Math 271 - Linear Algebra, Section 02, Fall 2019

Class meetings: 
MWF 12–12:50 pm, SMUD 205
Tu 12–12:50 pm, SMUD 206

Instructor: Sema Güntürkün

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Website: TBA

Office Hours:  
Mon, 1:30–3pm, E202  
Tu, 1:30–2:30pm, E202  
Wed, 1:30–3:30pm, E206  
Fri, 1–2pm, E206**  or by appointment.

(** The Friday office hour may not be hold in some weeks, in those cases I may hold an extra hour 4-5pm on Monday in E206. When there is such a change, it will be announced in class.)

Teaching Assistants / Math Fellows: Camille Blum and Lisa Cenek

Camille: Email: cblum20@amherst.edu  
Office hours: Sun & Wed, 6-8pm, SMUD 206

Lisa: Email: lcenek21@amherst.edu  
Office hours: Mon, 6-8pm & Thu, 8-10pm, SMUD 206

Math 271 Math Associate: Allison Tanguay, in the Math & Stats Department/Quantitative Resource Center.

Email: atanguay@amherst.edu

Drop-in Office Hours: Mon - Thu 1:30-4:30 in the QCenter / Science Library  
or at other times by Appointment via the link: https://us.bookingbug.com/home/128948-Moss-Quantitative-CenterAmherst-College

Text: D. Damiano and J. Little, A Course in Linear Algebra, Dover, 2011.  
Available at Amherst Books.

Webpage: TBA

Prerequisites

The official prerequisite for this course is second-semester calculus (Math 121 or the equivalent). However, I would strongly recommend that you also have taken one other math course beyond 121, like Math 211 (Multivariable Calculus). The point is not the specific material covered but rather the valuable mathematical experience of having taken both Math 121 and another course beyond it.

Exams:

- Midterm 1: Friday, October 4, in class;
- Midterm 2: Wednesday, November 6, in class;
- Final: Exact date during finals period is TBA.

Using electronic sources such as calculators, cell phones, laptops/ipads, smartwatch etc. are not permitted during exams. Exams are closed-book exams. The only valid excuses for missing an exam are incapacitating illness, religious conflict, or the like. In such cases, please get in touch with me as soon as possible.

Grading:
• Effort*: 5%
• Problem Sets**: 12%
• Midterm Exams: 28% for your better one, 20% for your worse one
• Final Exam: 35%

* “Effort” is a combination of class attendance, class participation, and handing in problem sets.
(See pages for ?? and ?? for more on attendance and participation.)

If an individual student’s final exam or homework grade is substantially higher or lower than his or her other grades, and if the student’s effort grade is strong, I will tweak the above percentages a little for that student to favor the better grades. Final course grades will be curved.

** Homework:
  • Reading from the textbook will be assigned each week as a part of homework.
  • Problem sets will be due usually twice a week (Tuesday and Friday), at the START of class.

Any occasional changes in due day will be announced in class.

See page ?? for important homework information.

Course Content

Linear algebra is one of the most important fundamental courses in mathematics. In this course, some of the key words you will hear and use frequently will be “vectors”, “matrices”, “linear transformations”. You’ve probably already seen some basic linear algebra, perhaps without knowing it, when solving several equations with several unknowns, but of course the subject goes a lot deeper than that. Here’s briefly some of what we’ll see throughout the semester.

• Chapter 1: Vector Spaces are the fundamental objects of study in linear algebra. The starting example is $\mathbb{R}^2$ (a.k.a. the familiar $xy$-plane). We’ll learn other examples, plus key concepts such as subspaces, span, linear independence, basis, and dimension. We’ll also discuss general methods for solving systems of linear equations.

• Chapter 2: Linear Transformations are special functions from one vector space to another. We’ll define and discuss them, along with matrices, which are closely related.

• Chapter 3: Determinants are certain special numbers associated with square matrices.

• Chapter 4: Eigenvalues and Eigenvectors are probably the most important concepts in the whole course. They provide a way to massively simplify certain important problems in linear algebra. In the same chapter, we’ll also study inner products and orthogonality.

