Math 124 Syllabus  

Summer, 2011

Instructor: Prof. Wilson.
Office: Room 304, 16 Colchester Avenue.
Office hours: Monday 2-3, Thursday 2-3, and by appointment.
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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 at every class session. You should do the problems but you do not need to hand them in. I will work a subset of the assigned problems at the next class meeting, 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 four quizzes (each worth 10% of your grade), a midterm (worth 30%), and a final exam (also worth 30%). I do not give letter grades to quiz or test scores, but only to your final class average. Note: I do NOT drop quiz scores.

The quizzes will take place on June 30, July 7, July 21, and July 28. I will give the midterm on July 14 and the final exam on August 4 (the last class meeting).

We will not meet on Monday, July 4. Although the longer (3.75 hours) class time almost gives us the necessary number of contact hours, having only 11 meetings, in my opinion, throws off the rhythm of the class terribly. We will hold a short (2 to 2.5 hours) make-up class some other day to bring us to 12 meetings. My first preference is for Tuesday, July 5, and my second is for Wednesday, July 6. We will decide between the two at the first class meeting.

I will be out of the state between July 26 and July 29. I will arrange for somebody to take over the class (and give the quiz) on July 28. If I cannot find anybody to cover the class, then, as a last resort—but only as a last resort—we will hold a second make-up class, at a time to be determined.

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
I 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.) Since the class meets in 205 Votey, where every student has a computer, I will from time to time lead the class through some of Mathematica’s basic linear algebra commands. 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.