

# Appendix B. A Recent Course's “Defining Labor Document”

## Defining Labor for Our Course

This document is a condensed version of the very first labor goal you did for this course (called, “Introduction: READ FIRST”). I provide it here for a quick reference to just the information about due dates, labor plans, labor instructions, and labor tracking.

### Due Dates

As indicated in our course schedule on our Canvas Modules page, our course is divided into five three-week units. Each unit has a set of labor goals, or assignments, for you to accomplish in order to complete it and move to the next unit. To give you the most flexibility in how you work through our course, MOST of the labor goals for each unit do NOT technically have due dates and times. While each labor goal (assignment) has a due date listed and is sequentially numbered so you can know what is best to do first, second, etc. in each unit, you will NOT be penalized for completing a labor goal late, as long as you complete it fully and before the last day of our course.

You do, however, have to do all units in the order that I’ve numbered them. That is, unit 1 must be done first, unit 2 second, etc. But you can do most of them at your own pace, for the most part. I’ve ordered labor goals in each unit so that they build on each other, but some may be done out of order. I’ve also offered suggested due dates for each labor goal, so you can see one kind of pacing, but you’ll have to decide when you’ll do each labor goal.

It is wise to plan out when you can do each labor, spreading out the labors in your schedule and on your own time frames. My hope is that you will not try to do all the labors in one day or in bunches. Please turn them as you do them, not in bunches, so that I can offer you feedback as you work through assignments.

There are several labor goals (14 out of 36 total labor goals) that have firm due dates, meaning they need to be turned in on a specific day. These are assignments that your colleagues are depending on to do the course and learn. These labor goals are noted as “(\*firm due date\*).” When you see that in the title of the labor goal, you know it will count against your grading contract if turned in past the due date and time listed (see our Course Grading Contract). Please plan to have these labor goals completed by the date designated.

## Unit Labor Plans

Giving you control over when you turn labors in is meant to give you as much control as possible over your schedule, but it demands that you think carefully about when you will do each labor and when you anticipate turning them in to me for feedback or other course uses. To help you with this planning, you will turn in to me on the first Monday of each unit a labor plan (a total of three in the course), which is a simple document that provides us with projected or estimated due dates and times you expect to complete each labor in that unit. Be aware that I may comment on your labor plan if I see some concerns, but I will not pressure you to change it. Any feedback I provide is meant to help you think about how you are planning out the labors of the course and how much time you are allowing yourself to do that work. The important thing is that you be honest, thoughtful, and realistic about how much time you need to complete each labor, try to spread out your labors and when you post them, and be responsive to me when I have questions.

It is usually NOT a good idea to turn in all of your labors at the end of each unit, unless there is a really good reason for you to do so. In fact, this can be suspicious behavior, which I may ask you about. This won't give you a chance to take advantage of any feedback I might provide along the way, which I'm expecting you to listen to and apply to future work in the course, even work done in the unit itself. So, plan your labor carefully, post on Canvas as you complete each labor goal, and look back frequently at any feedback I offer in the Canvas grade book.

The bottom line is: Your labor plans will help me anticipate your work and help you find the best pacing and timing to do the work asked of you in each unit. At the end of reading this document, you will post at least your first labor plan for Unit 1 (weeks 1-3) immediately.

Each labor plan is a short document meant to be your best guess at when you plan to do the labors assigned, how much time you expect to spend (and have set aside in your schedule and calendar), and when you plan on posting any Canvas posts related to the labor or Slacks. Have your calendar and schedule out when you make your labor plan. Here's what I am reading for in each labor plan:

- When are you planning on doing each labor goal in the unit?
- What exact days and times in your day do you have set aside to do each labor goal?
- When do you plan on posting your work for each labor goal on Canvas?
- How much time in minutes have you set aside to work on each labor goal, and how much time in total have you set aside to complete the unit's labor goals?

Below is an example of a labor plan for the first unit of our course that includes all the information I'm asking for. In the Course Materials and Documents module on Canvas, I've placed a template labor plan for each unit in the Labor

Planing Documents page. Please copy and paste this document into a gdoc or someplace you can find and use throughout the semester. You'll need to refer to past and current labor plan documents during the semester. So, you need to have your copy of all 5 unit labor plans even after you post them to me. You may need to add rows to some unit's planning document table. The version below is just an example labor plan, but it includes all the info I am looking for and that I think will help you. My best guess is that such a plan will take about 20 minutes to generate each time, but I would set aside 30 minutes. You are free to add more details or notes if needed.

## Example Labor Plan

Unit 1: "What Is Pop Culture?" (weeks 1-3)

Total labor anticipated: 1,090 mins (18.16 hours)

Total labor actually done: ?