• Chapter 5: We’ll do a quick survey of Complex Numbers and their use in linear algebra.

• Chapter 6: We may need to largely skip this chapter due to time constraints. I will keep you updated depending on our pace.

• Chapter 7: Linear algebra, and especially eigenvalues and eigenvectors, provide methods for solving certain types of Differential Equations. We’ll see some of the basics in this chapter.

If time permits, we may talk a little about some related topics, possibly including Adjoints, Least Squares Approximations, or Markov Processes.

In addition to the course material, I must also point out that, for many of you, Linear Algebra may be the most abstract math course you have taken which requires you to practice many mathematical proofs. I don’t expect you to have ever done proofs before. Math 271 is a good first course for starting to learn proofs. Proofwriting requires both strategy and meticulous attention to detail, but you’ll have plenty of example proofs in the book and in my lectures to help guide you. And again you can always visit my office hours or see Camille or Lisa or Allison.
More Information...

Class Participation and Classroom Dynamics

Class participation is part of the Effort portion of your grade. If you are quiet by nature, don’t worry; as long as you attend class devotedly, pay close attention, and do the homework, you will get full Effort credit. That said, even though this is a lecture course, class should be interactive, and participating in classroom discussion helps you learn the material better. Please do not hesitate to interrupt me and ask your questions! Sometimes, due to time constraints I may not be able to answer all questions, in that case, please take a note of your question and ask me after class (in office hours, via email or even right after the class time). So for your own benefit, speak up and ask questions. In addition, when I ask a question to the class, I’m usually expecting an answer. If you have even a half-formed idea of how to answer the question, please share it. No one has to give full, complete, correct answer immediately. I even prefer to hear half-formed ideas so that we can observe and experience together how to process and develop it to a full answer.

Homework

There will usually be two problem sets per week, assigned in class. Your homework consists BOTH of reading the relevant sections of the book AND of doing the assigned problems. (Only the written work counts directly in your grade, but I expect you to do both.) Start working on each problem set the same day it is assigned; do not put it off until a night or two before it’s due. Please note the following Important Problem Set Rules:

1. Problem sets are due in class at the start of class.
2. Problems must be in the same order as listed in the assignment.
3. Write legibly, and leave margins on all four edges of your paper. Please present your work clearly in an organized form. If the work is unreadable, and looks more like a scratch-work, it may not get any credit.
4. Multiple pages must be clipped or (preferably) stapled together, not merely folded at the corner.
5. Don’t write on any sheet in the corner where the staple/clip is going to go.
6. Your name must be written on all sheets, in case they get separated.
7. If you worked with other students or got help from a source other than me, Fernando, the TAs, or the book, then say so explicitly on the first page of your problem set. (See the discussion below on the Statement of Intellectual Responsibility.)
8. The Problem Sets grade for any late problem set will be substantially reduced. The later it is, the greater the reduction; see the course webpage under “Problem Set Rules” for details.

I am often willing to grant penalty-free extensions on problem sets; but see “Extensions, Extra Office Hours, and Class Attendance” on page ??.

I strongly encourage you to work on problem sets together, in pairs or small groups, provided you follow the common-sense guidelines below.

Homework Solutions (what to expect) : Individual homework problems, whether computational or theoretical, will require more strategizing and scratchwork than you may be used to. Please note:

- **Computations**: Show every step and all your work, using words along the way.
- **Proofs**: I’ll model lots of proofs in class. So follow my models!
- **All problems**: Use complete sentences and well-written paragraphs.

Of course, equations will usually appear, too, and you can certainly use abbreviations and standard mathematical shorthand. But fundamentally, solving any mathematics problem, whether computational or theoretical, is about making an argument using words.
**Start on Scratch Paper:** Please take pride in handing in neat and organized written work in math courses. In particular, unless a given problem is a **totally** straightforward computation, **Don’t start working on a problem on the same piece of paper that you will hand in.** Instead, start the problem on scratch paper, to figure things out **before** you write anything about that problem on the piece of paper that you will hand in.

