

AUGUST 11, 2010

RE: MA15900 New Information, Old Information, etc.

Hi,

Make sure you read all course emails carefully and thoroughly. Remember...

"A beginning is a time for taking the most delicate care that the balances are correct."—Frank Herbert

The MA15900 website is active now. All students should thoroughly read all documents I have put there over the next few days or so. You are guaranteed to miss important information if you do not.

[www.math.purdue.edu/MA15900](http://www.math.purdue.edu/MA15900)

NOTE: Adobe Acrobat is required to open the links on the webpage. 99% of computers are automatically set to do that, but you can always download Adobe Acrobat for free from the Adobe website.

**\*\*STAY TUNED FOR MORE INFORMATION REGARDING THE ONLINE HW SYSTEM, ETC. SOMETIME NEXT WEEK.**

I have appended the information from the earlier course emails further below, for students recently adding the course.

I do not have specific office hours the week before classes start, but I will be around my office(MATH 812) quite a bit next week, so please do feel free to stop by and say hello(NOTE: there are elevators if you go to the south entrance to the MATH building).

See you all in a week and a half.

Best,  
Owen K. Davis  
MA15900 Coordinator  
OFFICE: MATH 812

**\*\*OLDER EMAILED INFORMATION\*\***

JULY 26, 2010

Re: MA15900 student questions and answers, etc.

Hi,

Have I not told you that when you think you know something, that is a most perfect barrier against learning? – Leto Atreides II

NOTE: I have appended the previously sent course email to the end of this email

Although it is difficult at times with so many students, I do respond regularly to individual student email questions. I will certainly answer every email as I am able, so do always ask questions and/or report any course related problems through email as well. Administratively and for general advice, I am the one to ask questions, always.

Please do ask the "silly" questions when you cannot figure something out. It is important you get off to a good start this Fall.

\*\*\*\*Info related to some individual student questions I have been asked and have answered already...

MORE TEXTBOOK INFO(Even more textbook information is towards the very end of this email):

Text: Algebra and Trigonometry with Anal. Geom. by Swokowski/Cole, Classic 12th Ed., Brooks/Cole (2010)

So, if you are purchasing the book online or otherwise...

1) Make sure you get the "Classic 12th Edition".

2) The Student Solutions Manual(SSM) is not required. Entirely optional. Some students find it helpful, some find it confusing because the SSM uses different or abbreviated solution methods compared to what we do in the lectures and recitations.

3) Yes indeed, the "12th" and "Classic 12th" editions are different. The Classic 12th edition has the word "CLASSIC" near the top of the cover. The following are the ISBN numbers...

ISBN-13: 9780495559719

ISBN-10: 0495559717

4) The textbook itself, new or used, is a sufficient resource for most students for the entire semester.

NOTE: More and more students are purchasing textbooks online, so I try to get the information out early, but yes purchasing the book at the local bookstores in West Lafayette is a fine option. Every once in awhile the bookstores run out of a book for a few days, but if you are getting here around the 14th of August and purchase your books as soon as you can when you get to campus, then you should be fine and also have options, like purchasing a used copy for less money sometimes.

About moving up to Calculus and skipping MA15900:

In short, I see plenty of students every Fall who have taken "AP Calc" and feel like they are ready for Purdue calculus courses, but unfortunately have little chance of being successful in Purdue calculus. Do not be in too big a hurry to get to calculus, that is one of the biggest mistakes I see students make. If you cannot pass the CRT solidly without first reviewing PreCalc, then you are not likely ready for Purdue calculus. MA15900 will however get you ready for Purdue calculus courses, that is the specific design of the course, and I make sure that opportunity to be fully ready for Purdue calculus exists for incoming freshmen.

NOTE: Focus more having a great first semester than on what course you are in. For example taking 16100 twice, which is unfortunately common, puts you in the same place progress-wise as taking 15900 successfully in the Fall and then MA16100 in the Spring. Taking MA15900 first will get you ready to succeed in 16100 the first time through. Getting a good start in collegiate mathematics is more important than jumping ahead typically, but there are many factors to consider, so ask the advising office and others for advice, and you will sometimes simply need to use your own best judgment as well.

