

Math 251 Spring 2009 §10 FAQ

Vivek Srikrishnan, email: srikrish@math.psu.edu, office: 017 McAllister

- 1) **What is this class?** This is a class on differential equations, which is not only an important branch of mathematics for just about any application but also an interesting subject area in and of itself.
- 2) **When do we meet?** Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays at 12:20pm. The MWF meetings are in 303 Willard, while the R meetings are in 305 Wagner.
- 3) **What should we know coming in?** The short answer is “algebra and calculus.” Be able to differentiate, take limits, and integrate in addition to basic algebra.
- 4) **Is there a website?** There is, in fact. It will have all announcements, exam information, homeworks, etc. on it. It’s located at <http://www.math.psu.edu/srikrish/math251>.
- 5) **What book do we use?** *Elementary Differential Equations and Boundary Value Problems* by Boyce and DiPrima. We use the 9th edition, but if you can save yourself some cash by getting an older edition, go for it.
- 6) **Do we have homework?** Homework will be assigned each week on the website. Make sure your homework is organized, stapled, and *on time*. **I do not accept late homework.** It’s due by the end of class each Wednesday. Collaboration on the homework is not only permitted, but *strongly encouraged*. However, everyone must still hand in their own papers. Make sure you understand everything you hand in.
- 7) **And we have quizzes, too?** The weekly (every Thursday) quizzes are meant to be mainly diagnostic, for both me and you. They’re short (1-2 problems, 10-15 minutes), and should be looked at as a way for you to see if you can do the most basic examples of a particular type of problem timed and without any notes or help. **I do not give makeup quizzes.**
- 8) **What’s with the practice problems?** Doing problems is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition to learn mathematics, and you won’t get enough just from the collected homeworks. Accordingly, I’ve suggested problems from the book that I think are good practice. It’s a good idea to do (at least some) of them regularly.
- 9) **Tests?** There are two midterm exams, on dates to be announced. There will also be a final exam on a date to be announced. **You are responsible for verifying all exam dates and locations and dealing with any conflicts.** No calculators are allowed on exams.
- 10) **What’s the grading policy?** Homework and quizzes together count for 150 points. I count your top ten homeworks and quizzes. Each midterm is 100 points and the final is 150. Also, before you ask if there’s a curve...don’t. (No, really. Don’t.) The short answer is “Don’t count on it.” The long answer is a rant about how you shouldn’t count on curves – your grades should be good in the first place.
- 11) **What’s your attendance policy?** I don’t take attendance. That being said, *attendance is imperative*. If you miss a class now and then, no big deal, it happens; just make sure you catch up. However, if you think you can learn the material without coming to class, save yourself some tuition money and test out of the class.
- 12) **Are there typed lecture notes?** Yes, there are. However, they’re there as supplements, so you can recover from missing a class or spacing out a bit. They are *not* a substitute for attending lectures. If you think they’re an invitation to skip class, you should re-read the previous question.
- 13) **What if we struggle with something?** Please talk to me! Don’t wait until you’re drowning before coming to office hours (times on the website and syllabus). If you can’t make office hours, send an email – I’ll try hard to accomodate your schedule. Also, please ask questions in class!
- 14) **Anything else?** Don’t cheat. Really. Just don’t.