**Class Attendance, Extensions, and (Extra) Office Hours**

**Attendance:** You should be at every class meeting, and you should be on time. Of course, if you’re sick, have a religious conflict, or the like, just let me know (in advance, when possible). One or two accidental misses are OK, too; oversleeping can happen. Otherwise, however, I **expect you to be in class, and on time, for every class meeting.**

I don’t plan to take formal attendance (maybe except the early classes of the semester to keep up with the roster), but I will easily be able to tell who misses class too much; those students’ Effort grades will take a hit. In addition, if attendance becomes a problem, I reserve the right to start taking attendance, and to implement severe grade penalties for students who miss class more than once or twice, or who are late more than once or twice.

**Extensions:** You may request **up to two** homework extensions over the course of the semester, each one until the start of the **next** class meeting at the latest. To claim an extension, you must:

1. Not have taken more than one previous extension,
2. Request the extension (by email, by phone, or in person) **no later than 7pm the day BEFORE the due date,**
3. Have been attending class and handing in homework on time in the recent past, and
4. Attend class **on time** on the original due date **and** the new due date.

Note: you do **not** need to provide an excuse or reason for your extension request; just ask.

**Office Hours:** you are always welcome to attend my regularly scheduled office hours, and **please do!** In addition, **IF you have been attending class and doing the homework**, you are also welcome to make appointments to see me outside of my regularly scheduled office hours.

**Extra Drop-In Help: Teaching Assistants and Quantitative Fellow**

Our two Math 271 Teaching Assistants, **Camille Blum** and **Lisa Cerek**, will hold evening office hours. In addition, our Math associate, **Allison Tanguay** will also hold daytime office hours. (I’ll announce times and locations later.) Please make use of any and all three of them; just drop into their scheduled office hours to seek help. No appointments necessary for the regular office hours!

**About the Statement of Intellectual Responsibility and Academic Integrity**

**Exams:** Your work must be entirely your own, so no looking at other people’s papers, no talking or passing signals, and no outside help. Unless I specifically allow it, no aids like calculators, cell phones, books, notes, or cheat sheets are allowed.

**Problem sets:** When you study, I urge you to collaborate with each other, under the following ground rules:

1. If you collaborate with, say, Jane and Joe, write a note on the front of your problem set saying, “I worked with Jane and Joe.” (Please make sure your name stands out from Jane’s and Joe’s, so I know that you are the author.) Use similar notation if you get help from a fellow student, a tutor, another professor, another book, the web, etc. However, you do **not** need to write about help you got from me, Fernando, the Math 271 TAs, or the book.
2. Working together does not mean that Joe does the first half of the problem set and Jane does the second half; everyone should work on every problem.

3. Each student must hand in his or her own problem set; you can’t hand in a single packet as the work of multiple people.

4. Each student must write up each problem in his or her own words. Working together means discussing the problems. Copying someone else’s solution (even when the source doesn’t mind) is plagiarism and a violation of intellectual responsibility!

   A common question: What if Joe asks Jane about a problem she has already solved? If Joe simply copies Jane’s solution, both Joe and Jane would be guilty of academic dishonesty, leading to an F in the course for both of them and potentially to dismissal from the college. Instead, Jane can explain her solution to Joe (even showing him what she wrote), before Joe writes up his own solution himself, in his own words. Joe would then have to write that he got help from Jane (see rule 1 above), but Jane doesn’t need to write anything unless she also got help in return.

   If at any time you aren’t sure about what’s OK and what’s not as far as intellectual responsibility is concerned for this course, talk to me about it.

   **About Cell Phones and Mobile/Electronic Devices**

   Please do not use cell phones, ipods, tablets, laptops, and other electronic devices for talking, or for texting, or for checking social media (anything not related to the course) in the classroom. It distracts you and may also distract others in the classroom. So at every class:

   **Silence your cell phone, put it away, and pay attention.**

   **Accessibility Services and Special Accommodations**

   If you have a documented disability that requires accommodations, you will need to register with Accessibility Services for coordination of your academic accommodations. You can reach them via email at accessibility@amherst.edu, or via phone at 413-542-2337. Once you have your accommodations in place, I will be glad to meet with you privately during my office hours or at another agreed upon time to discuss the best implementation of your accommodations.