

The Great Klumpp Incomplete Memo

Over the years I have become an enemy of incompletes. My experience is that they seldom offer the benefits that people imagine for them when they decide to take them. On the other hand, there are times . . . So I have prepared the following thoughts and guidelines for you.

There are basically three problems with incompletes. First, as time passes, the link between your effort and the learning of the course dims. Assignments are made not simply to give you work to do, but to provide you a way of implementing in your own work the kinds of things that you are learning from the course. Thus, learning delayed is learning denied. Second, the vacuum of work that all of us see just over the horizon is a mirage. There will always be other work to do and so incompletes left undone become burdens at a later time. Third, I plan due dates to pace my grading. Late papers are often hard for me to find time to grade because other obligations have commanded my time. As a result, my response to your work is neither timely nor as relevant to what you are doing when it is received. Recently, departmental rules on incompletes have ratcheted up this problem. There is little tolerance of you nor me on these matters.

There seem to me to be two good reasons for taking an incomplete, and only two. First, even though the vacuum is a mirage, there are peaks and valleys in our loads. Incompletes are a way of queuing a peak into a valley. If the valley is really there, such a move may be justified. Second, we all also go through times when we simply are not as successful as at other times in expressing our ideas in quality work. When you're hot, you're hot; when you're not, you're not. Neither of these seem to call for extended incompletes, but merely extending due dates for a week or so.

Therefore, this is the Klumpp policy on incompletes:

On Individual Assignments:

- *On or before* the date the assignment is due, you may extend the due date by negotiating an alternative date on the form below. That date should be in the reasonably near future and it may require a justification by you as to why you think you will be able to meet that renegotiated date. *Only one extension may be negotiated on the assignment.*
- For papers that reach me by the renegotiated deadline, I will either grade them in my normal pattern with full comments or not, depending on my load at the time. There will be no grade penalty. Please notice that under our current rules on incompletes, I consider your failure to complete on time to relieve my moral obligation for full response to your work. You may restore my obligation by indicating on the title page of the assignment that you do not care about the timing of the grading, you just want full feedback. In short, the feedback is more important than the grade.
- Papers that do not meet the later deadline will be graded immediately and will receive no comments. You may request comments after receiving the grade but they go very late into the queue and my obligations are not to you as a student in the class but as a student in our program.

On Incompletes for the Course:

- In addition to the above, you and I need to negotiate an incomplete form which specifies (1) a final due date, (2) the grade that you will be assigned in the course if that renegotiated deadline is not met. Such an agreement is necessary if any renegotiated assignment takes us beyond the end of the semester.

Student Name _____ Course: COMM _____

Assignment: _____

New Due Date: _____

(Student)

(Instructor)