

Dear students of MA253A,

I hope this email finds you well and that you've had some time to get settled. It is my goal to give you the best educational experience possible for the remainder of the semester. While we may not cover the full scope of linear algebra, at least as we originally intended, we will cover enough material so that you are prepared for your mathematics courses to come.

From now on, our course will focus on three pillars: video lectures, homework, and projects. In contrast to our original plan, we will not have any more formal quizzes or exams. From now on, your assessment will be focused on your performance on homework and projects. The following is our new grading scheme:

Grading: Your grade will be calculated as follows:

Class participation:	5%
Weekly homework assignments:	20%
Quizzes:	10%
Project 1:	15%
Project 2:	15%
Minimum of Midterm 1 and Project 3:	15%
Maximum of Midterms 1 and Project 3:	20%

Some notes:

1. You all have already earned 5% for your class participation scores. Going forward, I ask all of you to still be present in the course, participate and ask any and all questions you want via email or video communication (Zoom, Skype, etc.).
2. You all have already submitted five homework assignments. The grades from these assignment will be part of your cumulative homework grade. Below, I will discuss the structure of the homework for the remainder of the semester. This homework will henceforth consist of weekly digital assignments through MyLab Math which is obtained through the publishing company of our textbook, Pearson. Your lowest homework score will still be dropped.
3. You each already have a cumulative quiz grade based upon the three quizzes already taken. As I previously agreed to drop your lowest quiz score on the condition that you attend a department colloquium and write a summary, I have decided to drop your lowest quiz scores uniformly (regardless of whether or not you were able to attend a colloquium). I think this is only fair given that our on-campus semester has been cut short.
4. There will be no Midterm 2 and no final exam. In lieu of these exams, I ask that you complete three projects (instead of the original two). You already have instructions for Project 1 (and I will send you a separate email about it shortly). Information about Projects 2 and 3 are forthcoming; they will be due at specified times toward the end of the semester.

Homework: For the remainder of the semester, each week you will be asked to complete online homework through Pearson's website. I am currently waiting to finalize things with the publisher and all of you will obtain a login with access to MyLab Math and also an online version of the textbook. Your homework score will be an average of the five homeworks you've already submitted

and the forthcoming MyLab Math assignments.

In addition to the MyLab Math assignments, each week you will have a write-up entitled “Problems to Chew On” which will parallel, in spirit, the “turn in” problems you had in the beginning of the course. For you to perform well on the projects, it is crucial that you do treat the “Problems to Chew On” seriously – they will go deeper into the material than we are able to through online homework. At the end of the week, I will post solutions to these problems so you can check your work and understanding. These problems will not be collected, though I strongly encourage you to do them and ask me lots of questions about them.

Lectures: I will post a series of short lectures each week on our course website. Along with reading your textbook, please watch those lectures and take notes (as if you were doing it in a physical classroom). As was true of the beginning of the semester, my lectures will cover a subset of the material from the textbook (the difficult stuff); however, you will be responsible for learning more material than my lectures cover. For this, I encourage you to read your textbook actively, with pencil and paper in hand.

Projects: As stated above, the majority of your grade will, henceforth, be spread between three projects. You will receive a specific write-up and instructions (including due dates and expectations) for each project and these will be posted to the course website (shortly). Some details I can give you for now are as follows:

1. **All drafts of projects will need to be submitted as PDF files.** Microsoft Word files, screenshots, image files, are not acceptable. If you need help converting something to PDF, please email me.
2. **Project 1:** This project will simply be the same as the original project you were working on during the Week of March 9th. The instructions for this project are exactly the same as we discussed before, the only difference is that we will have no peer review process and, instead, you will submit a rough draft to me by Friday, April 3rd, by midnight in your respective timezone. I will give you feedback and return your projects the following week. The final draft of Project 1 is due on April 17th.
3. **Project 2:** You will receive instructions for Project 2 during the week of April 6th. These projects will likely be group projects and you will collaborate with other group members via email and Zoom or Skype (or whatever). This project will be due during the final week of classes.
4. **Project 3:** Project 3 will be an individual project and less open-ended than Projects 1 and 2. This will, in some sense, serve as a final exam for the course and, perhaps, it should be thought of as a take-home exam. For it, you will be asked to solve and produce a clear write-up for a series of (fairly extensive) problems covering a large amount of the course material. You will have a fixed amount of time to complete these problems.

