Math 455: Changes in Class Mechanics  
March 23, 2020

Here is some information about how the course will work now, or at least how we’ll start out. We will all need to keep in mind is that none of us expected this to happen now and all of us are going to have to be flexible. We’ll do the best we can with the online version of the course and we’ll make adjustments as we encounter new problems. Please give me feedback, preferably by email or during office hours, and let me know about any problems you’re having (whether technical or other) and suggestions you have for improving the course.

1. Zoom stuff
   (a) I want people to participate synchronously, if possible, so they can ask questions, respond to questions I ask, etc. If it’s not possible for you (e.g., due to bandwidth problems, being in a distant time zone, unworkable home situation), let me know by email and explain why.
   (b) I am recording the Zoom classes and will post links on Moodle, but I’m not sure how that will work, how long it will take to become visible, etc. Note that some things (like the chat logs and screen annotations) are limited in recorded meetings.
   (c) Interactive features:
      • Please mute your microphones, except when you’re saying something to the whole class. If you’re having trouble with the Zoom performance (lags, freezes, etc.), try turning off your video.
      • Please set your Zoom name to be something I will recognize, preferably your first and last name, so I can take attendance and call on you.
      • Note the features to raise your hand, indicate things are going too fast or too slow, etc. And feel free to use the chat feature with the whole class if you have questions, in addition to raising your hand. I do have to manage several of these things at once, as well as giving the lecture, so I may not be able to keep up with all of them at once. Please be patient! (The experts recommend having a co-teacher sitting with the main instructor to watch the chat, etc., but we won’t have that in general.) If you have problems finding or using any of these features, let me know.
   (d) I will post pdfs of the material I write on the “board”, so you don’t have to try to write everything down. The research shows, however, that taking notes that try to capture the main ideas does help you learn the material.

2. Homework: There will be homework, exactly as before: I’ll assign problems, mostly from the textbook, you’ll write them up on paper. The same
rules about consulting other people, books (other than the textbook), the
web, etc., will apply.

You will have to submit pdf files—if you want to create your homework
with \texttt{\LaTeX} or some other suitable formatting program, that’s great, but
otherwise you’ll need to scan your homework to submit it. If you don’t
have a scanner, you can get and use various apps for you phone: Tiny
Scanner, Cam Scanner, etc. We’re still exploring various approaches to
grading the papers, and it’s possible that you will need to submit the pdf
files to a different application, not Moodle. (You may also explicitly need
to indicate which pages have your answers to which problems; if we use a
system that requires that, we’ll give you more information about how to
do it.) Assignments will be posted on Moodle and the course web page.

3. Exams: I haven’t had time to think about the details of this. I still intend
to give a second exam, but I’m not sure how it will work. I am also hoping
to get some guidance from the campus and the math department.

4. Office hours: I will schedule regular office hours where we can meet by
Zoom, probably at the same times I had for in-person office hours, but
we’ll have to see how this works on Zoom. I will set these up with what
Zoom calls a “waiting room”, so that if you have things you want to discuss
privately (grades or anything else), we can do that. As usual, if you can’t
make it to the regularly scheduled time, let me know.

5. Course projects: You will still be doing the group projects, though we
may find that we have to make some changes in how they work. I will
be posting the first part of the assignment (which will ask you to give me
your preferences for various topics and information about your math back-
ground) very soon, hopefully before our first online class tomorrow. You
will presumably have to communicate with the other people in your group
by email, Zoom (or Skype or Hangouts, or . . . ), and the presentations will
be done on Zoom.

6. Announcements: I will continue to use the email list and the course web
page, as well as Moodle, for announcements, assignments, etc. After we
see how things are going and you let me know which you find most useful,
I may cut back to one primary channel, but I will let you know before I
do that. If I run into problems updating things and what’s on the course
web page, say, doesn’t match what’s on Moodle, please let me know by
email.

7. Other things: The campus is allowing students to change to pass-fail grad-
ing and you should have received an email about this. I am happy to talk
to you about your decision on this, but I don’t know whether a student is
enrolled pass-fail or not; I give a letter grade in any case (and if it raises
your GPA, I think it gets recorded in your transcript as the letter grade).
As I’ve said above, please do give me feedback about how the course is going and how you are doing, and any suggestions you have for things we could do to make the course better. And stay well!