This is an Internet course. There are no classroom; no face-to-face, meetings.

Dr. David Strutton

During all 13 class “days” on which assignments or tests are due, I will spend three or so hours online answering student questions or addressing student issues. When student questions or issues are universally-applicable rather than personal in nature (which often happens), responses will be shared on CANVAS.

Office Phone: 565-3123; David.Strutton@unt.edu; contact Professor using this e-mail address only, please. TA: Ashleigh Allison; please contact by and through Ashleighallison2@my.unt.edu

Required Resources:


Book 1 features an access code that lets students enter the publisher’s web page for the book. Access to this site is required in order to complete assigned online practice exams. Access to this site is necessary to pass this course. Access this book using the following link: https://he.kendallhunt.com/product/marketing-scratch-principles-you-really-need-know-0. This is not a “live-link.” Find the live-link elsewhere on CANVAS. When you open the link, click on “Choose Format” and pick the e-book package. Congratulations, you just saved $50.00.


Book 2 likewise features an access code that lets students enter the publisher’s web page for the book. Access to this site is required in order to complete assigned online preparatory exams – and the actual examinations themselves. Access to this site thus is necessary to merely pass this course. Preparatory are designed to prepare students to successfully complete the regular online exams. Regular online exams will only test content taken from Book 2. Access this book using: https://he.kendallhunt.com/product/marketing-scratch-just-facts. This is not a “live-link,” either. Find the live-link elsewhere on CANVAS. When you open the link, click on “Choose Format” and pick the e-book package. Congratulations, you just saved $20.00.
Students must purchase each book ONLINE. (See “how to” directions, below. Students must purchase online versions only. Students should purchase these two books on the 1st day of class or before class begins. Fail to do any of these three things (purchase online, purchase e versions only, purchase immediately), and students unfortunately will find that completing course assignments and examinations successfully and on-time will prove quite the challenge. The great likelihood, then, is that students will end up having to drop the course.

To acquire: Marketing from Scratch: The Principles You Really Need to Know, 2nd edition (Book 1 in this course)

- Students will want to go to the following link: https://he.kendallhunt.com/product/marketing-scratch-principles-you-really-need-know-0 (Links to an external site.)
- Choose eBook Package as the format
  - You can choose the Print Package, however, you will have to pay and wait for shipping.
  - This means you could fail and almost certainly will get a lower grade in the course. NOT A GOOD CHOICE.
- Once format is selected, add to cart and proceed to checkout
- If you selected the eBook Package, please make sure to double check that your email address you’re providing is correct
- After you’ve purchased, you should receive an email immediately containing the textbook access code and the Webcom 2.0 access code, each come with a set of instructions in that same email
- Follow the instructions accordingly to gain access to both components.

To acquire: Marketing from Scratch: Just the Facts (Book 2 in this Course)

- Students will want to go to the following link: https://he.kendallhunt.com/product/marketing-scratch-just-facts (Links to an external site.)
- Choose eBook Package as the format
  - You can choose the Print Package, however, you will have to pay and wait for shipping
- Once format is selected, add to cart and proceed to checkout
- If you selected the eBook Package, please make sure to double check that your email address you’re providing is correct
- After you’ve purchased, you should receive an email immediately containing the textbook access code and the Webcom 2.0 access code, each come with a set of instructions in that same email
- Follow the instructions accordingly to gain access to both components

What’s happening here is that you purchase books directly from the publisher. The publisher is Kendall-Hunt. The phone number for K-H, the publisher, is 563-589-1000. This number only works during business hours. Call the number, explain your problem (if it relates to not being able to acquire either book) to the operator, and you will directly to the right number and person to solve your problem.

Course Objectives

Course objectives parallel those associated with most survey courses in which students obtain exposure to a business discipline such as marketing. Specifically, this course:

- Provides students with an understanding of the scope of Marketing and its role within in the firm and society.
• Provides students an understanding of the scope of the tasks, responsibilities and challenges that marketing managers face in today's complex and competitive global business environment.

• Provide students with a working knowledge of basic marketing terminology and concepts. Exams emphasize a basic understanding of the major terms and concepts to ensure that students understanding know the "language of marketing."

• Introduces students to the “hows, whys & whats” of the marketing function as a basic and indispensable driver of all business success.

• Introduces students to key marketing terms, principles, concepts and values.

Dear Students:

What will actually happen during this brief online course? Lots, and that’s why students must hit the ground running and then execute continuously. This course compresses 16 weeks of learning into less than 3 weeks of class time; i.e., 13 days. So what else could we expect but a wham-bam experience?

