algebra II

course expectations
PACKER COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE | 2009-2010

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greetings!

Howdy! This year we are going to discover beautiful, useful and extraordinary islands of knowledge. I'm going to be challenging you consistently as you build bridges from island to island – from lines to quadratics to polynomials to matrices. These islands will provide resting places for our adventures, while we explore what great things these paradises have to offer. Still, any adventure isn't an adventure unless there is uncertainty, unexpected perils. *I can promise you that you will not be immune from confusion, wandering dazed and confused.*

But don't worry! Yes, at times it will be hard – all good adventures are – but rest assured that I'm always going to be right there with you. I am here to tell you now: *we are in this together and we can conquer all.* In fact, I'm going to make sure we make it to the end of the year with lots of sparkling mathematical treasures to your name: graphs of neat functions, complex numbers, quadratic functions, the remainder and factor theorems, compound interest, and other surprises.

teaching goes both ways

With this said, you are now at a point in your education where you are responsible for your own learning. You are old enough to know what you need to do when you are having difficulty. Wait, are you? Pop quiz.

When you are feeling lost in class, you should:
  (a) wait until the next class and hope that it will all begin to make sense.
  (b) not do anything… it's only one concept and you know you'll be tested on a bunch, so it won 't be a big deal to not learn it.
  (c) ask someone else for help – whether it be Mr. Shah, your desk partner, or a friend.
  (d) watch *America's Next Top Model* and hope that the concept will be explained during a photo shoot.

You are in this class to learn some math – and even though we are in this journey together (remember: **I am always on your side**), that does not absolve you of responsibility. For this class to operate smoothly, for us to have a good time, to get all we need to get accomplished in mere months, you need to

… come to class prepared every day
… spend quality time working on your homework daily
… not be afraid to ask questions about concepts or homework problems you are struggling with
… be an engaged participant in every class

... be kind and respectful to the other members of the class

If you keep your end of the bargain, I guarantee you that your mind with be brimming with intellectual riches at the end of the school year. You will have learned a lot.

Just as I expect only the best from you, I want you to expect the best from me. I promise to come to each class well-prepared, ready to embark on our daily adventures. I promise to try my best to make my presentations clear and interesting. I promise to respect you.

materials

This year we are trying something new. You will be required to have a 3" three-ring binder for this class. *WHAAA?*, you say? No, no, don't fret. You won't have to bring it to class everyday. You can keep it in the classroom, keep it in your locker, or if you want, bring it home. However, when I ask you to bring it to class, *you must bring it to class* – no exceptions. More about how we'll use the binder below.

To keep your work organized, I am going to require that you carry around a folder specifically dedicated for math. I don't want to see English papers or sheet music in there. Seriously. Math only.

For homework, I am requiring you to have at all times *hole punched graph paper* – since we will be graphing a lot in this class. You must do your homework on this graph paper, and on the top of the paper, write the following header:

Bruce Dennis	[Name]
September 21, 2008	[Date **Assigned**]
Section 3.1#1-5 (odd), 8, 9, 21, 25	[Section/Problems]

As for your class notes, you can either use a notebook or hole punched graph paper. Your choice. However, you will want to keep good notes, because... well, keep on reading.

You also should come to class every day with a graphing calculator (TI-83/84) and a pencil. Allow me a single eccentricity: for this class, *do all your work in pencil*. Math done in pen is hard to undo – and I want you to get comfortable making mistakes, and erasing. **You will not get credit for homework done in pen; you will have to recopy quizzes or tests done in pen**. Seriously. No, like, seriously.

safety

Your safety is my number one concern, and mathematics can get treacherous at times. My number one rule is: *do not divide by zero, lest your paper busts into flames*.

absences

If you are absent for a test or quiz, you have exactly three school days to make it up **during study hall**. If you do not make it up by the third day, you will get an automatic 0.

