

**“Grade, Grade Me Good!
You Know that You Should.
So, Please, Please Me Like I Please You”¹**

“Thank you for seeing me,” said the student as she sat down in the chair next to the instructor’s desk. “I want to ask you about the grade you gave me on my paper. You gave me a C+. And I don’t understand. I did everything you said to do – I followed the instructions to the letter. I got the required number of references; followed the format exactly.

....

“Yes, I looked at the comments you put on the draft and responded to all of your comments. They were very helpful too. And I think this is one of the best papers I ever wrote for any professor.”

“I don’t mean to sound conceited, but I have a 3.85 GPA and I always get A on all my papers.

....

No, I just don’t understand how you could give me such a bad grade. It’s so out of character for me. I’ve written tons of papers for teachers ever since high school and for three years of college. This is not a C paper!”

....

“You see, I really can’t get a C or even a B in this course. I’m pre-med. I’m going to be a doctor. I have to have A’s.”

...

“Your course is only an elective for me. If you don’t re-evaluate my paper, I think I’ll just drop the course. Or, maybe I’ll talk to your department Chair. You said in class that grading is subjective, on essays. I think you were being arbitrary when you gave me that C.”

Questions:

- 1. Suppose you are an experienced faculty member and quite confident in the grade you assigned. How do you work with this student to effectively promote greater learning and maturation?**
- 2. Would your response differ if you were new to teaching or if you otherwise did not have great confidence in the grade you assigned? If so, how and why?**
- 3. Is there a statement about grading and appealing grades which should become part of your course syllabus? Is there a reasonably clear way for faculty to communicate to students that professional judgment, while “subjective” is informed and not necessarily arbitrary, without standards, or random?**

¹All characters, situations, and stories described here are fictional. No reference to actual persons, events, or institutions is intended or assumed. Drs. Peter and Noreen Facione developed and refined these hypothetical cases based on the experiences gained through their many decades of service as faculty, administrators, workshop presenters, and leadership consultants to colleges and universities throughout the nation.