



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Department of French, Hispanic & Italian Studies

RMST 202

Romance Studies,
Modernism to the Present

**Contract Grading
Lightning Talk
May 10, 2022**

with Jon Beasley-Murray
and Patricio Robles

rmst202.arts.ubc.ca





THE COURSE

- RMST 202: “Introduction to Literatures and Cultures of the Romance World II: Modern to Post-Modern”
- A survey of Romance Language literature: Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, Catalan, Romanian
- Europe, the Americas, Africa
- Modernism (1910s) to the Present

UBC THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

RMST 202 Literatures and Cultures of the Romance World II: Modern to Post-Modern

Home About Syllabus Authors Texts Concepts Lectures Videos Blogs Assessment Playlist

Welcome to RMST 202
An introduction to the main themes that shaped the Romance World in the age of the nation state, imperialism, colonization, and decolonization.

A World of Difference
If the hallmark of literary representation is that it is an unfaithful representation of the real, then perhaps the most literary texts are those that betray (disclose or let slip) that infidelity even as they indulge in it themselves.

Student Blogs
[Full list of Student Blogs>>](#)
[My Concluding Farewell to RMST 202!](#)
[My Concluding Farewell to RMST 202!](#)
[Agualusa on Reluctant Dreamers](#)
[Agualusa on Reluctant Dreamers](#)

Tags
[announcements](#) [C20th](#) [childhood](#) [communism](#) [death](#) [Dreams](#) [Family](#) [fiction](#) [France](#) [gender](#) [history](#) [identity](#) [Italy](#) [language](#) [life](#) [literature](#) [love](#) [memories](#) [memory](#) [Mexico](#) [modernism](#) [narration](#) [narrative](#) [perspective](#) [Poetry](#) [politics](#) [postmodernism](#) [power](#) [questions](#) [reality](#) [reflection](#) [relationships](#) [repetition](#) [revolution](#) [Romance Studies](#) [Spain](#) [Surrealism](#) [temporality](#) [time](#) [trauma](#) [truth](#) [videos](#) [violence](#) [war](#) [writing](#)

Watch on YouTube

[Transcript](#) | [Slides](#)



- Literature Requirement
- 76 Students
- 2 TAs

OPEN EDUCATION

- Open Website
- Flipped Classroom
- YouTube Lectures
- Student Blogs

The screenshot shows the YouTube channel page for 'UBC Romance Studies', which has 66 subscribers. The channel banner features a colorful mosaic pattern. The navigation menu includes 'Home', 'Videos', 'Playlists', 'Channels', and 'About'. The main video player displays a video titled 'Inventing Romance Studies' with a thumbnail showing a glass of yellow beverage and a can of 'INCA KOLA'. The video description states: 'Romance Studies emerges when tradition is infiltrated and overthrown by the demotic, by the everyday speech of a nameless multitude.' It is attributed to Jon Beasley-Murray, University of British Columbia. Below the main video, there is an 'Uploads' section with a 'PLAY ALL' button and five video thumbnails. The thumbnails are: 'Agostino: Alberto Moravia and the Return of the Real' (16:51), 'Bonjour Tristesse: Françoise Sagan on Translation and Affect' (19:56), 'Black Shack Alley: Zobel, Development, and Writing' (19:39), 'On Roberto Bolaño, Amulet' (21:43), and 'Norman Manea in Conversation' (42:41). The 'On Roberto Bolaño, Amulet' video has 52 views and was uploaded 1 month ago.

FLEXIBLE PATHWAYS

- Excessive Syllabus
- Optional Texts
- Student Choice
- Contract Grading

Agualusa	>
Aragon	>
Bolaño	>
Bombal	>
Cercas	>
Ferrante	>
Fuentes	>
Laforet	>
Lispector	>
Manea	>
Moravia	>
Perec	>
Proust	>
Rodoreda	>
Sagan	>
Zobel	>

Tags

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[modernism](#) [narration](#) [narrative](#) [perspective](#)
[Poetry](#) [politics](#) [postmodernism](#) [power](#)
[questions](#) [reality](#) [reflection](#)
[relationships](#) [repetition](#) [revolution](#)
[Romance Studies](#) [Spain](#) [Surrealism](#)
[temporality](#) [time](#) [trauma](#) [truth](#) [videos](#) [violence](#)
[war](#) [writing](#)

Authors



[José Eduardo Agualusa](#)



[María Luisa Bombal](#)



[Carlos Fuentes](#)



[Norman Manea](#)



[Marcel Proust](#)



[Joseph Zobel](#)