The general policy if you didn't miss a test or quiz: if you are absent for *n* **class** days, you have *n* **school** days to get credit for your homework. So, for example, if you missed 3 class days, you have 3 school days

to leave your homework for me to check on my desk. If it is not there by 3:10 of the third day you've been back in school, you will get an automatic 0.

cheating

The crux of this is "don't." And for all the discussions that we have at Packer around what constitutes cheating, I believe you know what it is. So don't exchange answers on an exam or quiz, tell a student in another section of the class anything about an exams, or do other morally bankrupt things. But seriously, my fundamental assumption is that you, my intrepid mathematical explorers, are good people. So don't prove me wrong. If you ever have a question about if something is cheating, just ask me.

If you do cheat, and I find out, not only have you destroyed my seemingly unflagging faith in humanity, but you will get a 0 on the assignment and your parents and advisor and the class dean will be notified immediately. Read the Packer Student Handbook for more information.

An important note, however, is that I encourage you to talk with other students about concepts, homework problems, etc. You can talk with others about the homework problems, but when you write them up, you must write them up separately. You cannot copy homework from others. Again, if you have questions, just ask me.

email:

I am an email junkie and I will be checking my email multiple times a day. However, *I don't guarantee a response to anything sent after 5pm.* (But honestly, I most likely will respond at all hours of night.)

On the topic of email:

hey, i have break free tomorrow. can u meet? i like cabbage.	Howdy Mr. Shah! I have been having some difficulty understanding how to divide complex numbers. Do you have any time to meet Tuesday (tomorrow) or Wednesday to help me out? I would really appreciate it. My frees are: Tuesday: Break, E, F Wednesday: Break, A, E. Thanks, STUDENT X

extra help:

I am always available to meet with students for additional support. My brain doesn't do well with times and dates, so I keep everything in my trusty planner. For my sanity, **send me an email with the topics you are confused by, the dates you can meet, and all the bands you are free.**

extra time on exams:

Some of you qualify for extra time on tests. If you want to use your extra time, **you must email me by 3:10pm the day before – with all your possible free times – so that I can keep some time free for you. <u>If you do not contact me the day before the test, you will not be allowed to use your extra time.</u> Period.** You must take your extra time on the same day of the exam. You have the right to extra time, but it comes with this basic responsibility.

<u>I am dead serious about academic integrity</u> and extra time brings up a host of issues. Most important, you cannot tell anyone what is on the exam, in ANY form, and you cannot study, ask questions, or open your book between when you first see the exam in class or break and when you finish your exam in class or break.

placement

To go into Precalculus next year, you need a final course grade of B- <u>and</u> permission of the department head.

To go into Precalculus A next year, you need a final course grade of A (not A-) <u>and</u> permission of the department head.

grading

Formal Assessments (70%):

You know what these are. Many of the assessments will have a "calculator part" and a "no calculator part." I will try my absolute darndest to get tests and quizzes back to you in 3 class days (usually less), assuming all students in the class have already taken it. There might also be short pop quizzes, so keep up with your work!

I need to emphasize that right answers only mean so much to me. What's really important to me is seeing you show *how* you got your answers, so you can effectively communicate to someone else your thought process. **Show your work on assessments** if you want credit!

On each assessment, there might also be a question which checks your knowledge of work done in a previous unit. I promise to tell you which topic or section the problem will be from.

Daily Practice (10%):

In essence, this is your homework. But homework has such a negative connotation to it that I am going to call this part of your grade "Daily Practice" to emphasize that the problems assigned are meant to reinforce what you've learned in class. The problems aren't meant to be mindless busy work – though I know sometimes they can feel that way. Although I sometimes fail, I try to keep the homework under 25 minutes.

When working out of the book, I will attempt to assign mainly odd problems – which have their answers in the back. **You will have to check your odd answers in the back of the book – and mark them right or wrong with a different colored pencil/pen.** Then when we go over the answers that are not in the back of the book, you will have to mark these right or wrong also.