PURPOSEFUL REDUNDANCY: There is substantial redundancy, duplication of key points, in this syllabus. This repetition is intended to lessen the likelihood that students fail to complete assignments/tests on time. Redundancies are also embedded to ensure that students have no “I do not know that” or “I did not understand this was due” excuses. But, if and when you don’t understand something or what to do next write me, using my email address only, i.e., David.Strutton@unt.edu. Or, write teaching assistant Ashleigh Alison, who can be reached via a portal on CANVAS. (This is the first redundancy.)

TWO BOOKS, BOTH REQUIRED: As shown immediately above and discussed again below, this course features two books. Both are required. You will tested extensively, and quickly, on the content present inside each book. As also noted, please purchase those books online and then begin studying the assigned content inside each book as soon as possible. (The precise assignments are shown in the Table that follows.) Note: all of Book 2 is assigned. Note, further, only selected portions (about 60%, in all) of Book 1 is assigned. If students fail to complete assignments and examinations (there are three types of examinations) on a timely fashion, they simply cannot complete, much less succeed in, this course.

REGULAR EXAMINATIONS: Three online regular examinations are scheduled. The first online regular examination must be completed by Friday, December 21 at 11:59 PM (Exam I). Students can take this examination early, but students cannot complete the exam late. The second online regular examination must be completed by Saturday, January 5th at 11:59 (Exam II). The same principle applies; exam II can be completed early but not taken late. The third and final Examination must be completed by Friday, January 11th at 11:59 (Exam III). Any and all of these three examination can be completed early. Early, here, means any time before their due date. But keep the following points in mind: ONCE STUDENTS OPEN ANY ONLINE REGULAR EXAM, WHENEVER THEY OPEN ANY EXAM, THEY WILL HAVE EXACTLY 60 MINUTES TO COMPLETE IT. So when students “enter” an exam, game-on, they’d best be prepared to roll. (For the record, students can take as long as they want to complete Practice Exams or Preparatory Exams).

• Each of these three exams can be accessed via the CANVAS platform for this course.
• Every exam will feature the same set of questions. But these sets of questions will not be presented to students in the same order. Students, presumably, can figure out why for themselves. To be certain, however, this randomization of the presentation of questions is designed to eliminate team-efforts, when it comes to test-taking, inside this course.
• Each examination is worth a possible 750 points. Each 50 question test will be timed (again, 60 minutes from whatever time students begin).
• Deadlines; due dates, will not be extended except under conditions where extreme, University-approved, and documented constraints or impediments have arisen.
Each exam question will be based on material from the Modules that students study in Book 2, and only from that source.

Ten practice exams taken from the chapters assigned in Book 1 must be completed. Practice Exam batch 1 (from Chapters 1, 3, 4, and 6) must be completed by December 21st at 11:59 PM. Practice Exam batch II (from Chapters 8, 12, and 14) must be completed by January 4th at 11:59 PM. Practice Exam batch III (from Chapters 15, 16, and 17) must be completed by January 11 at 11:59 PM. Each practice exam is worth 100 points – that’s 1000 possible points in total. Practice exams can be taken twice, if you want. Only students’ highest score is counted in the final score tabulation.

STUDENTS ACCESS THESE TEN PRACTICE EXAMS VIA THE WEBSITE FOR BOOK 2. THAT MEANS THEY VISIT THE PUBLISHER THROUGH THE LINK PROVIDED TO THEM WHEN THEY PURCHASED BOOK 1.

As noted, students can complete any practice exam at any time they want during the Wintermester; that is, before the exam’s deadline has passed. But students cannot complete any examination after the deadline to take it has passed.

Deadlines will not be extended except under conditions where extreme, University-approved, and documented constraints have occurred.

Each practice exam question will be based on material present in the assigned chapters inside Book 1, and only from Book 1.

Thirteen preparatory exams taken from the Modules assigned in Book 2 must be completed. Preparatory Exam batch 1 (from Modules 1-5) must be completed by December 21st at 11:59 PM. Preparatory Exam batch II (from Modules 6-9) must be completed by January 4th at 11:59 PM. Preparatory Exam batch III (from Modules 10-13) must be completed by January 11 at 11:59 PM. Each Preparatory Exam is worth 100 points – that’s 1300 possible points. Students can take these Preparatory Exams twice, if they want. Only student's highest score will be counted. As noted, these Preparatory Exams are designed to prepare students to do well on the regular exams.