[Louis Aragon](#)



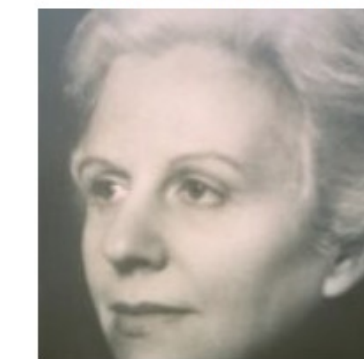
[Javier Cercas](#)



[Carmen Laforet](#)



[Alberto Moravia](#)



[Mercè Rodoreda](#)



[Roberto Bolaño](#)



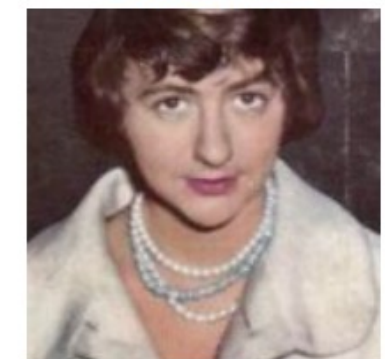
[Elena Ferrante](#)



[Clarice Lispector](#)



[Georges Perec](#)



[Françoise Sagan](#)



CONTRACT GRADING

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Assessment

This course uses “contract grading.” This means that you choose in advance the work you will do, and receive a relevant grade so long as you fulfil that contract.

The four texts you *have* to read in order to pass this class are those by Proust, Bombal, Perec, and Bolaño. If you do not read these four, you will not pass the class. If you do, you will pass.

All the other texts are optional, but your grade will rise the more that you read.

How do you show that you have read them? You write and publish a blog post, of around 400-500 words (or with an embedded video blog of 5-10 minutes), and comment briefly on two blogs posts written by your classmates and peers. (More details [here](#).)

You will also write an introductory blogpost (in week one), and a concluding blogpost (in week 13), reflecting on what you have learned.

The more books that you read (and so blogposts and comments that you write), the higher your grade will be, as follows:



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The more books that you read (and so blogposts and comments that you write), the higher your grade will be, as follows:

Number of texts read / blogposts written	Percentage Grade	Final Letter Grade
4 (Proust, Bombal, Perec, and Bolaño) / 6	60-63	C
5 (the basic four plus one) / 7	64-67	C+
6 (the basic four plus two) / 8	68-71	B-
7 (the basic four plus three) / 9	72-75	B
8 (the basic four plus four) / 10	76-79	B+
9 (the basic four plus five) / 11	80-84	A-
10 (the basic four plus six) / 12	85-89	A
11 (the basic four plus seven) / 13	90-100	A+

You can choose which books you read and write on (after the basic four). Some weeks you have more than one option. There is a guide to help you choose [here](#).

You tell me in advance how many and which books you plan to read. This is your contract. In return, if you fulfil that contract, I guarantee you the appropriate grade. Fill out your contract [here](#) ([PDF](#)).

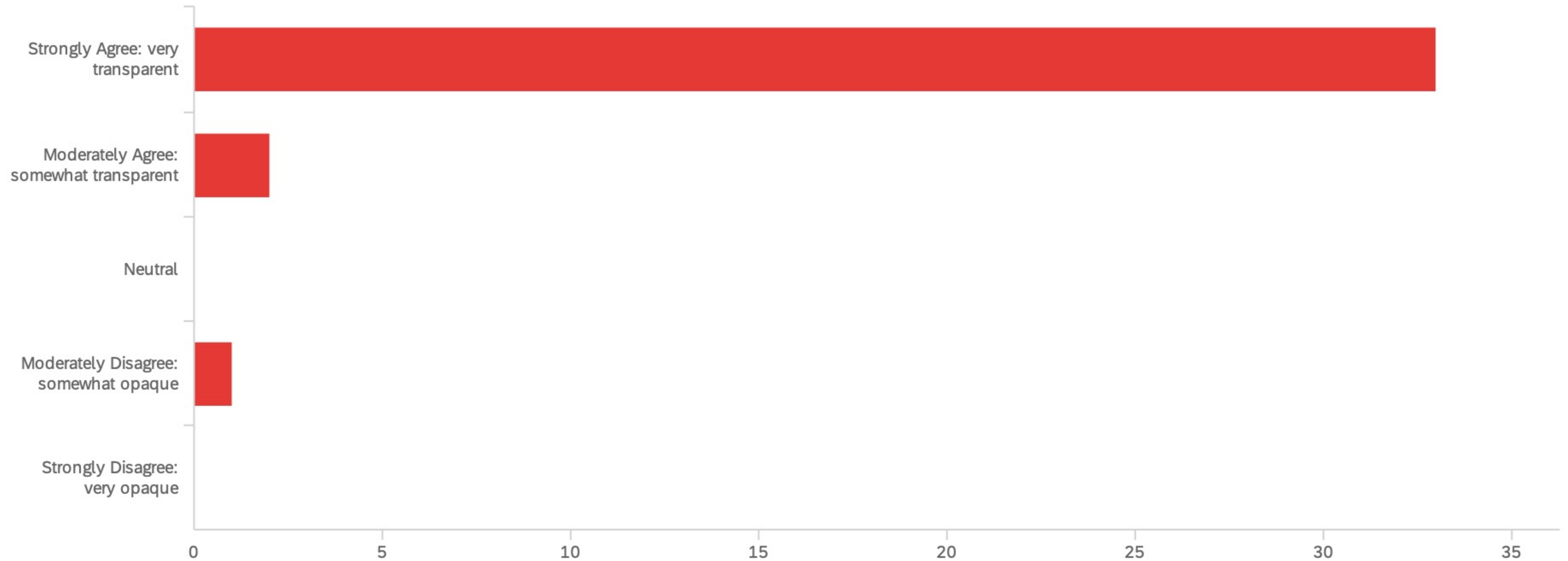
Over the course of the semester, you are allowed to make one, and only one, revision of your contract (changing the choice of books, or the number of books, to get a higher or a lower grade). No changes are permitted after week six (February 17).