Labor Goals	Scheduled Times (est. total time needed and actual time spent)	Estimated Post Date
START HERE document	Mon 03/13 at 9-10:30 am (60 mins)	Mon 03/13 at 10:30 am
1. Reading Our Syllabus	Tue 03/14 at 1-2 pm (120 min) Actual time spent (?)	Tue 03/14 at 3 pm
2. Reading about Compassion	Tue 03/14 at 3-5 pm (120 min) Actual time spent (?)	Tue 03/14 at 5:30 pm
3. Reading Our Contract	Fri 03/17 at 6-8 pm (180 min) Actual time spent (?)	Fri 03/17 at 8 pm
4. Introducing Ourselves	Mon 03/20 at 9-9:30 am (30 min); Tue 3/21 at 3-6 pm (60 min); Wed 3/22 at 5-8 pm (90 min) Actual time spent (?)	Wed 03/22 at 8:00 pm
5. Reading about Pop Culture	Fri 03/24 at 4-6 pm (400 min) Actual time spent (?)	Thu 01/19 at 8 pm
6. Labor journal	Sun 03/26 at 10-10:30 am (30 min) Actual time spent (?)	Fri 03/26 at 10:30 am

Note that the "actual time spent" and "total labor actually done" are not yet filled in above. They won't be filled in until you do each labor goal. This will do two things. First, it is a record of what you planned and what actually happened, which will likely be different. You'll use this information to help you reflect upon your labor as a practice over time. Second, this will help you in subsequent weeks when you plan or revise your plans for each of those units. For instance, if you

notice that you actually spent 120 minutes doing the unit 1 readings, but you expected to spend only 60 minutes to accomplish that labor goal, then you have some good information for the next labor plan.

Keeping track of your labor also allows you to make other kinds of labor-based decisions. Given the time you realistically have during each three-week period, how much time should you spend on each labor? Is that enough to accomplish your and the course goals? Should something in your life change, or should we talk about what you will be able to turn in? If you didn't complete a labor goal for a previous unit, you'll need to add it to the present unit you are planning, if you plan on completing it. Reviewing your previous labor plans will help you plan better.

## Important Note About How Much Labor You Plan and Do

Please understand that I will never fault any student for not being able to read or write every word assigned. When this happens (if it does), as long as your total actual time is at or more than the labor time you planned, and you didn't plan a very small amount of time to do a lot of work (that is, you weren't unrealistic in your labor plan), then you are okay. You are doing all you need to in order to fulfill your obligations to our grading contract. This also assumes that we've come to an understanding about your labor plan. I will tell you if your labor plan seems unrealistic or inadequate, so know that. But it is YOUR labor plan, not mine.

At the same time, should you turn in something that suggests you've not completed the labor in the spirit assigned, or not given enough time for yourself to complete the labor, then I will inquire with you about it. Usually, this will be part of my feedback either to the labor goal or your labor plan. In either case, I expect us to have a conversation and agree upon any changes or understandings. I also expect you to reflect upon these concerns in your weekly labor journal entries (you'll be prompted to do so). This will help us figure out together any issues you may be having with your own labor expectations and/or actual labor done.

One thing that complicates all this is that technically the labor time expectations of our course are dictated by ABOR (the Arizona Board of Regents), which says that all students in a university course like ours should spend 9 hours a week (or 27 hours on each three-week unit in the semester) laboring in the course. This amounts to 135 hours of total labor for our course during the entire semester. While I don't think that labor expectations for students in any course are as simple as doing a certain set number of hours of work, I do believe that we must have some clear measure of our labor that we can agree upon is reasonable for accomplishing our goals in this course. We all work at different paces and speeds. We all have different limitations on our time, and all these factors may very well change from week to week. At the same time, I do believe university courses require lots of time and energy, time and energy that many students may not be aware of or used to. Learning takes time and energy. And labor is learning.

And so, I do expect all students to spend a significant amount of time laboring each week. That time commitment is the most important thing for me, more so than how many words you read or write, even though I do care about that and often the number of words you produce will correlate with how much time you spend on a task. I also think that ABOR's 135 hour figure (or 9 hours each week) seems close to what a college course like ours should demand of all students. While I won't hold you to that exact figure, it is the yardstick I have available to design the course's work. But I've actually assigned what I estimate as less than 9 hours a week of labor. It's actually 7.17 hours (430.33 minutes) of work per week, which comes out to 21.52 hours (1,291 minutes) per unit. That's actually 107.58 hours (6,455 minutes) of total work for the semester that I'm estimating you will need to accomplish our course goals. Thus I expect at least this much labor from everyone.

