Goal Prospectus

The idea behind this informal piece of writing—what I am calling your Goal Prospectus—is for you to reflect on and write (briefly) about what your primary learning goals are for this semester. Almost every class, including ours, has a set of course objectives. While meaningful, these objects are generic, abstract, and widely applicable to the entire class. The purpose of this brief assignment is to reflect on how those objectives fit into the richer, individualized context of who you are as a student and what you’d like to get out of being in this class. Your objectives for yourself can be anything and everything. For example, if you do not like American Literature, your goal might be to try to figure our why more specifically you do not like it, or how studying it this semester might be appropriated for what you do care about. Or maybe your goal is to speak up more in class, to improve your writing, be it creative or analytical, or to become bettered verses in the subject in preparation for a future career in teaching. The point is that we all bring unique learning contexts with us; thus, the more we think about what those contexts are, the better we can make learning matter for us. While no one class can serve all students’ needs, knowing what your goals are helps you think metacognitively about your own educational process and, ideally, makes said process more valuable. This in part is what ungrading is about, and your Goal Prospectus functions as an important component in this process.

In the two self-evaluations you will complete this semester, I will ask you to reflect back on this Goal Prospectus as you consider the work you’ve done up to that point, and as you think forward to what you’d like to accomplish in the future—either for the rest of the semester (in the case of your midterm self-evaluation) or the rest of your education in and beyond the classroom (in the case of your final self-evaluation). As mentioned on the syllabus, in both self-evaluations you will suggest a holistic course grade for yourself based on the work you’ve so far completed, which includes in-class participation (verbal and non-verbal participation), at-home work (keeping up with the readings), and writing assignments. To do this, you will consider in part whether you have achieved the goals you set out for yourself in your Goal Prospectus. However, it is important to stress that your proposed grade is not necessarily determined by whether or not you’ve achieved the goals in your Goal Prospectus. What matters more is that you have engaged with the process of self-directed learning. Semesters are finite entities; we simply cannot accomplish all that we want in the span of time they offer. Moreover, your goals might change mid-course. This happens all the time and is a natural part of our growth as learners. There is nothing wrong with reflecting on how your goals have changed. Again, what is important is that you reflect on what your goals are in the first place.

For this assignment, you only need to state what you think you would like to achieve by the end of this semester. You have been in the course for a week now and likely have some sense of how the class runs and what we will be reading for the semester. Based on your own goals as a student—goals that likely reach beyond this class, since growth-based learning is not a discrete, semester-bound process—what might you like to see yourself accomplish in the time that we have together? What would you like to take with you when you leave? Please answer these two questions in a 1-page response.