POLICIES

MY VIEW OF COLLEGE

College courses are primarily about learning, not credits or grades. Course credits provide recognition of learning and course grades provide a rough measure of the amount of learning. Your tuition for a college course buys instructor expertise, not course credit. It is up to you to make the most of the opportunity you have purchased.

GRADES

Your grade will be determined by the sum of your scores on the various evaluations used in the course. Each item will have its own grading scale, and these will be added to give an overall grading scale. Your grade will be determined by comparison to the overall grading scale. Imagine that there is a student in the class who always hits the B+/A- borderline on every evaluation. Get more points than this fictitious student and you have at least an A- in the course. And so on. There will be a total of 650 points for the semester, allocated as follows:

- FINAL EXAM 200 pts
- 5 EXAMS, 60 pts each 300 pts
- GATEWAY EXAM 50 pts
- GROUP PROJECT 50 pts
- DAILY WORK 50 pts

Daily work will consist of a combination of written homework, 1-paragraph papers, and online assignments. These will be counted separately from the larger items in the course. At any given time, your grade on the 50-point scale is two times the percentage score you have on the daily work.

- IMPROVEMENT BONUS

If the letter grade you earn on the Final is higher than the letter grade you have earned prior to the Final, then I will replace your lowest exam grade by a grade based on your Final Exam score.

EXAMS

The standard mid-term exam is 100 points and hard to finish. I’ve learned by experience that students learn more if I give 5 or 6 exams of 50-60 points each. You won’t have time to dawdle, but you shouldn’t be rushed either. Exams may include material from earlier in the course; if so, the specific topic will be announced prior to the exam. Exams will consist of some problems similar to the homework and other problems designed to use course material creatively. Calculators capable of symbolic differentiation and integration are not allowed on exams, but other calculators are allowed. You must show your work to receive full credit. The exam schedule for our section is posted on the web.
The final exam is comprehensive in the sense that all course topics can be included. All classes have the same final exam. All instructors work together to write and grade the final exam.

**GATEWAY EXAM**

This exam consists of 6 questions. You need to get 5 questions completely right to pass the exam. The exam will initially be given in class for 50 points. If you don’t pass the first time, you will need to retake the exam at the Burnett Testing Center (Burnett 126) or the Math Department computer lab (Bessey 105). You may only take it once on each specified exam day. Note that the exam is not available on weekends. Calculators are not allowed.

The role of the Gateway is to provide evidence that you have learned the technical skills in the course, and the sooner you demonstrate a high level of mastery the easier will be topics that require these skills. In order to encourage everyone to pass the exam quickly, my policy is to have the number of points you get for passing decrease by one point each day that the exam is available.

**WRITING MATHEMATICS**

I have become convinced that being able to write mathematically indicates a higher level of understanding than just being able to get the right answers. I also believe that the process of writing about an idea or problem helps you understand it better. One way we will use writing is to have “written homework,” in which the student works a specific homework problem, alone or in groups, and each student writes up their solution in standard English with mathematics embedded. The grade is based on both the quality of the solution and the quality of the exposition. We will also use writing through “essays,” by which I mean a 1-paragraph explanation of something, composed in a few minutes during class.

**GROUP PROJECT**

Each student will be on a team of 3-5 students working together on a major project. The work will result in a project paper. In my class, there will be two submissions. The “rough draft” will be graded for mathematical content and marked, but not graded, for writing. This will be worth 25 points. The final paper will be graded in full, with the emphasis on the writing, and be worth 25 points.

**WEB ASSIGNMENTS**

We will have a number of short assignments using the web-based tool EDU, developed by Professor Orr of the Math Department. These assignments are mastery-style, meaning that they can be repeated several times if not done successfully the first time. There will also be some practice assignments to help you study for exams. These activities are accessed at the web address http://calculus.unl.edu/edu2/classes/m107s02s350.

**EXPECTATIONS**

I make a serious effort to make class time a valuable learning experience. I therefore consider regular attendance to be the first commitment a student needs to make in a course. In order to get the most out of class, you should also commit to coming each day ready to learn the scheduled topic. This means doing homework promptly and reading the basic material in each section before class.

The amount of time you need to spend outside of class will depend strongly on your background. Well-prepared students should expect to spend about 10 hours per week outside of class time. Students who are not expert at algebra and precalculus will likely need to spend more time. Don’t overestimate your current knowledge and skills. Too much time is a less serious error than too little. In particular, our experience at UNL indicates that students who got a grade lower than a B in Math 106 have a difficult time with Math 107. Be prepared to budget extra time for the course.