- Individual contracts, signed and counter-signed
- One chance to amend the contract (up / down / same)
- The more effort they put in, the higher the grade
- Highest grades meant reading a book a week
- Lowest grades meant four books, attending six weeks
- Very little qualitative evaluation: almost all quantitative
- Failed contracts meant new ceiling and new rules

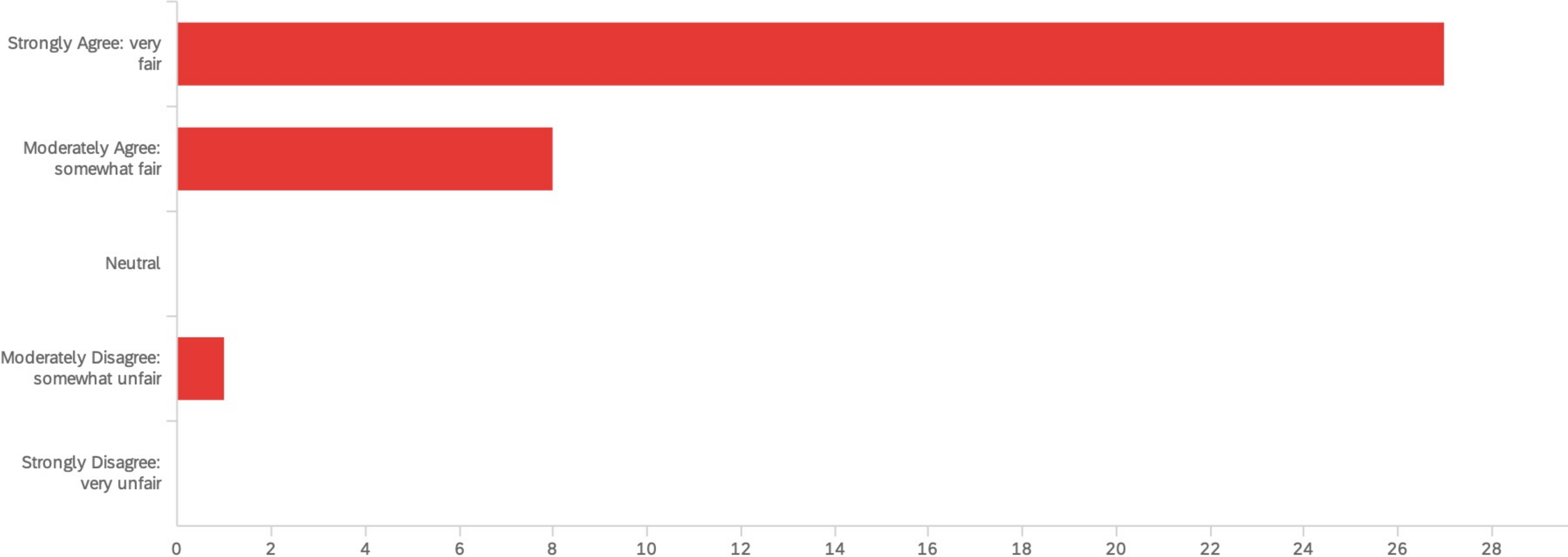


STUDENT REACTIONS

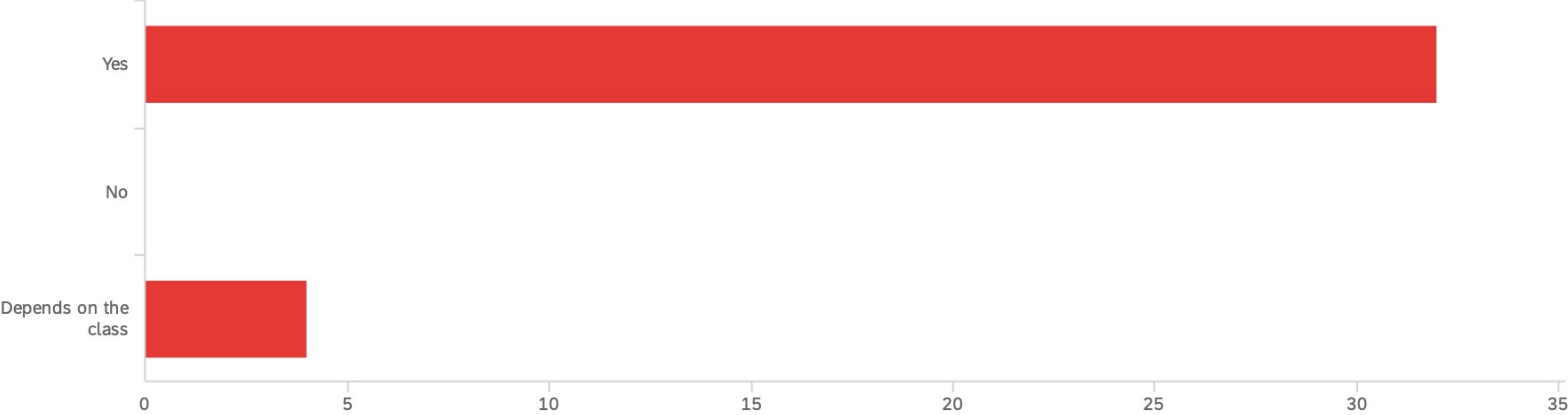
Q25 - 3. Was the grading system transparent?



Q26 - 4. Was the grading system fair?



Q27 - 5. Do you wish more of your classes used contract grading?



"I enjoyed having complete control of my learning and choosing how many and what kind of books to read. With that control, it was nice to have boundaries and be exposed to things I picked on my own outside of class. It was nothing I was expecting. I look forward to this in the future."

"For starters, due to the contract and pre-determined grade in this class, I never really felt overwhelmed or stressed by this class, which definitely helped put me at ease."

"I like the transparency, and I picked a lot of the books and I picked my grade because of the subject matter and not because of the grade that I wanted. I looked at all the options that I felt I was interested in, and I feel like that's what I wanted. It was a lot more of the time, so I think this is a good system and it's fair and it's transparent, which is unlike a lot of other courses."

"This grading system was **FANTASTIC.**"

