

Course Assessment Policy

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Contact

If there are any questions or concerns about grading policy, Please mail inquiries to Joseph.Kolibal@usm.edu. If you need to see me about a particular problem, please schedule an appoint.

Basis of the Class Evaluation

Each student is assessed based on a cumulative point score from 0 to 100. The score is based on examination papers, bonus points and on class participation (problem solving). The algorithm is explained under the topic Scoring and Course Grades. Graduate students have an additional project grade in mixed undergraduate/graduate classes which is part of the assessment and some additional rules and policies apply.

Examination Papers

Typically in a lower level class (100 – 200 level) there are usually four examinations, one of which consists of a midterm paper, and one a comprehensive examination. In an upper level class (300 and above) there is only the midterm paper and a comprehensive examination paper. Depending on the syllabus, in a graduate level class (500 and above) additional projects are assigned.

The midterm paper is intended to provide an extensive assessment of the student's ability to work with the material and to reason in an un-timed environment. The midterm paper is always a lengthy paper at all class levels, and the student is usually given at least one week to complete the midterm paper. Because of this, the level and quality of work is expected to be high. In introductory classes (below, but not including MAT-167), the midterm is typically a comprehensive, in-class exam covering the material up to the date of the exam.

The comprehensive evaluation covers all material which is discussed in the course and is usually given in class toward the end of term. Other exams are specific to topics or chapters. All in class examinations are closed book, open notes unless otherwise specified. The questions are designed to test reasoning and the ability to work with the material.

Each paper or exam is worth 100 points. The course grade is based on the average score obtained on all examination papers, plus bonus points which are earned for solving more difficult problems, less points deducted for failure to participate in class.

Bonus Problems

Bonus problems are typically given as extra problems on examination papers, or else are given during the course of the semester, to be turned in at the required time. Bonus problems are more difficult and challenging problems which are available for students to gain experience beyond the requirements of the course. These problems usually have point values from 1 to 10. Students are not required to do these problems, but it is to the student's benefit to attempt them since they are counted after the examination results are averaged.

In classes with a mixed graduate and undergraduate component the bonus points are worth only half as much for the graduate students taking the course.

Class Participation (Assignments and Homework)

There is no credit given for homework assignments in any class, however since examination papers are based on the material and problems which are to be found in the homework assignments, it is beneficial to attempt all of the problems. In all classes students are required to be able to solve, or attempt to solve homework problems in class.

Policies on assignments vary from class to class. Please refer to the class specific details on course assignments in order to fully be aware of the requirements.

Scoring and Course Grades

The class grade is based on the student's earned point score for the semester. This earned point score is computed using the average of all points earned on papers to which the bonus points are then added. From this score, up to 5 points may be lost for failure to participate in class work.

Determination of Class Grade The class grade is assigned based on

- 90 – 100 : A
- 80 – 90 : B
- 70 – 80 : C
- 60 – 70 : D
- 00 – 60 : F

Grades which fall on a grade boundary, for example a score of 90, are decided at the discretion of the instructor based on the participation of the student in class.

For graduate students in mixed undergraduate/graduate courses (e.g., 400/500 level courses) an additional graduate project grade is used to determine whether the assessment is raised one grade or not.

Further Considerations and Rules

Late Papers

Any material handed in late without having obtained prior approval or without having a valid university excused absence (e.g., a signed medical excuse) results in a 90% factor being applied to the students score on that paper for each day, or part of each day, that it is late. All papers are due at the start of class. Material handed in over one week late without prior approval is not accepted.

It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor concerning any scheduling conflicts which may result in late papers.

Considerations for the Student

Because of the importance attached to solving bonus problems and because no examination results are curved or normalized, it is strongly emphasized to the student that they attempt as many bonus problems as possible. These provide a mechanism for improving performance; however, unlike 'curving' exam results, they require that the students take the initiative to improve their scores.

The examinations are structured so that without attempting to solve any of the bonus problems the average grade that can be expected by a student is a high C or low B. If there is a need for better grade, it is important to attempt bonus problems.

In a lower level class the first exam will always be before the drop date. This allows students to assess without penalty whether they desire to continue with the class. In an upper level class, self-assessment is the responsibility of the student.