

MATH 341 Spring 2019 (3 credits)

Course Syllabus

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Instructor	Professor Adam Kapelner
Contact	<code>kapelner@qc.cuny.edu</code>
Lecture Time / Loc	Tues and Thurs 9:15 - 10:30AM / Kiely 283
My Office Hours / Loc	Tues and Thurs 12:50-1:30PM / Kiely 283
TA Office Hours / Loc	Thurs 1:45-2:45PM / Kiely 5th fl lounge
Course Homepage	https://github.com/kapelner/QC_Math_341_Spring_2019

Course Overview

MATH 341. Bayesian Modeling. 3 hr.; 3 cr. Prereq.: MATH 241. A review of frequentist methods followed by a survey of statistical modeling using the Bayesian framework: prior distribution design, including Jeffreys priors; likelihood models; posterior probabilities; hypothesis tests; Bayesian linear regression; Gibbs sampling; Metropolis-Hastings (basic Bayesian computing). Emphasis on real-world applications, including those in finance and applied probability. The goal is to be fluent enough to understand how industry uses Bayesian modeling and computation by the end of the course.

Statistics has historically been taught from the frequentist perspective. Recently, the Bayesian perspective has become popular (1) due to their models' performance on previously intractable problems and the recent availability of inexpensive computational power and (2) it solves many philosophical quandaries in the Frequentist perspective. Further, many scientific journals have stopped accepting p-values and confidence intervals in favor of Bayesian inference and testing. It is imperative to teach this perspective; students will see these models in industry and this mode of thinking is becoming mainstream in science at large.

This course covers (and is not limited to) the following topics:

- Data modeling with parametric families
- Bayes Rule as it applies to parameters
- prior distribution design
- Jeffrey's priors
- likelihood models and maximum likelihood estimators
- posterior probabilities
- Bayesian inference: credibility intervals
- Bayesian inference: p-values for hypothesis tests
- mixture priors
- mixture models
- Newton-Raphson and Expectation-Maximization Algorithms
- basic computing for Bayesian models including Gibbs sampling and Metropolis-Hastings Sampling

The only prerequisite is Math 241 or equivalent. You should be familiar with the following:

- 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 and others
- Expectation and Variance
- Modeling with Continuous Random Variables: Exponential, Uniform and Normal
- Frequentist Confidence Intervals and Hypothesis Testing for one-sample proportions

We will review the above *throughout the semester* when needed and we will do so rapidly.

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.

The 650.3 section

You are the students taking this course as part of a masters degree in mathematics. Thus, there will be extra homework for you and you will be graded on a separate curve.

Course Materials

Textbook: Introduction to Bayesian Statistics by William M. Bolstad First Edition. It can be purchased used on Amazon. This is *recommended*. You get a way to get “another take” on the material. However, most of the material in the class comes from the lecture notes.

Popular Book: We will also be reading the non-fiction novel “The Theory that Would not Die: How Bayes’ Rule Cracked the Enigma Code, Hunted Down Russian Submarines, and Emerged Triumphant from Two Centuries of Controversy” by Sharon Bertsch McGrayne which can also be purchased on Amazon. This is *required* — you will have homework questions directly from this book.

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. There are 28 scheduled meetings. Of these, 23 will be lectures, 2 will be midterm exams which are in class and 2 will be review periods (the meeting before the exams). The exam schedule is given on page 6.

Lecture Upload

As many previous students have noted, my handwritten notes are useful to me and not to many others. Thus, I will be rewarding students for taking notes, scanning them in and sending them to me. You will be rewarded in two ways: (1) if you do this for more than 10 lectures, you will be given the automatic 5 points (see grading policy on page 7) for your classroom participation grade and (2) you have the option for me to say your name publicly on the course homepage. Make sure you follow these instructions:

- You have *one week only* from the time of the lecture to email me lecture notes.
- There must be *one* file and it must be in PDF format only.
- The file must be <2MB. No exceptions.

Homework

There will be 9-11 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 will be doing the grading and 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 under my office door (KY 604).

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 am not perfect and I 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.

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

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

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 and you won't have all that much to do when the exams roll around.

Late Homework

Late homework will be penalized 10 points per business day (Monday–Friday save holidays) 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 May 15 at noon. 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 1–10 point bonus** added to your homework grade for typing up your homework using the L^AT_EX typesetting system based on the elegance of your presentation. The bonus is arbitrarily determined by me.

I recommend using overleaf to write up your homeworks (make sure you upload both the hw#.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. The easiest way to use overleaf is to copy the raw text from hwxx.tex and preamble.tex into two new overleaf tex files with the same name. If you are asked to

make drawings, you can take a picture of your handwritten drawing and insert them as figures 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. Also, **never share your L^AT_EX code with other students** — it is cheating and if you are found I will take it seriously.

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; I once had a student go from a B to an A- based on these bonuses.

Homework #0

For your first homework, 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”

This constitutes a contract — you are agreeing to this syllabus.

This assignment is due Friday, Feb 1, 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 (which are rooted in the lectures)! 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 Tues, March 5 in class with the first review session on the Thurs prior

- Midterm examination II will be Thurs, April 11 in class with a review on the Tues prior
- The final examination will be in KY283 with a review on the prior Tues, May 14.

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). **Two sheets single sided are not allowed.** 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). **Six sheets single sided are not allowed.** I will be handing back the cheat sheets so you can reuse your midterm cheat sheets for the final if you wish.

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 me to call the doctor or hospital to verify the legitimacy of your note.

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 selectively throughout the semester. 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. Midterm I covers material during this time..
2. From midterm I to midterm II. Midterm II covers material in this period only.
3. From midterm II until the final. The final is cumulative and covers all course material.

Each of the periods is assessed evenly. Thus, each period must count 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.

The Grade Distribution

As this is a small and advanced class, the class curve will be quite generous. If you do your homework and demonstrate understanding on the exams, you should expect to be rewarded with an A or a B. \leq C's are for those who "dropped out" somewhere mid-semester or who cannot demonstrate basic understanding.

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 (or email) 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.