STUDENTS ACCESS THESE THIRTEEN PREPARATORY EXAMS VIA THE WEBSITE FOR THE BOOK. THAT MEANS STUDENTS VISIT THE PUBLISHER THROUGH THE LINK PROVIDED TO THEM WHEN THEY PURCHASED BOOK 2.

Students can complete any Preparatory Exam at any time they want during the Wintermester before its specific deadline. But students cannot complete any Preparatory Exam after the deadline to take it has passed. Deadlines will not be extended except under conditions where extreme, University-approved, and documented constraints have occurred.

Each Preparatory Exam question will be taken from one of the 13 Modules that students study in Book 2.

GRADING: Students who have been keeping score will note 2300 possible points are available to be earned in this course. To earn an “A”, students must earn 88% and above of those points. To earn an “A”, students must earn 88% and above of those points. To earn a “B”, students must earn 78% and above of those points. To earn a “C”, students must earn 68% and above of those points. To earn a “D”, students must earn 58% and above of those points. Small curves will probably be added to each Exam score. Note I wrote probably; whether or not “curves” happen depends on average test scores.

CONTACTING PROFESSOR: Email me at any time when you have questions, concerns, or want to have something explained. THE ONLY way to email me is through my UNT email address: David.Strutton@unt.edu. I will ALWAYS respond within 24 hours and usually much sooner than that. Whenever an individual student’s concern is one that applies to most or all other students taking the class I will share my (presumably helpful) response online on CANVAS as an announcement.

READ AND STAY CURRENT ON ANNOUNCEMENTS: Students should routinely look for announcements posted on the CANVAS platform for this course. Many messages will be posted during week 1; fewer but still substantial number of announcements will be posted during week 2 (which follows New Year’s Day); and then a bunch of messages will start up again as our brief time ends during the third week. Whew!
STUDENT DISCUSSIONS; SHARING BEST PRACTICE OR SOLUTIONS: Students will find a discussion board, or some name to that effect, through which they can share thoughts about best practices or how best to solve problems. I will occasionally visit the discussion board and may share my relevant thoughts on the aforementioned CANVAS announcements page.

STAY CURRENT: Students absolutely cannot allow themselves to fall behind during this 13 day course. You can work ahead between during the break between Christmas and New Year’s to ensure you keep ahead, if you want. But I am not suggesting students should or have to work during this time to keep up.

Now noted for the third time, students absolutely, positively must purchase both books, as online books, on the first day of class or before the WinterMester actually begins in order to keep up. As noted on page 1 of this syllabus, students must purchase the books in order to gain access to the codes (one code per book) that gives them access to the assignments.

WELCOME! GOOD LUCK! I am here to help students learn what they need to know about marketing, so get in touch with me during the first hint of a problem. One of my major jobs in this course is to help students solve their marketing course related problems.

Dr. David Strutton
## TABLE 1. TOPICS, TESTS, TIMELINES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Days</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Book 1 “Principles You Really Need to Know” - Assigned Chapters</th>
<th>Book 2 “Just the Facts” Modules – Assigned Modules &amp; Examination Dates</th>
<th>Due Dates – Practice Exams Preparatory Exams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>December 17 (Monday)</td>
<td>Chapter 1: Core Concepts and Principles</td>
<td>Module 1: Marketing Fundamentals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>December 18 (Tuesday)</td>
<td>Chapter 3: Developing and Executing Marketing Plans</td>
<td>Module 2: Strategic Planning</td>
<td>Practice Exam Chapters 1, 3, 4 &amp; 6 must be completed by 11:59 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3</td>
<td>December 19 (Wednesday)</td>
<td>Chapter 6: Managing Marketing Information</td>
<td>Module 3: Marketing Planning Module 4: the Marketing Environment</td>
<td>Prepartory Exams Modules 1-5 must be completed by 11:59 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 4</td>
<td>December 20 (Thursday)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Module 5: Marketing Research</td>
<td>Examination 1: Modules 1-5 must be completed by 11:59.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 5</td>
<td>December 21 (Friday)</td>
<td>Chapter 8: Understanding Business Buyer Behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 6</td>
<td>January 2 (Wednesday)</td>
<td>No Assignment</td>
<td>Module 6: Consumer Behavior Module 7: Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 7</td>
<td>January 3 (Thursday)</td>
<td>Chapter 5: Marketing Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility</td>
<td>Module 8: Marketing Ethics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Day 8**  
January 4  
(Friday)  
**Chapter 12: Brands and Brand Management**

**Module 9: Products, Services, Brands and Product Life Cycles**

- Practice Exams from BK 1 (Chapters 12, 14) must be completed by 11:59 PM
- Preparatory Exams from Book 2 must be completed by 11:59 PM (Modules 6, 7, 8, & 9)
- Online Regular Examination (Modules 6, 7, 8, & 9) completed by 11:59 PM on **Saturday, January 5th**

Students obviously should work ahead to complete these assignments in a staggered fashion.

