Learning Communities

Applications due September 15

These learning communities are opportunities to share learning activities and enrich our GE teaching and learning practices at EMU. This semester we will focus on Global Awareness, US Diversity, and the Arts. Learn more or apply for the learning communities [here](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

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Join us for this workshop to learn specific and practical communication tools based on Nonviolent Communication (NVC) in order to support an open, inclusive, and respectful classroom environment. This workshop will be led by Drs. Paula Willoquet and Jenny Kindred. Learn more here.

Meaningful Conversations: Facilitating Empathic Listening and Mindful Expression

September 30,
9am-1pm, in 300 Halle

Women in Philanthropy Grant Applications Open

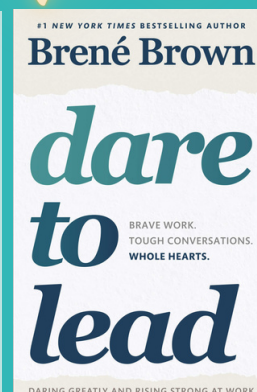
Applications due October 10th

The Women in Philanthropy at EMU group supports projects that align with the mission and vision of Eastern Michigan University. WIP is accepting grant proposals for projects that will enhance learning opportunities, foster creativity, expand partnerships between EMU and the community, or otherwise improve the EMU climate. To submit a proposal or check eligibility, visit this page.

SPOTLIGHTS

This week's book spotlight features *Dare to Lead: Brave Work, Tough Conversations, Whole Hearts* by Brené Brown. In this title, Brown teaches what it means to "dare to lead" through topics such as being vulnerable as a leader, sharing power and recognizing that leadership is not about our title but instead about how we hold ourselves accountable and what we see in others.

Click here to read the full spotlight or to check out this book, or others, from our library.



In his teaching spotlight, Dr. Ahmed talks about revitalizing the engineering program, giving students class options ranging from ethics to leadership along with their core curriculum. He also discusses the importance of kindness in teaching which he learned from one of his 10th grade teachers. To read the full spotlight, please click here.

**Dr. Muhammad
Ahmed**
Professor - Engineering

TEACHING BLOG: I HATE GRADING. SO I STOPPED. (SORT OF.)

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I hate grading. I probably shouldn't say that out loud, but it's true. I hate grading. It's the part of our job I dislike the most. And, if conversations with others in academia are any indication, I'm not alone.

Except, that's not entirely accurate. I enjoy reading student work. I enjoy seeing how their work improves with each draft and how understandings and applications of concepts grow. It's not the *process* of grading that I hate. It's part that comes *after*. The part that requires judgement.

On the surface, grades are supposed to be a neutral way of helping students understand their progress in grasping the material. In practice, we know they are not. We all have stories of the student who is deflated and gives up after a receiving an F or otherwise earned a grade below their expectations—even though failure (or, at least, not doing as well as desired) is often a part of the learning process. We all have stories of students who are happy to get their C and move on, and stories of students whose mental well-being relies on earning that A+.

But we also have stories about us. We all have stories at being frustrated that students don't read or incorporate our comments or about the student we encourage to re-do their assignment and raise their grade and being discouraged when they didn't. And we all have stories of the late nights grading wondering why we do more than the easiest of assessments that would save us time and energy. (On the flip side, we also likely all have stories of sometimes choosing to do the easiest of assessments because doing more feels like a waste of our time and energy.)

So, no, I do not hate the process of grading. I hate the way students (and we) view grading.

By Dr. Rita Shah

I hate the tension grading can create between instructors and students. In other words, what I really hate is the *effect* of grading.

That is why, when at the end of 2020 I heard about a Twitter-based book club reading Susan Blum's edited collection *UnGrading: Why Rating Students Undermines Learning (and What to Do Instead)*, I jumped at the chance to join.

It was in that book club that the notion of ungrading clicked: The goal of removing grades is not necessarily to eliminate grades altogether (though that is the route many of us take), particularly given the requirement most of us face to submit a final grade; rather, the goal is to change the *relationship* with grades, so that students focus on the formative aspects of the grading process and not just the letter or number they receive.

For me, accomplishing this reframing involved fully ungrading my MA level courses. Doing so the first time required adjusting my existing assignments and incorporating new ones. Doing so the second time led me to develop a semester-long project-based assignment that allowed students in my Qualitative Methods course to comprehend the basics of qualitati-

SUBMIT A BLOG POST

We welcome blog posts from faculty, lecturers, staff, and interested others on teaching and learning topics. Email us at faculty_development@emich.edu with your blog post idea for the opportunity to be featured in future newsletters!

ve studies and develop skills to critique others' studies. (I have been invited to write a book chapter on ungrading my MA-level courses and will be happy to share it once it is published.) Student feedback in both classes highlights that the ungrading approach helped them focus more on the class content and skill building and stress less on the numbers and letters. (I do intend to ungrade my undergraduate courses, but am holding off for reasons that, honestly, probably deserve its own write-up.)

For those of us who have never incorporated gradeless assignments, ungrading can seem daunting at first, but it doesn't have to be. If you aren't ready to ungrade, but want to learn more, there are tons of great resources out there. Here are a few:

- Read Susan Blum's edited collection;
- Join the [Discord #ungradinghub](#) to connect with ungraders across institutions and to gather ideas and support;
- Check out [#UngradingCon](#) on Saturday, October 15 (you might even see a familiar face).

If you, like me, are ready to try something different, there are lots of little ways to start incorporating ungrading methods into the classroom, none of which require upending your syllabus mid-semester. Two ideas that worked really for me are:

1. Altering how scaffolding assignments are graded: Rather than a traditional grade, each draft earned a complete (C) or incomplete (I). A "C" means they move on to the next part of the paper/project/etc. An "I" means they revise until they get a C (usually only takes one more attempt). By the time you get the final version, students have improved the skill the assignment was intended to build, and you get to see the fruition of their and your hard work in helping them reach the end.

2. Incorporating midterm [self-reflections/progress letters](#): These provide students an opportunity to reflect on their time in the course, where they have excelled, and where they need assistance. You can also add a final letter to help students reflect on the class as a whole and provide an honest reflection of the final grade they think they have earned and why.

Here are some additional ideas:

- Check out David Buck's [Alternative Grading Resources](#);
- See Starr Sackstein's [Hacking Assessment](#) for a slew of ways to incorporating ungrading;
- Adjust [rubrics](#) to be more content-based than points-based;
- Incorporate contract-based grading and/or peer review (examples include Ch. 7 in Blum's *Ungrading* and Inoue's [Labor-Based Grading Contracts](#)).

And, of course, let's lean on each other! I know I am not the first on our campus to pursue ungrading techniques, and I certainly will not be the last. Last year's WAC ungrading book club is proof of that. The number and types of brilliant techniques being used on our campus are as varied as we are. So, let's make sure we ask each other for advice and support, too.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rita Shah is an Associate Professor with the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminology.