

MATH 241 Fall 2015 (3 credits)

Course Syllabus

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Instructor	Professor Adam Kapelner
Office	604 Kiely Hall
Contact	kapelner@qc.cuny.edu
Section A (241-08) Time / Loc	Tuesday and Thursday 9:15 - 10:30AM / Kiely 422
Section B (241-02) Time / Loc	Tuesday and Thursday 10:45 - 12:00PM / Kiely 422
Section C (241-04) Time / Loc	Tuesday and Thursday 1:40 - 2:55PM / Kiely 326
Office Hours / Loc	Tuesday and Thursday 12:40-1:30 / Kiely 604
Course Homepage	https://github.com/kapelner/QC_Math_241_Fall_2015

Course Overview

MATH 241 is an introduction to the basic concepts and techniques of probability and statistics with an emphasis on applications. Topics to be covered are below (not in order of coverage):

- Basic Set Theory
- Counting Methods — permutations and combinations
- Basic Probability Theory — axioms, conditional probability, in/dependence
- Modeling with Discrete Random Variables: Bernoulli, Hypergeometric, Binomial, Poisson, Geometric, Negative Binomial, Uniform Discrete, Rademacher and others
- Expectation, Variance, Covariance, Moments
- Modeling with Continuous Random Variables: Exponential, Uniform and Normal
- Moment Generating Functions
- Law of Large Numbers and the Central Limit Theorem
- Confidence Intervals and Hypothesis Testing for one-sample proportions (possibly p -values and statistical significance as well)

Students taking this course may not receive credit for MATH 114, except by permission of the chair. Pre/corequisites include MATH 132 or 143 or 152.

This is not your typical mathematics course. This course develops ideas and concepts for helping to make decisions based on randomness and we will do lots of modeling of real-world situations. The course does not dwell on theory nor details of computation but will make use of computation especially using the R statistical language.

Course Materials

Textbook: A First Course in Probability by Sheldon Ross. I prefer the 7th edition which you can buy this used on Amazon. You can buy *any edition* though if you find it cheaper. There is no excuse not to have this book. It is *required*. However, most of the material in the class comes from the lecture notes. The textbook is a way to get “another take” on the material.

Computer Software: We will also be using R which is a free, open source statistical programming language and console. You can download it from: <http://cran.mirrors.hoobly.com/>. I do not expect you to do *any* programming. I will be giving you R code to run and expect you to interpret the results based on concepts explained during the course.

Calculator: You can use a TI-84, 85, 89 or any calculator which you wish. I strongly suggest you use Wolfram Alpha and its smartphone app.

Announcements

Announcements will be made via email. I am known to send a couple emails per week on important issues. Thus, I will need the email address that you reliably check. The default is whatever is in CUNYfirst which many of you do not check. (See Homework #0 for more information).

Lectures

I have a no computer / tablet / phone policy during lectures. Only pen / pencil and paper. Classes are 75 minutes and run from Thursday, August 27 until Thursday, December 10. There will be 26 lectures and two days for the two midterm exams which are in class. Exam schedule is given on page 5.

Reschedule of Two Lectures

Due to the Jewish holidays, I must miss two lecture days: Tuesday, September 29 and Tuesday, October 6. Both lectures will be made up in one 2.5hr lecture on Friday, October 2 and we will vote on the time in-class.

Homework

There will be 10–12 homework assignments. Homeworks will be assigned and placed on the course homepage and will usually be due a week later in class. Homework will be **graded** out of 100 with extra credit getting scores possibly > 100 . I (and the TA) will be doing the grading. We will grade an *arbitrary subset of the assignment* which is determined after the homework is handed in. Homework must be printed, neat and stapled (**it cannot be emailed to me**). Homework can be given to me in class or delivered to my office in Kissena Hall. *Homework cannot be handed in to my mail slot in the Kiely mathematics office* (unless you want it to be counted as late).

Graded homework will be returned in class. Regrades are handled during office hours or right after class is over. Scores for homeworks are finalized one week after the graded copies are handed back. Thereafter there will be no changes and no re-grading. Do not delay checking your graded homeworks. I (and the grader) are not perfect and we do make mistakes. It is your obligation to find our mistakes and report them.

You are encouraged to seek help from me if you have questions. After class and office hours are good times. **You are highly recommended to work with each other and help each other.** You must, however, submit your own solutions, *with your own write-up* and in *your own words*. There can be no collaboration on the actual *writing*. Failure to comply will result in severe penalties. The university honor code is something I take seriously and I send people to the Dean every semester for violations.

Homework will be similar to previous semesters' homeworks. I will change questions here and there. If you are copying from a previous students' homeworks, we will eventually find you since the criminal mind eventually will slip. Honesty is the best policy. It's not worth me giving you a zero for your entire homework score.

Philosophy of Homework

Homework is the *most* important part of this course.¹ Success in Statistics and Mathematics courses comes from experience in working with and thinking about the concepts. It's kind of like weightlifting; you have to lift weights to build muscles. My job as an instructor is to provide assistance through your zone of proximal development. With me, you can grow more than you can alone. To this effect, homework problems are color coded **green** for easy, **yellow** for harder, **red** for challenging and **purple** for extra credit. You need to know how to do all the greens by yourself. If you've been to class and took notes, they are a joke. Yellows and reds: feel free to work with others. Only do extra credits if you have already finished the assignment. The "[Optional]" problems are for extra practice — highly recommended for exam study.

Time Spent on Homework

This is a three credit course. Thus, the amount of work outside of the 2.5hr in-class time per week is 6-9 hours. I will aim for 6hr of homework per week on average. However, doing the homework well is your sole responsibility since I will make sure that by doing the homework you will study and understand the concepts in the lectures.

¹In one student's observation, I give a "mind-blowing homework" every week.

Late Homework

Late homework will be penalized 10 points per day for a maximum of five days. Do not ask for extensions; just hand in the homework late. After five days, **you can hand it in whenever you want** until the last day of class, Thursday, December xx. As far as I know, this is one of the most lenient and flexible homework policies in college. I realize things come up. Do not abuse this policy; you will fall far, far behind.

Homework L^AT_EX Bonus Points

Part of good mathematics is its beautiful presentation. Thus, **there will be a 1–15 point bonus** added to your homework grade for typing up your homework using the L^AT_EX typesetting system.

I recommend using overleaf to write up your homeworks (make sure you upload both the hwxx.tex and the preamble.tex file). This has the advantage of (a) not having to install anything on your computer and not having to maintain your L^AT_EX installation (b) allowing easy collaboration with others (c) always having a backup of your work since it's always on the cloud. If you insist to have L^AT_EX running on your computer, you can download it for Windows here and for MAC here. For editing and producing PDF's, I recommend T_EXworks which can be downloaded here. Please use the L^AT_EX code provided on the course homepage for each homework assignment.

If you are handing in homework this way, read the comments in the code; there are two lines to comment out and you should replace my name with yours and write your section. If you are asked to make drawings, you can take a picture of your handwritten drawing and insert as a figure or leave space using the “\vspace” command and draw them in after printing or attach them stapled.

Since this is extra credit, do not ask me for help in setting up your computer with L^AT_EX in class or in office hours.

Homework Extra Credit

There will be many extra credit questions sprinkled throughout the homeworks. They will be worth a variable number of points arbitrarily assigned based on my perceived difficulty of the exercise. Homework scores in the 140's are not unheard of. They are a good boost to your grade.

Homework Redo Policy

After a homework is graded and (a) you do not have a ZERO on the homework and (b) your HW grade is failing (i.e. under 65), you may hand in a homework “redo” at any time before the final date to hand in homeworks (see above under “Late Homework”).

You must redo the *entire* homework. If it was handwritten, you must copy all the answers and redo the wrong questions. Then, you must hand in *both* the old homework and the new homework with the redone homework clearly marked as a “redo.”

I will remark the redone homework possibly marking questions that I did not mark previously. I will then record your final score as the average of the old and new scores. L^AT_EX bonus

still will be applied. If the original homework was handed in late, the same late penalty applies to the redone homework.

Homework #0

For your first homework (due immediately). You must:

- (1) email me at kapelner@qc.cuny.edu from the email address you wish to be contacted at for this course (most commonly this is a gmail address),
- (2) in the email, you must say “My name is <Your Full Name as appears in the registrar> and I have read and understand all the material in the course syllabus” and
- (3) in the email, you attach a picture of you so I can memorize and know your name. (You can also say “I opt-out of picture” and state your reason).

I will email you back a password you can use to check the course grading site once the site is up (which should be a couple weeks into the semester).

This assignment is due Tuesday, Sept xx, 2015 5PM and will receive a grade of 0 or 100 with the usual 10 point penalty for lateness.

Examinations

Examinations are solely based on homeworks! If you can do all the green and yellow problems on the homeworks, the exams should not present any challenge. I will *never* give you exam problems on concepts which you have not seen at home on one of the weekly homework assignments. There will be three exams and the schedule is below.

Exam Schedule

- Midterm examination I will be Thursday October 8 in class
- Midterm examination II will be Thursday November 12 in class
- The final examination will be Thursday December 17 and Tuesday December 22. Section A has the exam from 8:30-10:30AM in class 12/17, section B has the exam from 11AM-1PM in class 12/17 and section C has the exam from 1:45-3:45PM in class 12/22. I will try to consolidate this to one day if possible.

Exam Materials

I allow you to bring any calculator you wish but it cannot be your phone. The only other items allowed are pencil and eraser. I do not recommend using pen but it is allowed

I also allow “cheat sheets” on examinations. For both midterms, you are allowed to bring one 8.5” × 11” sheet of paper (front and back). On this paper you can write anything you would like which you believe will help you on the exam. For the final, you are allowed to bring three 8.5” × 11” sheet of paper (front and back). I will be handing back the cheat sheets so you can reuse your midterm cheat sheets for the final if you wish.

Cheating on Exams

If I catch you cheating, you can either take a zero on the exam, or you can roll the dice before the University Honor Council who may choose to suspend you.

Missing Exams

There are no make-up exams. If you miss the exam, you get a zero. If you are sick, I need documentation of your visit to a hospital or doctor. Expect my grader to call the doctor or hospital to verify the legitimacy of your note. If you need to leave the country for an emergency, I will expect proper documentation as well.

Special Services

If you are a student who takes exams at the special services center, I need to see your blue slip one week before the exam to make proper arrangements with the center.

Class Participation (and attendance)

I will be taking attendance during the class. Attendance counts towards the class participation portion of your grade in equal part with how often you ask and answer questions during the lecture.

Grading and Grading Policy

Your course grade will be calculated based on the percentages as follows:

Homework	20%
Class participation	5%
Midterm Examination I	20%
Midterm Examination II	20%
Final Examination	35%

The semester is split into three periods (1) from the beginning until midterm I (2) from midterm I to midterm II (3) from midterm II until the end. The material in each of the periods is tested evenly; thus, it counts the same towards your grade. Since there is 75% of the grade allotted to exams, there is 25% allotted to each period. Thus, the final is upweighted towards the material covered in the third period. In summary, the final will have $5/35$ points $\approx 14\%$ for the first period's material, $5/35$ points $\approx 14\%$ for the second period's material and $25/35$ points $\approx 71\%$ for the last period's material. A good strategy for the final is to just study the material after Midterm II and minimal studying for the previous material.

Previous semesters' grade distributions

Below is a history of previous semesters' grade distributions with approximate cutoffs.

Grade	F	D	D+	C-	C	C+	B-	B	B+	A-	A	A+
n	3	3	4	4	6	4	3	6	3	4	3	0
%ile	—	9.5	19.0	26.2	35.7	50.0	59.2	66.7	78.6	85.7	95.2	—

Table 1: Math 241 Spring, 2015. Total enrollment out of two sections save no-shows was $n = 42$.

Grade	F	D	D+	C-	C	C+	B-	B	B+	A-	A	A+
n	6	5	1	5	4	4	4	6	4	2	6	1
%ile	12.5	22.9	25.0	31.3	37.5	52.1	60.4	72.9	81.3	85.4	97.9	100

Table 2: Math 241 Fall, 2014. Total enrollment out of two sections save no-shows was $n = 48$.

I am not obligated to mirror these grade distribution and cutoffs this semester. Grade distributions vary from semester-to-semester based on the relative difficulty of exams, student ability and randomness in raw score clustering. The above is meant for informational purposes only. Do not come to me expecting a negotiation of your grade based on a previous semester's cutoff.

The Computer Science C- requirement

This class is a required course for the Computer Science major and requires a minimum of a C- to earn credit for the major. I cannot assign grades based on student need. What I can do is let you know if you are in danger of getting a grade lower than C- after the first exam and after the second exam. The second exam is scheduled on the day of the Withdraw deadline and I will do my best to have them graded well before the deadline.

If you are below the 30-35%ile and you are a CS major, you are on the border of passing your requirement. If you do not plan on studying hard for the final and improving your grade, you may choose to withdraw, thereby allowing you to focus on other classes only to retake Math 241 in the future and this time earn a stellar grade.

Checking your grade and class standing

You can always check your grades in real-time using the grading site. You will enter in your QC ID number and the password I will provide to you after homework 0.

Auditing

Auditors are welcome in both sections. They are encouraged to do all homework assignments. I will even grade them. Note that the university does not allow auditors to take examinations.