Math 124 Syllabus

Instructor: Prof. Wilson.
Office: Room 304, 16 Colchester Avenue.
Office hours: Monday 11:00-12:00, Tuesday 12:30-1:30, and by appointment.
Office phone: 656-4326 (has phonemail).
Email: jmwilson@uvm.edu (office); hinesburg@juno.com (home). (Note: the home email is not private.)
Website: http://www.cems.uvm.edu/~wilson.

Text: Linear Algebra and its Applications (fourth edition) by David C. Lay.

Approximate course contents: We will try to cover most of chapters 1–5 and some of 6. We will cover the chapters in this order: 1, 2, 4, 3, 5, 6. The respective topics covered are (roughly): basics of solving systems of linear equations; matrix algebra; vector spaces; determinants; eigenvalues and eigenvectors; orthogonality and least-squares methods.

Grading, tests, and homework: I will assign homework every week. You should do the problems but you do not need to hand them in. I will work a subset of the assigned problems the following week, along with any others you wish to see done. I will regularly post homework and reading assignments on the website. Your grade will be based on a combination of quizzes and exams. I will give 6 quizzes, from which I will drop your lowest score. The five counted quizzes will each contribute 10% to your grade. The midterm will count for 20% and the final will be worth 30%. I do not give letter grades to quiz or test scores, but only to your final class average.

The quizzes will take place on 9/7, 9/21, 10/5, 10/26, 11/9, and 11/30 (all are Wednesdays). I will give the midterm on Wednesday, October 12. The final exam will take place Monday, December 12, from 4:30-7:15 PM in Waterman 458 (the regular classroom).

We will not meet on Monday, September 5 (Labor Day).

Note on computer usage: Computer accounts have been or soon will be set up in your names. The basic principles and techniques of linear algebra can and will be illustrated via hand computations on small matrices; but the matrices one typically encounters in the real world are too large to be tractable without computers, and you should become familiar with their use. Since I use Mathematica to make up handouts and exams, I will talk about it whenever I do mention computers. (I’ve used MATLAB, but I’m very rusty on it, and any knowledge I have is years out of date; unfortunately, I don’t know a thing about MAPLE.) Note: you won’t need a computer to do any exam, but I encourage you to bring a calculator.

Policy on missed quizzes, etc.: If you miss one for a good reason (illness, job conflict, family emergency, etc.), I will be happy to arrange a time and place for you to make it up. Normally I will not ask for written verification of your excuse (I don’t think I’ve ever had to), but I might if it seems that people are taking advantage of my good nature. If I do
ask you for such verification, you should not feel that you’re the bad guy: somebody else was, but the policy has to be uniform. I must warn you that if you come to a quiz or test feeling ill, take the exam, and bomb it, you will be stuck with the score.

Policy on learning disabilities: If you have a learning disability requiring special accommodations (such as untimed or large-print exams), the University and I will be happy to provide them. However, it is your responsibility to inform me and ACCESS (formerly the Office of Specialized Student Services) at 656-7753 *well ahead of time* if you do require such accommodations. Your request for special accommodations will be kept completely confidential.