**Day 14**  
January 7  
(Monday)  
**Chapter 11: Developing New Products, and Your Creativity**

**Module 10: New Product Development**

**Day 10**  
January 8  
(Tuesday)  
**Chapter 14: Key Intermediaries: Wholesalers, Retailing and Facilitating Agents**

**Module 11: Supply Chain Management**

**Day 11**  
January 9  
(Wednesday)  
**Chapter 15: Pricing and Pricing Management**

**Module 12: Pricing**

**Day 12**  
January 10  
(Thursday)  
**Chapter 17: Advertising, Sales Promotion, Publicity, Public Relations, and Personal Selling**

**Module 13: Marketing Communication**

- Practice Exams Chapters 1, 3, 4 & 6 must be completed by 11:59 PM
- Prep. Exams Modules 1-5 must be completed by 11:59 PM

**Day 13**  
January 11  
(Friday)  
Examination 3: Modules 10, 11, 12, & 13 must be completed by 11:59 PM.

- Practice Exams Chapters 15, 16, and 17 must be completed by 11:59 PM
- Preparatory Exams Modules 10, 11, 12 & 13 must be completed by 11:59 PM.

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**COURSE POLICIES & IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

No excuses other than those that certify, in writing, family death, illness, illnesses, accidents or other hugely negative life events are accepted for missing deadlines on all regular examinations, practice examinations, or preparatory tests, or other grading opportunities that might arise as extra credit. This is because all opportunities are open for long time periods of time and are being announced now (at the beginning of Wintermester). If students wait until the last minute to complete...
assignments, they may encounter technical problems resulting in lower or no grades. **Deadlines will not and cannot be reset in this abbreviated course. Please, please, please do not wait until the last day on which assignments are due to begin them.**

**Assigning Final Grades**

**There are 4550 possible points available to be earned in this course. See the breakout of this points-distribution below.**

To earn an “A”, students must earn 88% and above of those points. To earn an “A”, students must earn 88% and above of those points. To earn a “B”, students must earn 78% and above of those points. To earn a “C”, students must earn 68% and above of those points. To earn a “D”, students must earn 58% and above of those points. An “F” is earned by any student who fails to earn at least 58% of available grades.

**Small curves will probably be added to each Exam score.**

**In-Class Exams (2,250 Points)**

**Three online regular exams** are scheduled during the term at the times identified in the Table and discussion presented above. These exams are each worth 750 points for a total of 2,250 points.

The three online regular exams are designed to test student comprehension of material presented in class. Each online regular exam consists of 50 multiple choice and true-false questions.

**Practice Exams (1000 points)**

There are 10 practice exams worth 100 points each or 1000 points in total. Practice exams are delivered online and are available via the website associated with book 1. Access to this website is via an access code provided with your copy of the text. **You must purchase a new book in order to acquire this code. Yes, this syllabus keeps saying this same thing over and over again but consider that a measure how important it is for students to follow this direction.**

**Preparatory Exams (1300 points)**

There are 13 preparatory exams with 100 points each or 1300 points in total. Preparatory exams are delivered online and are available via the website associated with book 2. Access to this website is via an access code provided with your copy of Book 2. **You must purchase a new book in order to acquire this code. Yes, this syllabus keeps saying this same thing over and over again but consider that a measure how important it is for students to follow this direction.**

- Students earning 4004 or more points will receive a final grade of “A.” (88% and above)
- Students earning 3549 or more points but less than 4004 points will receive a final grade of “B.” (78%+)
- Students earning 3094 or more points but less than 3549 points will receive a final grade of “C.” (68%+)
- Students earning 2639 or more points but less than 3049 points will receive a final grade of “D.” (58%+)
- Students earning less than 2639 points will receive a final grade of “F.” (less than 58%)

**Contesting Exam Grades**
Students one **weekday** after the results of the first two in-class exam have been posted to CANVAS in which to contest grades or bring errors to the attention of my TA. *Missing or incorrect grades will not be adjusted after that deadline has passed.*

**Communicating with Dr. Strutton or Ms. Alison; TA**

All email communications with me should be via regular email using the address shown above in this syllabus. Again, **all email communications with me or my TA must be regular UNT email (see address above).**

**All email communications should be treated as professional correspondence.** This is a fundamental course in the core business curriculum. Professors are tasked with training business professionals. Bear this in mind as you craft your communications. The following email guidelines should be strictly followed:

Failure to follow these syllabus guidelines about email professionalism will result in an email returned **unread** with a note to ‘edit and resubmit.’

