Frequently Asked Questions:

1. I'm not used to converting times from UTC. How can I find out when my due times are?
2. How can I get help in the course and what are the rules/expectations?
3. How do I see solution keys for assignments?
4. What if I can't get an assignment in by a deadline?
5. Is it acceptable to use a spreadsheet, such as Excel, as statistical software?

1. I'm not used to converting times from UTC. How can I find out when my due times and days of the week are?

You can configure your edX account to show local time for the times in your course. When you do that, independently check to make sure that it is correctly showing the local time and VERY carefully check for correctness when/if your local time changes from/to Daylight Savings time. You are responsible for knowing our deadline in YOUR time zone at all times during the semester.

If you are interested in the details, in the last line of this paragraph is a link to a calculator for time zones that takes the day of the year into account, which is mostly (completely??) correctly taking into account changes from/to Daylight Savings Time. (UTC does not use Daylight Savings time.)
Use this as needed: https://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html

You have at least a full week available to submit each assignment. Moreover, you have more than TWO weeks to complete the first homework assignment.   We expect you to use this to stay at least three days ahead of the deadlines throughout the semester in order to give yourself the flexibility you may need to avoid getting behind.

2.How can I get help in the course and what are the rules/expectations?

For homework, the use of any help to clarify the meaning and on how to start a problem is fine. Try to ask questions and help each other without giving actual solutions, but that is not completely prohibited among *small* groups of students.   But it is *not* appropriate to ask, essentially, "Here's my solution. Do you think it is correct?" The point is to discuss what you are thinking, why you're thinking it, and what you are still uncertain about. The goal of homework is for ALL students to think about ALL problems, not to help anyone arrive at answers they don't fully understand.

To keep the discussions easy to follow, try to keep each discussion thread about a single idea or a single problem.   It is, of course, acceptable to mention more than one idea or problem if your discussion involves comparing or contrasting them. In that case, specifically state how you are thinking of comparing and contrasting them.   Or about how the ideas are connected.

Don't participate in discussions about multiple problems that someone else started unless you are discussing what the problems have in common or what you see as different about them.

All questions in homework, quizzes and exams require either a single numerical answer or are multiple-choice. Only the final answer is entered online. Most problems require extensive off-line computation or derivation. You are expected to keep reasonable records of that work so that you can compare it to the solutions to enhance your learning.

As described in the "grading" portion of the syllabus, the grading in a course of this size and style is based on your skills in doing multiple consecutive steps correctly, careful attention and proofreading, and time management as well as correct understanding and use of probability and statistics concepts.

3.How do I see solution keys for assignments?

Solutions will be posted for all homework, quizzes and exams eight hours after the deadline for the assignment. The posted solutions give some details of answers to the problems. It is important that you compare your work to the solutions. Being a successful student involves learning as much as possible from your mistakes.   In fact, it is often true that the students who first make mistakes and learn from them actually learn more than those who don't have any questions or mistakes in working the problems.   To encourage you to use these solutions, no feedback will be provided on the questions in the "submission" of the assignment.

After the assignment is due AND the solutions are posted, if needed, you can discuss the solution and any questions about on the class discussion board (the Discussion Board.) However, do not discuss issues about grading or your grade in the Discussion Board.

If you have questions about the grading of any assignment, you must submit those to the course email address no later than a week after the day and time of the due date of that assignment. As shown in the calendar in the syllabus, a shorter time is allowed during the last two weeks of the semester in order to meet the grading deadline of the course.   The appropriate TA or instructor will respond.

4.What if I can't get an assignment in by a deadline?

All students are expected to strictly adhere to deadlines, to arrange to have reliable internet connections so that they can handle timed assignments. The deadlines are all at the same time of day, to avoid confusion. The most important consideration of adhering to deadlines is to avoid submitting work very close to the deadline. That should be easy since you have at least a week in which to do each assignment.   Plan to get all your work in at least several days before the deadline, and NEVER wait until the last few hours before the deadline.

We do recognize that sometimes students have various difficulties with submission of assignments. (This includes those unfortunate disasters in various parts of the world that may disrupt Internet access, etc.)   To allow for this, we will ***drop two homework grades, two quiz grades, and two of the "other" grades before computing those averages***.   However, students are expected to DO and learn the material from all problems in ALL assignments.   ***Neither exam grade can be dropped. Both exams must be taken on time. Plan ahead for those!***

In a previous semester, a few students complained about the system not taking the answers for quizzes or exams that they submitted in the last few seconds or so of their allowed time. (Presumably this was because the time the user submits something and the time the server receives it are not exactly the same.) To avoid this issue, for the (timed) quizzes and exams, one minute has been added to the allowed time (so quizzes will have 31 minutes and exams 121 minutes.)   Answers which the system accepts during that last minute are counted, but if the system does not accept an answer during that last minute, no consideration will be given to counting it. This allowance is considerably longer than enough time to avoid all such difficulties.   .

Do not post in any public forum, including the Discussion Board, any discussion about your grade, because conversations about grades should be private. If you think that you have a crucial-enough comment that it might affect your grade, you must submit your supporting documents with proof of what you did to Canvas *within a few minutes of the time you had to finish the assignment*, *and write something to the course email address.* Here is the link to Canvas: http://canvas.utexas.edu .   See the instructions there (and in the Orientation Quiz 0.)

If you have some other comment about grading, send an email message to the course email address: onlineprobability@austin.utexas.edu . To actually affect a student's grade we MUST see the work that the student did **during the time** allowed for that assignment and submitted immediately to Canvas.

Please keep in mind that grading rules are expected to treat all students equally, and, in a large class such as this, it is frustrating to the instructor and TAs when students want exceptions to the rules.   Remember that the "dropped" grades are supposed to handle whatever students' difficulties are with submitting homework and quizzes on time in the system.

5. Is it acceptable to use a spreadsheet, such as Excel, as statistical software?

Spreadsheets are excellent for doing large calculations to many decimal places.   But they are *not to be used to replace statistical software*. Spreadsheets will give you answers to most statistical questions, but most answers require some amount of approximation (at least rounding off) and spreadsheets do not consistently do those approximations in a way that will give you the same answer as the appropriate formula or a dedicated statistical software package. Sometimes that difference will cause your answer to be counted as incorrect.