Do I need to take the ALEKS Assessment:

ALEKS is newer placement/assessment tool that uses artificial intelligence, and is significantly different from the ART and CRT placement tests. Although it is not used for actual course placement yet, ALEKS will give you a clearer picture of your strengths and weaknesses, and there are also remediation opportunities through ALEKS as well if you feel after the assessment you would want to do that. ALEKS required, no. ALEKS strongly recommended, yes.

<http://www.math.purdue.edu/academic/undergrad/placement>

Concerned about getting a good grade and what to do to be successful:

That is the right attitude...

Be proactive. You will hear and read me mentioning things like looking at or trying a HW assignment before attending the lecture associated with that lesson. I have mentioned things like seeking out other MA15900 students to form HW and study groups. Do these things early. You will be fed a consistent

stream of advice and suggestions in class and through the course emails on how to be successful in MA15900, pay close attention to that information. The students that consistently do the things I suggest will tend to thrive in the course and also be better prepared for calculus.

Caution is great, but "no fear". "Fear is the mind-killer..."

Since most of you have had a summer break, or longer from mathematics education, you will likely be a bit rusty. You might get the textbook early and work some of the easier odd-numbered problems(then check your answers) in the first few chapters of the book to refresh your memory on some of the more basic topics you are already familiar with.

Be disciplined and work with other students who are highly motivated. Make personal rules that work for you, such as, "No fun til the homework is done", or whatever else keeps you on track. A consistently hard work ethic of always trying to learn and understand more deeply can also help quite a bit.

The course structure MWF versus TuTh:

The MWF meetings listed on your MyPurdue schedule are the lectures. Your MWF instructor will make announcements and present the new material.

The TuTh meetings listed on your MyPurdue schedule are the recitations. In the recitations you will go over questions from the HW problems with your instructor (usually 25 to 30 minutes), do a few extra problems as time permits, and then take a quiz.

Trouble opening up the files on the Purdue webpages and printing them off:

Keep in mind that the files on the webpage are mostly Adobe Acrobat .pdf files. Most web browsers will automatically open them, but otherwise download them and open them with Adobe Acrobat Reader(which you can get free from their website, if on an odd perchance it is not already on your computer), and you should be fine. You might try opening them some different way. If you go to an Purdue iTap computer lab, then you can check with the Lab Techies if something is still going wrong.

See you soon...

Best,  
Owen K. Davis  
MA15900 Coordinator  
Office: MATH 812

\*\*\*EVEN OLDER EMAIL\*\*\*

JULY 20, 2010

RE: MA15900 Introduction, Textbook notes, etc.

Hi,

"A beginning is a time for taking the most delicate care that the balances are correct."—Frank Herbert

Read that again, make sure you begin the semester well-focused with good, balanced priorities. This is a major key to being successful in MA15900 and here at Purdue.

You have an amazing opportunity to become a Purdue Engineer, Scientist, etc., but if you do not find the right balance quickly, you could quickly see that dream start to slip away. BE CAREFUL OUT THERE.

MA15900 is fast, deep, and challenging, but a most excellent course and the best possible preparation you could get for any of the Calculus classes here at Purdue.

Read my course emails carefully, and do not delete them too quickly, they are a major key in communicating effectively to 900 students at the same time and to getting you the course information you need in an organized and timely fashion.

Anyway, although there are about 900 of you in MA 15900, you should understand that you are all individually important to me. While it is impossible to give very much individual attention to each of 900 students, you should not hesitate to find me or contact me (in person or email is best), in particular when you have administrative questions or situations about the course of any kind. Giving individual mathematics help to 900 students, made even worse through email, is impossible, but administratively and for general advice, I am the one to ask questions, always. There will be plenty of other avenues for getting direct mathematics help which will be available to you beyond myself and those will be given to you in more detail during the coming weeks.

