Math 266 Course Description, Course Policy
Introduction to Differential Equations
Fall 2005

Professor: Scott Hansen, 494 Carver, 294-8171
Office Hours: See course homepage

General Information

The main emphasis of the course is the material from chapters 2, 3 and 7 of the text. Specific sections in chapters 4 and 9 may also be included as time permits.

Exams

We will have two in-class exams and a comprehensive final exam. Each exam is worth 100 points and the final is worth 150 pts. The test dates (subject to revision) are:

Thurs. Sept. 22,    Thurs. Oct. 27,

Homework, quizzes

In addition to the practice problems (mentioned above) there will be regular quizzes and homework assignments through the course of the semester. Occasionally extra credit problems may also be assigned which will add on to the homework grade. The homework and quiz grade will only count if it benefits your average (it will for most of you). I expect about 3 quizzes, 3 homeworks for about 70 - 80 pts. Some of the homework is designed to prepare you for the types of problems that will be on the exams, but others are more analytical and go beyond what is possible to put on a test. To encourage students to work hard on the homework problems I’ll occasionally give extra credit for good work on the more difficult problems. This makes it possible for an average test-taker to get nearly 100 percent on this part of the grade (with enough hard work!)

Grading system

A straight percentage is calculated based upon your homework and quiz grade (80 pts), the in-class exams (200 pts) and the final (150 pts). The semester grade is based upon this percentage. In borderline cases (within about 5 points of a borderline - on either side), my own personal opinion, based upon final exam performance, class attendance and my personal assesment of what you have learned will determine your semester grade.

Tests will be curved based upon my opinion of the difficulty and how well the class does. In past semesters the final scale has been approximately a 87-75-62-50 % scale.
“Plus” and “minus” grades will be approximately the top and bottom three percent in each grade bracket.

Attendance is highly recommended but not required. However, I do regard the homework and quizzes partly as a class participation grade and will accept only one excuse from any one person during the semester regarding late homework or missed quizzes.

Missed Exams

There will be no make–up exams for people who miss an exam without a valid reason. A valid reason must be supported by some official note of explanation, such as a note from a physician. Lacking this, your semester grad percentage will be calculated using the scores available, with a 10 percent penalty for the missed exam.

If you know in advance that for legitimate reasons you will be unable to take an exam, please discuss this with me BEFORE THE TEST.

Alternate Final Exam

In case you have three exams on the day of our final exam, you will need to talk to the professor of the class which has the least number of students in it, and have him or her set up an alternate test time for you.

Pet Peeves

Cell Phones are disruptive. Please turn them off when the lecture begins. I sometimes get students that slipping out during the lecture to talk. Don’t make this a habit. Expect to hear from me if you do this more than a time or two.

My email is shansen@math.iastate.edu. I am happy to answer simple questions over email, but but it is much easier to explain mathematics in person, or even over the phone, if this is the case.

With regard to correction of partial credit on homework and exam problems, it is always a good idea to check the grading. Occasionally I do miss something and will be happy to correct the oversight. On the other hand, assesment of partial credit is not an exact science. Usually on a given test the amount of partial credit given averages out. Most people will get both unfavorable and favorable scores on a give test, so if you think you deserve more partial credit on one of the problems, I will look at the whole exam and decide based on the whole test whether or not to give more credit.

And finally, for a lot of you, this will be a very demanding class. If you are one that struggles with this material, try to not get discouraged, do not fall behind, use the office hours when you need help. If you think you might want a tutor, look into this right away since there are not enough to go around. Finally, feel free to come discuss with me any problems you are having with the course.

Good luck!