

*Duluth Campus*

*Department of Sociology -Anthropology*  
*College of Liberal Arts*

*228 Cina Hall*  
*1123 University Drive*  
*Duluth, Minnesota 55812-3306*

*Office:218-726-7551*  
*Fax: 218-726-7759*

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[This is the crux of a memo sent to a student Fall Semester 2011. For any other semester, the details are different from day to day, but the basic scheduling problem addressed remains the same from semester to semester, especially during the last three weeks of the semester.]

## **Why Your Extra Credit Paper Will Not be Accepted . . .**

Your late-arriving extra credit term paper will not likely be included in calculating your final grade.

“Why,” you might appropriately ask.

This is quietly likely more than you are interested in, but I’ll lay it out straight to you anyway.

First of all, your paper was due almost two weeks ago, a fact that was made know several times from Day 1 of the semester. And extension of due dates were not met.

The bottom line is that you simply missed the window of opportunity. Here’s why . . .

Yesterday at 7:45 a.m. I began the final exam at UMD in Cina 214 with the Ancient Cultures of Middle America students. From the time they finished, a little after 10:00 a.m., until your paper arrived, a little before midnight, I was reading those exams, and dealing with exam-related items (people missing the exam—8:00 a.m. is early for some—computers “acting up”, and the like). During that time I also answered e-mails, from students and UMD administration and staff, one of which was your late-night e-mail. I had lunch, which I ate holding it on my lap as I read exams. And, for a short break in the afternoon, I fed and watered the chickens in my back yard; that took about seven minutes. About 1:15 a.m. this morning I brushed my teeth—while reading exams, of course—and went to bed. At approximately 6:30 this morning I awoke and immediately continued reading exams; when they were all read I calculated the final “curve,” sent a memo to the class members asking them to review their Moodle Gradebook folders, and began preparing for the Prehistoric Cultures exam scheduled to start in a few minutes at 2:00. After the Prehistoric Cultures exam is over I will—you guessed it—be working on exams. When I am finished working on the Prehistoric Exams and memo to the class about their grades—which no doubt some will be anxious over—which may either be very late tonight or sometime tomorrow, I will read and reply to whatever comments have come in from your classmates about their Moodle Gradebook records, if any—and then set to the task of submitting the final grades to the Registrar, on Thursday, as I promised you in my memo to the class. After that, I will attend to the Middle America students’ comments on their Gradebook folders, due the same for the Anthropology of Food Students, and send their grades off to the Registrar as promised to the students in those classes. By the way, there

is a deadline for grade submissions set by the Registrar. By then the folks taking the Prehistoric Cultures exam in a few minutes should have responded to my e-mail, if they have any question about their Moodle Gradebooks. I will deal with that, and then send their grades off to the Registrar. By then it will be time to start sending out materials to students now registered for Spring Semester courses. And in between, as I actually did about noon today, I need to tend to some system-wide technical technology problems that are affecting the course offerings for Spring semester.

If you have read this far, you should have been able to figure out that basically you missed the window of opportunity that was reserved for extra credit papers over the last week. Between the arrival of your paper and the completion of all of the grading and class-related events noted above, it is physical impossible to properly read, evaluated and responded to paper.

You probably vaguely remember something about that in the memo that I sent out before Thanksgiving. Remember that?:

**AVISO: Unexcused Late Assignments Receive No Credit**

(If you have been turning your assignments in on time please ignore this memo. And, thanks.)

If you turned in an assignment late and are wondering where your points are, you may not be getting any. (Excused late assignments are not included here.)

Let's cut to the chase: What the situation in the end comes down to is reasonable practicality.

Here's the situation: This semester the 100+ students in my four courses have been assigned a total of 2,460+ written items to be submitted. In addition, the 100+ students were each given the opportunity to submit one Extra Credit Case Study and one Extra Credit Review, which at least theoretically could add another 200+ papers to the "pile." Four hundred of those are generally fairly lengthy items (term papers, exams, extra credit papers, and some projects). So we're talking about approximately two-thousand-five-hundred [2,500] papers, exams and forum assignments for the semester.

In order to carefully read, respond, and record that quantity of written material, it must be turned in in a timely manner, and as scheduled. I actually really like reading what you have to say, but even in the Garden of Paradise there are limits.

This first week about twenty items were turned in late. At that first-week-of-the-semester rate, for the semester (and it's generally *higher* the last three weeks of a semester), one would expect about 300 late papers and forum postings for the term. Each of those, should they be graded, needs to be read and evaluated on one screen, then have a score entered by hand in the Gradebook, which is in another part of the Moodle system—and that is not an efficient or reasonable thing to do.

Therefore, unexcused late assignments receive no credit.

If you can think of a better way to read, evaluate, score, and record the 2,500 items, please let me know and I'll be happy to give it a try (throwing the paper set down the stairs and assigning grades based on the step they land on does not work anymore with electronic submissions).

Thanks,

Tim Roufs

**So the bottom line is, and I wish it were otherwise, but as you should be able to see, as I have earlier suggested, it is physically impossible to accept late papers, including papers that had an alternate due-date that was missed.**

It is also a simple fact of life that if deadlines are not maintained, to sustain the scheduled flow of materials, then options like Extra Credit Film/Review and Extra Credit Term Paper and Extra Credit Case Study options would have to be discontinued. And that would be a shame, for all of us.

Let me close by saying for the record that this is *not* a complaint. I actually really love to read papers and exams, and I love to look at projects—and that's actually the very reason why I do so much of it. This is, rather, a simple statement of a fact of life, that there are only so many hours in a day.

Best Regard,

Tim Roufs