"We can't teach you everything you need to know in 4 years. You have to learn how to teach yourself."  
-- Professor A. J. Marshall – Aeronautics & Astronautics (now retired)

A wizened old professor of mine said that to my Aerospace Engineering class many years ago and it has always stuck with me. A major goal of your education is learning how to learn. I and the other lecturers will do our darnedest in the 3-50 minute lectures we are given with you each week, but you will have to mostly take it from there and make the mathematics your own. Your recitation instructors will help with questions on Tuesdays and Thursdays, but the time is limited and you should always try to figure out most of the homework problems before you go to recitation. As I mentioned above, there will be other mathematics help resources available also...

Which leads me to perhaps the most important tool for success at Purdue, each other. You are strongly urged to form study groups with your fellow students, as mentioned there are about 900 other MA15900 students and you should form alliances and study groups of various sizes to help each other with the homework, quiz preparation, and exam preparation. I cannot emphasize how important this peer-to-peer learning can be to your success, and not just in MA15900. Be inquisitive, ask the students you meet what courses they are taking and what major they are pursuing. Find those who you can partner with in your time here at Purdue.

#### GRADES:

Basically, if you do the HW consistently and perform well on the quizzes & exams, then you will get the grade you want or need. However, grades are calculated differently than what most of you have experienced. It is a complex grading system in its details, but extremely fair and accurate. The fundamental concept of the system is however very simple. Essentially, simply, everything is graded on a curve in MA15900, but not necessarily the type of curve you are used to. If an exam average happens to be, for example, 66%, then that is a middle C grade. Well above average an A or B and well below average D or F. The same is true of quizzes and homework compared to their course or section of the course averages. Second, with our type of curve we do not physically recalculate grades using, for instance, the difference of the highest exam score and 100%, instead we simply lower the percentage required to earn a given grade. I will explain more about this later in the semester and this will make more sense by then. For just remember grade-wise everything in the course will be curved to some degree or another.

#### \*\*\*\*TEXTBOOK INFO:

PLEASE READ THE REST OF THIS INFORMATION VERY CAREFULLY OR YOU COULD VERY EASILY END UP WITH THE WRONG EDITION OF THE TEXTBOOK.

Textbook: Algebra and Trigonometry with Analytic Geometry by Swokowski/Cole, Classic 12th Ed., Brooks/Cole

So, if you are purchasing the book online or otherwise...

1) Make sure you get the "Classic 12th Edition" However, if you cannot find that, a reasonably good option is to buy a used "Classic 11th Edition". It will work okay, but a few problem numbers are switched around and a few newer problems added, but mostly in the review sections, so not a major problem at all.

2) The CD that you can get bundled with a new textbook is not required and should never be used to initialize the Online Homework. I will send you Online Homework information shortly before the semester begins, so do not get curious about the Online Homework or you can create irreversible damage. Seriously. WAIT PATIENTLY FOR MY HOMEWORK INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE DOING ANYTHING WITH THE ONLINE HOMEWORK SYSTEM.

3) The Student Solutions Manual(SSM) is not required. Entirely optional. Some students find it helpful, some find it confusing because the SSM uses different or abbreviated solution methods compared to what we do in the lectures and recitations. Note: The SSM has only solutions to the odd-numbered problems, whose answers are already in the back of the textbook.

4) Yes indeed, the "12th" and "Classic 12th" editions and also "11th" and "Classic 11th" editions are different, and in several ways. As mentioned above, either "Classic" edition will work okay, the newer edition will be slightly better. A few ways to tell the difference. The Classic 12th edition has the word "Classic" near the top of the cover. The Classic 11th is usually listed as 2005(although the copyright as on mine says 2006, odd). Also, on Amazon.com for instance, the cover for the classic 11th edition is usually shown as a lighter color and further in the lower right corner of the book it says "CLASSIC ELEVENTH EDITION" in rather small letters.

5) The "iLrn" or "CENGAGE..." booklet that is mentioned with some of the online textbook listings refers the Online HW system we will use. However, the information about the Online HW system that I will send soon and what is available on the Cengage website itself is typically more than sufficient for most students. Again buying a book with an iLrn booklet is entirely optional, but some new books may come with it. It just depends where you buy it. AGAIN...WAIT FOR MY HOMEWORK INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE DOING ANYTHING WITH THE ONLINE HOMEWORK SYSTEM.

Best,  
Owen K. Davis  
MA15900 Coordinator  
OFFICE: MATH 812