

Poor Summary

Wiesenfeld complains that the students of today have a lower work ethic because they have been raised on gold stars for effort and smiley faces for self-esteem. He worries that the hyperrational thinking of these students will lead to the collapse of buildings and the failure of new drugs. He assumes that all of these problems are caused by partial or extra credit. In other words, the problem is with unearned bonuses, the academic equivalent to of a freebie T-shirt or toaster giveaway. But he ignores the fact that 90% of his class didn't come to him to ask him for better grades. His solution is to lie low after final grades are posted next time.

Improved Summary

In the essay "Making the Grade," Kurt Weisenfeld, a professor of Physics at Georgia Tech University, argues that there has been a discernible decline in his students' work ethic over the last generation. Based on his own personal interactions with his students, he has observed that many of his students fail to see the connection between their final grades and their own personal hard work (or lack thereof). Rather, they seem to feel they are simply entitled to the grades they want. Weisenfeld theorizes that their indifference towards learning is the result of a society saturated with superficial values and the "erosion of quality control" for grades in the public education system (e.g. giving out grades that were not really earned). Because most of his students are science and engineering majors, he fears that their poor work ethic and "hyperrational thinking" could potentially result in costly or harmful engineering accidents.