**Academic Misconduct**

All work performed in this class must be your own. Violation of this policy can result in a grade of ‘F’ for the course and notification of appropriate university officials for disciplinary action. Academic misconduct consists of, but is not limited to, the use of notes or other memory aids during exams, obtaining/passing answers or other information from/to others during exams, plagiarism, passing copies of exams to others, and obtaining copies of exams from others. Students should familiarize themselves with the University’s disciplinary rules and regulations available in the Student Guidebook and the Student Code of Conduct brochure. Both are available from information desk in the Administration building or the third floor of the Student Union.

**University & Departmental Policies on Grade Changes**

Any student who believes a grade has been improperly awarded should first contact the instructor who awarded the grade to discuss the issue and attempt to resolve the differences. Any instructor no longer associated with UNT at the time of the appeal will be represented in these proceedings by the chair of the department in question. A student not in residence the semester following the awarding of the grade or a resident student who is unable to resolve the differences with the instructor has 30 days following the first day of the succeeding semester to file a written appeal with the chair of the instructor’s department, or the equivalent administrative unit. Refer to the Undergraduate Catalogue for further details.

No grade except 'I' may be removed from a student’s record once properly recorded. Changes are not permitted after grades have been filed except to correct documented clerical errors.

Requests for error corrections must be initiated immediately after the close of the semester for which the grade was recorded.

A faculty member who believes an error has been made in calculating or recording a grade may submit in person a request with a detailed justification for a grade change to the department chair and the appropriate dean. The Registrar accepts requests for grade changes only from the academic deans.

**University Policy on Awarding and Removal of Incomplete (I)**

The grade of I is a non-punitive grade given only during the last one-fourth of a semester. This grade can be awarded only if a student:
• Is passing the course;
• Has reasons beyond the control of the student why the work cannot be completed on schedule; and
• Arranges with the instructor to finish the course at a later date by completing specific requirements that the instructor must list on the grade sheet.

A student may remove a grade of I within one year by completing the stipulated work, paying a fee at the Bursar’s Office and returning the permit form to the instructor. Obtain the Student Request to Remove Grade of I from the departmental secretary. The instructor then files the permit form in the Registrar’s Office along with the grade, and the grade point average is adjusted accordingly. If a student does not complete the stipulated work within the time specified (not to exceed one year after taking the course), the instructor may change the grade of I to a grade that carries credit or assign a grade of F if appropriate. The GPA is adjusted accordingly.

A student who could not complete final examinations because of illness may remove a grade of I without payment of the fee. The academic dean is authorized to waive the fee upon certification of illness signed by the attending physician.

**Departmental Policy on Informing Students of Final Grades**

Final grades will be posted via CANVAS’s grade book. Please bear in mind that departmental staff are not allowed to give out grades. Do not call or stop by the department office to ask for your grade. Only I can release your grade.

**Americans with Disabilities Act**

The College of Business complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodation for qualified students with disabilities. If you have an established disability as defined in the Act and would like to request accommodation, please see me as soon as possible. My office hours and office number are shown on the first page of this syllabus. Please note: **University policy requires that students notify their instructor within the first week of class that an accommodation will be needed.** Please do not hesitate to contract me now or in the future if you have a question or if I can be of assistance.

**Changes to Syllabus**

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus at any time. Changes are disseminated verbally in class and / or via announcements in CANVAS. There may not be a hard copy revision to this document. It is students’ responsibility to stay on top of any changes, regardless of how the change is disseminated.
"It was a rookie error. After 10 years I should have known better, but I went to my office the day after final grades were posted. There was a tentative knock on the door. "Professor Wiesenfeld? I took your Physics 2121 class? I flunked it? I wonder if there's anything I can do to improve my grade?" I thought: "Why are you asking me? Isn't it too late to worry about it? Do you dislike making declarative statements?"