I do NOT accept late work unless you were absent.

I will sometimes:
> …collect it and grade it for completeness (if you don't have it, you don't get credit)
> …walk around the classroom to check for completeness (if you don't have it, you don't get credit)

If you worked with someone else, please write his or her name down on your paper under your header. But remember, you may talk about the problems, but when you write up your answers on your homework page, you must be working independently.

Because I tend to modify the assigned problems based on what occurs in class, I don't have an assignment sheet. I will post the problems on the course conference by 3:10pm at the latest (but usually earlier).

Your homework must be more than just some chicken scratch and an answer. Part of this course is learning how to communicate math well. **You should show all your work, in a neat manner, so that someone reading it can follow your thought process.** Right answers aren't worth much in this class; right answers with solid work are. (See the next section.)

Binder **(10%):**

This will probably be the most different part of this year's math class for you – so you'll want to pay close attention to this section. In theory, it will be **the easiest 10% of your grade**, if you stay on top of things.

For this class, you will be required to have a 3" three ring binder. At the end of the year, the binder will have archived all your hard work: worksheets and Daily Practices, your class notes, and all of your assessments. In fact, it will be invaluable when studying for cumulative assessments.

You can leave your binder in the classroom, keep it in your locker, or keep it at home. You'll only be carrying a folder with you to class each day. In that folder, you'll keep your Daily Practices, assessments, and class notes.

At the end of each unit, I'll ask you to bring your binders in and we'll spend a few minutes at the beginning of class putting all the unit's work in the binder.

You will have binder checks periodically – and **these checks will constitute 10% of your course grade**. There will be two binder checks in the first quarter, and one at the end of the second, third, and fourth quarters. The dates will be announced in advance – and on the day of the binder check, you're going to have to bring in your binder. If you don't, you will lose 20% for each day late.

The binder check will look like this:
    Date Assigned: 10/2/2009; Section 4.2, Problem 3
    Date Assigned: 10/15/2009; Section 5.2, Problem 4
    […]

You will highlight these answers in your binder and mark them with post it notes. I will collect and go through them. You will be graded for your work – specifically, the correctness of your work and answer – and neatness.

Since you will be checking answers in the back of the book, since there is copious online help (http://go.hrw.com/hrw.nd/gohrw_rls1/pKeywordResults?keyword=MB7+HWHelp), and since we will be going over the homework daily, there is no reason for your work and answers not to be amazing! If you get something wrong, take a minute and correct it. It will not only help you understand everything better, but you're pretty much guaranteeing yourself a great binder grade!

Blog Posts **(5%):**

You will be asked to be a "class scribe" every so often. What this entails is that you take good paper notes in class – writing down all the relevant definitions, examples, explanations, etc. Then you will

make a formal writeup of what we did and learned in class on a class blog. The real purpose of this is to teach you how to communicate math effectively. Trust me – it's not easy. It's a learnable skill. But a nice benefit is that we will have an archive of what we did throughout the year!

What's really nice is that once your blog post is graded, I will give you corrections to make, and your final grade will be the average of your initial post and your corrected post.

Classroom Engagement (5%):

Your classroom engagement will be based on your ability to focus and participate in class. You will lose points for being late or by distracting other classmates.

Extra Credit / Extra Assignments To Boost Grades:

Well, sometimes there will be an extra credit question on an exam. But that's about it. I'm just not big into extra credit.

Grading:

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Semester I = 50% Quarter 1 + 50% Quarter 2
Semester II = 40% Quarter 3 + 40% Quarter 4 + 20% Final
Final Course Grade: 50% Semester I + 50% Semester II

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Instead of having a midterm, we will be having a Quarter 2 exam, which will assess all the material from Quarter 2. It will count only as a standard assessment grade for the second quarter.

I must also state that depending on how things unfold this year, I reserve the right to change things. If things will be changed, I promise to be very explicit about the changes.