Communicating with me, office hours, etc.: As this class has gone fully remote, I would like our primary form of communication to be over email. I now (for the first time in years) have internet access in my home and will be working from home primarily. So please feel free to email me at any point with any questions/concerns about homework, projects, the course, our plan, etc. **In every email you send, please put “[MA253]” (without the quotations) in the subject**

line. I will do my best to get back to all of your emails within a 24 hour period – if I don't, feel free to send the email again.

If there are a number of identical or very similar questions I receive via email, I will post a video to the course website of me answering certain questions. So, as with everything, please check the course website often (and before you email). I will do my best to make these videos as informative as possible and try to not overwhelm you with them.

Finally, if we determine that answers via email to be insufficient, I will happily set up a time for you to video chat. At this point, I'm not sure how much time I will have available but I will do my best to be as accommodating as possible.

Some notes about communication:

1. I understand that some of you will not have consistent access to Colby email/Gmail. To this end, I will adopt the following three policies:
 - (a) If you do not have consistent access to Colby email, please feel free to send me email from an email account to which you do have consistent access. If this is the case for you, I would prefer if you were consistent about only using the one form of email and please make sure that your name, as it stands with the Colby registrar, is readily and easily identifiable in those emails. I will then communicate with you via that email address.
 - (b) Once you establish your preferred form of email, I will expect that you all submit your projects via this email address. If, for some reason, submitting PDF files becomes problematic via email, we will work with Colby ITS to find another solution.
2. To account for those who do not have consistent access to email, I will post all official class emails the course's webpage (<https://personal.colby.edu/~erandles/M253.html>). Please check this webpage often.
3. In all emails, please make sure to put "[MA253]" in the subject line.
4. If you are sending an email to submit an assignment (meaning drafts of projects), make sure that your submission is in PDF format. Again, if you need help putting something in PDF format, please feel free to ask.
5. As I am now receiving 50+ email per day (and I expect that number to double), I would appreciate if you could clearly state your question/concern as efficiently as possible.

The next steps:

1. Read Sections 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1 and 3.2 from the textbook (Lay, 3rd Ed.). These will be the sections covered this week.
2. Solve this week's "Problems to chew on" assignment. I would suggest, for your own benefit, that you write up solutions to these problems as if you were going to hand them in (though you will not hand them in).
3. Watch the video lectures on the course website as they become available. As there is a limited amount of space on the Colby server, I will be removing videos after one week and replacing

them with others. Thus, it is crucial that you watch the videos as they go up and, perhaps, it would be advisable for you to download them to your own computer if you have space (so that you can rewatch).

4. I am still in the process of getting our online homework to be functional. As soon as it is, I will send another email with instructions of how to get started. For now, in addition to “Problems to chew on”, you should do the following “Do not turn in” problems from the textbook (Lay, 3rd ed.):

(a) **Practice Problems:**

- i. Section 2.1: 1
- ii. Section 2.2: 1, 2
- iii. Section 2.3: 1, 2, 3
- iv. Section 3.2: 1, 2

(b) **Exercises**

- i. Section 2.1: 2, 4, 6 - 10, 12, 20, 27, 28
- ii. Section 2.2: 1, 2, 5, 13, 21, 31
- iii. Section 2.3: 1, 3, 13, 14, 16, 17, 24, 33, 34, 35
- iv. Section 3.1: 1, 3, 5, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 33, 35, 36, 37, 38
- v. Section 3.2: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 23, 31, 32, 33, 34

5. Work on Project 1. The rough draft for this project is due, via email, on April 3rd by midnight in your respective timezone.

Again, I hope that the rest of the semester goes as smoothly and is as educational as possible, for all of us. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to email me. I wish you and your families happiness and good health in these incredibly difficult times.

Sincerely,

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