"I want to say that the current structure is based on what we do in other classes, but I think the current structure is. It's not as rigid and shitty as other classes. It's more enjoyable because of the freedom to experiment with it. It's inherently valuable because of the choice where our grades will fall, and the uncertainty of what our grades may be can be nerve-wracking. But the contract eliminated a lot of the anxious feelings which definitely help make this course more enjoyable!"

"I believe that the entire course is based on what we do in other classes, but I think the current structure is. It's not as rigid and shitty as other classes. It's more enjoyable because of the freedom to experiment with it. It's inherently valuable because of the choice where our grades will fall, and the uncertainty of what our grades may be can be nerve-wracking. But the contract eliminated a lot of the anxious feelings which definitely help make this course more enjoyable!"



OUR CONCLUSIONS

Did students get the same grades as they would have done under a more traditional system of evaluation? No. But nor should we expect them to.

Here, most students did better than they would have done otherwise. (Some surely did worse.)

Students reported that they worked at least as hard, and generally harder, than in comparable courses.

Our goal should not be student satisfaction. It should be to encourage thought and to produce concepts, which may sometimes cause discomfort.

But we should still listen to students, and trust them. Part of that must involve **relinquishing some of the power of the grade.**



MORE INFO

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<https://publichumanities.ubc.ca/ubc-professor-shakes-up-romance-studies-in-experimental-course/>

https://rmst202.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2022/05/rmst202_article.pdf

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