Here's a breakdown of the total time I've estimated for each unit in the course:

Unit 1 - 21.33 hours (1,280 mins)

Unit 2 - 30.42 hours (1,825 mins)

Unit 3 - 16.67 hours (1,000 mins)

Unit 4 - 27.67 hours (1,660 mins)

Unit 5 - 11.50 hours (690 mins)

Total estimated labor: 107.58 hours (6,455 minutes)

Ultimately, when I review your labor plans, I am looking at how much time you are dedicating to this course, as well as to specific labor goals for that unit. Some units and weeks are more intensive than others, and some weeks have less work. It's always good to look ahead and consider your calendar, work and life schedule, sleep and eating needs, very carefully.

## Labor Instructions

While you'll have a labor plan for each unit of the course that you make, I'll provide labor instructions for each labor goal (assignment). And I've listed and numbered the labor goals in the order I think works best.

I don't want my prompting in the labor instructions to cause counterproductive stress for those that may find them overwhelming, but they are my primary way I can "teach" and "inform" you in this course, given its format. So it is vital that you read them fully before you begin. They will give you a good sense as to what work you have ahead of you. Additionally, each set of labor instructions will open with some guidelines-at-a-glance that should help you create your labor plan. This is so that you don't have to read all the labor instructions for each unit before you make your labor plan.

Most importantly, my labor instructions are meant to give you a clear set of guides for what I want you to accomplish for each labor goal, while still providing

you with room to decide how you work best. My estimates of time to accomplish a task may not be accurate for you, and you'll know this best as you move through the course. You will have to decide how much time you can or should spend on any given labor goal.

While I ask you to pay attention to the three guides that mark labor (listed below), keep in mind that they are only estimates, my best guesses at such relative measures of labor. They are there to help guide your planning and expectations of labor. For many of you (hopefully most), it will take less time than I've estimated to do each labor goal. This is because I have tried to overestimate the amount of time it takes to do the key steps in each labor goal by a factor of about 15%. If you find that labor goals take consistently more time than I have estimated, then I want to talk to you so that we can find an appropriate target for you, and likely ways for you to translate our labor goal instructions. This is not a fault, weakness, or problem in anyone. It is a natural part of our diverse natures. We are all different.

The three main markers of labor I incorporate into my labor instructions as guides are:

- **Time on task** - how much time do you need to spend on a task in order to accomplish the labor goal?
- **Word counts** - how many words seem most appropriate to produce for a post or reflection or in a note document? This is what I initially use to understand if you've accomplished the labor in question. If you produce fewer words, I will likely ask you about it. Usually, word counts mean either: (1) the level of detail that I'm wanting you to shoot for; or (2) the depth of or engagement in a discussion, reflection, or analysis I'm hoping you can attempt. It should match up with time on task, but it may not for some students.
- **Steps/Tasks** - What steps/tasks did you modify or add to help you do the labor goal?

Please keep in mind that I don't expect everyone, or even most of you, to spend the exact amount of time I have estimated, and produce exactly the amount of words I offer as guides. We are all different and have different limitations and affordances that make our laboring different, and likely will make what we produce different. One of our jobs in this course is to understand ourselves as learners (readers and writers) as best we can. Tracking our labor and making a few observations about it along the way will help us do this. Doing this also helps you think carefully about what you are accomplishing, how you are doing that work, and why it is different from my estimates.

To reiterate: It is perfectly acceptable for your labor processes to be different from what I anticipate them to be or to produce. It is not acceptable to not document and explain how you've labored differently and why you've produced what you have, whether it is what I expected or something else. What is most

important in any labor process is that that process provides you with a way to meet the labor goal, the learning, that you are attempting. How is your laboring and time achieving our goals?

My labor instructions, and how you use them, are meant to recognize that we all come into a course like this with diverse neurological makeups, various constraints on our time, perhaps some anxieties or worries, illnesses (either chronic or periodic), and dis/abilities (either documented or not, and visible and invisible). Our school systems and society at large have assumptions built into them that create unseen and invisible problems for some of us who then get labeled as "slow" or "out of step" or "a problem." I am trying to counter this, and I need your help. That is, my course design around labor plans, labor instructions, and labor tracking, among many other elements, is meant to create a learning environment that resists neurotypical, ableist, racist, White language supremacist assumptions about our laboring and its products. It is also meant to help you personalize your laboring and the learning that that laboring produces. I may not always accomplish this, but with your help, we might continue to build such a learning environment. So I ask for your help by staying in contact with me, replying to my comments on your labor plans, labor journal entries, assignments, and emails.

## Labor Tracking

Finally, you will keep track of the labor you actually do by making some quick observations and reflections on each labor goal (or assignment) you complete for the course once you complete that labor. Each of your labor goals has a Canvas posting requirement, so I'll read your labor tracking document (the questions and your responses) along with what you post for each labor goal. Like the planning document template, you can find the Labor Tracking Document on Canvas in the Course Materials and Documents module.