Aspects of Good Assignments

Assignments that are considered strong include the following common elements:
- Address multiple learning outcomes as part of one assignment
- Clear directions and expectations
- Topics that are personally meaningful and relevant to students
- Structure is provided, while also allowing students some flexibility and creativity in topic choice or method of completion
- A timeline with tasks broken into chunks to be completed throughout the semester
- Utilize a rubric (given to the students beforehand) that outlines how students will be evaluated

Projects
Projects that are considered strong include:
- Group projects in which students are given guidance about the group process
- Opportunity for evaluation of group members (if applicable)
- Divided throughout the semester, with various checkpoints and smaller assignments as part of a larger timeline

Presentations
Presentations that are considered strong include:
- Broad topics that will interest all of the class
- Topics that provide variety—a topic that won't become too repetitive after a number of presentations
- Group partnerships or participation (this also saves class time)
- The use an evaluation that is not too specific—balancing the idea that this is not a public speaking class, but you still want to evaluate on basic presentation skills

Papers
Papers that are considered strong include:
- Idea banks or sample ideas with assignment description
- Processing questions in the assignment description that can possibly serve as an informal outline
- A timeline with tasks broken into chunks to be completed throughout the semester
- The use of resources that are clearly outlined and cover an appropriate breadth (books, scholarly journals, primary sources, web sites)

Exams
Exams that are considered strong include:
- Questions that are reflective, open-ended, and/or applied rather than simple memorization or regurgitation of information (examples: multiple choice or true/false questions)
- A take home component or allowing for appropriate time to complete in class
- Room for creativity
- Working on something meaningful and tangible (scrapbook page, journal, piece of art)
- The opportunity to synthesize the first semester of college

Designing Engaging Assignments

(Exams, Projects, Papers, Presentations, etc.)

Content

- Knowledge is objective
- Instructor determines what is important
- Multiple choice/True false
- Memorization/ Regurgitation

- Knowledge is subjective
- Students make meaning
- Students help determine which information is important to know
- Open-ended

Motivation/Relevance

- For sake of a grade
- Busy work
- Check a box to get it done
- Not relevant to course learning outcomes

- Interested in project
- Would want to keep it
- Make an impact/Leave a legacy
- Connected to multiple learning outcomes

Choice

- Instructor dictates all aspects & topics

- Students have options on how to complete the assignment
- Students have options on which assignments to complete

Structure/Guidelines

- All done at one time
- No status updates
- Vague descriptions

- Broken into chunks
- Timeline given
- Clear & concise rubric

Less Engaging

More Engaging