After the student gave his tale of woe and left, the phone rang. "I got a D in your class. Is there any way you can change it to 'Incomplete'?" Then the e-mail assault began: "I'm shy about coming in to talk to you, but I'm not shy about asking for a better grade. Anyway, it's worth a try." The next day I had three phone messages from students asking me to call them. I didn't.

Time was, when you received a grade, that was it. You might groan and moan, but you accepted it as the outcome of your efforts or lack thereof (and, yes, sometimes a tough grader). In the last few years, however, some students have developed a disgruntled consumer approach. If they don't like their grade, they go to the "return" counter to trade it in for something better.

What alarms me is their indifference toward grades as an indication of personal effort and performance. Many, when pressed about why they think they deserve a better grade, admit they don't deserve one but would like one anyway. Having been raised on gold stars for effort and smiley faces for self-esteem, they've learned that they can get by without hard work and real talent if they can talk the professor into giving them a break. This attitude is beyond cynicism. There's a weird innocence to the assumption that one expects (even deserves) a better grade simply by begging for it. With that outlook, I guess I shouldn't be as flabbergasted as I was that 12 students asked me to change their grades after final grades were posted.

That's 10 percent of my class who let three months of midterms, quizzes and lab reports slide until long past remedy. My graduate student calls it hyperrational thinking: if effort and intelligence don't matter, why should deadlines? What matters is getting a better grade through an unearned bonus, the academic equivalent of a freebie T shirt or toaster giveaway. Rewards are disconnected from the quality of one's work. An act and its consequences are unrelated, random events.

Their arguments for wheedling better grades often ignore academic performance. Perhaps they feel it's not relevant. "If my grade isn't raised to a D I'll lose my scholarship." "If you don't give me a C, I'll flunk out." One sincerely overwrought student pleaded, "If I don't pass, my life is over." This is tough stuff to deal with. Apparently, I'm responsible for someone's losing a scholarship, flunking out or deciding whether life has meaning. Perhaps these students see me as a commodities broker with something they want -- a grade. Though intrinsically worthless, grades, if properly manipulated, can be traded for what has value: a degree, which means a job, which means money. The one thing college actually offers -- a chance to learn -- is considered irrelevant, even less than worthless, because of the long hours and hard work required.

In a society saturated with surface values, love of knowledge for its own sake does sound eccentric. The benefits of fame and wealth are more obvious. So is it right to blame students for reflecting the superficial values saturating our society?

Yes, of course it's right. These guys had better take themselves seriously now, because our country will be forced to take them seriously later, when the stakes are much higher. They must recognize that their attitude is not only self-destructive but socially destructive. The erosion of quality control--giving appropriate grades for actual accomplishments--is a major concern in my department. One colleague noted that a physics major could obtain a degree without ever answering a written exam question completely. How? By pulling in enough partial credit and extra credit. And by getting breaks on grades.
But what happens once she or he graduates and gets a job? That's when the misfortunes of eroding academic standards multiply. We lament that schoolchildren get "kicked upstairs" until they graduate from high school despite being illiterate and mathematically inept, but we seem unconcerned with college graduates whose less blatant deficiencies are far more harmful if their accreditation exceeds their qualifications.

Most of my students are science and engineering majors. If they're good at getting partial credit but not at getting the answer right, then the new bridge breaks or the new drug doesn't work. One finds examples here in Atlanta. Last year a light tower in the Olympic Stadium collapsed, killing a worker. It collapsed because an engineer miscalculated how much weight it could hold. A new 12-story dormitory could develop dangerous cracks due to a foundation that's uneven by more than six inches. The error resulted from incorrect data being fed into a computer. I drive past that dorm daily on my way to work, wondering if a foundation crushed under kilotons of weight is repairable or if this structure will have to be demolished. Two 10,000-pound steel beams at the new natatorium collapsed in March, crashing into the student athletic complex. (Should we give partial credit since no one was hurt?) Those are real-world consequences of errors and lack of expertise.

But the lesson is lost on the grade-grousing 5 percent. Say that you won't (not can't, but won't) change the grade they deserve to what they want, and they're frequently bewildered or angry. They don't think it's fair that they're judged according to their performance, not their desires or "potential." They don't think it's fair that they should jeopardize their scholarships or be in danger of flunking out simply because they could not or did not do their work. But it's more than fair; it's necessary to help preserve a minimum standard of quality that our society needs to maintain safety and integrity. I don't know if the 13th-hour students will learn that lesson, but I've learned mine. From now on, after final grades are posted, I'll lie low until the next quarter starts.