VCU Precalculus (Math 151) Syllabus  

Spring 2015

Website: VCU Precalculus Web contains copies of all Classroom Worksheets, a copy of the text, videos, and much, much more. Go to: http://wp.vcu.edu/precalculus/

Prerequisites: MATH 141 (a grade C or better is strongly advised), or satisfactory score on the VCU Mathematics Placement test.

Text & Computer software: For our text, we will be using Precalculus, 3rd edition, by Carl Stitz and Jeff Zeager. A free digital copy of the text is available for download at VCU Precalculus Web. Though a hardcopy version of the text will not be available at the bookstore, you can purchase it as two books here:


You will be required to purchase access to WebAssign, an online homework system. Instructions on how to register for your section’s WebAssign site can be found in the Getting Started with WebAssign document posted at VCU Precalculus Web. After registering, you will have a 14-day grace period to access WebAssign before you are required to purchase it. The cost as of December 2014 is approximately $30.

Course Packet: You will be also be required to purchase a course packet for around $10 at Wythken Printing on 911 W. Grace St. Ask for the packet for VCU Math 151. The color sheet from the packet will be returned to your instructor and you will be given an assignment grade. You are responsible for bringing these worksheets to class. They are turned in and recorded. There will be at least one worksheet and sometimes more in class on any given day. They are part of your grade.

Calculators: A graphing calculator is required - a TI-83, TI-83 Plus, TI-84, or TI-84 Plus is highly recommended. The TI-89, TI-92, TI-NSpire CAS, or any other calculator with a built-in symbolic algebraic system will not be permitted on any quiz, test or the final (The TI-82, TI-85 or TI-86 are allowed, but NOT recommended).

Content: Chapters 1.3 - 1.7, 2.1 - 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 4.1-6.5, 10.1-10.7 (some topics may be omitted)

Course Goals: The goal of Precalculus (MATH 151) is to prepare each student for Calculus. A student well-prepared for calculus will be able to model real-world problems and analyze their quantitative aspects, using strong algebraic and trigonometric skills.

Objectives: Throughout the semester a student will construct a variety of models to analyze quantitative aspects of real-world problems. To do so, the student will master numerous algebraic and trigonometric techniques, which will be used to solve equations involving various types of functions, e.g. polynomial, exponential, logarithmic, trigonometric. The student will also relate the algebraic properties of a function, such as whether it is a polynomial function, e.g. \( f(x) = 3x^2 - 5x + 1 \), an exponential function, e.g. \( f(t) = 4^t \), or a trigonometric function, e.g. \( f(\theta) = \sin(2\theta) \), to the properties of its graph (For instance, are there turning points? Is there a maximum or minimum? Does the graph cross the x-axis or y-axis?).

Students are expected to understand the content of the text and to be able to solve successfully exercises such as those assigned for homework. The skills needed to solve the homework exercises are the skills students will need to demonstrate on tests and the final exam.

Methods: Precalculus is a difficult course that covers a large amount of material, consisting of literally hundreds of algebraic and trigonometric techniques. Not all the techniques will be covered in class
sessions, so the student needs to learn many of the individual techniques outside of class. This learning comes in two parts: The student must understand the technique, e.g. the quadratic formula, and how to use it, and the student must be able to use the technique correctly. This second skill – working exercises correctly – comes through repeated practice and drill. To ensure that each student practices enough, there are homework assignments through WebAssign that will require significant time.

While the instructor can guide the student to understand these techniques in the classroom, the student’s mastering of the techniques comes through homework. Many of our classroom activities will involve discussion of models of the real world that these techniques allow us to analyze.

**Lecture meeting:** New material will be covered in lectures, and any other work the instructor assigns.

**Other policies:** Make sure you are familiar with your instructor’s attendance policy. All students are responsible for all material covered and announcements made. It will be assumed that students have read the appropriate portions of the text before the class session in which it is discussed. This will enable class sessions to be interactive, with lots of student involvement. While classroom discussions may not always cover every item in the text, they will be designed so that students can achieve understanding of the material.

**Homework and Class Work:** Homework will be assigned each time new material is introduced, and will include all assigned WebAssign exercises. There will be daily classroom worksheets, sometimes more than one. **There are no make-ups on classroom worksheets.** Worksheets are graded for completion and are not returned. Your five lowest worksheet scores will be dropped – class attendance and participation are extremely important – but we know that there are occasional excusable reasons for missing class.

**Tests and Exams:** There will be three regular tests, based on the material covered since the previous test. The final exam will be comprehensive, and based on all material of the semester. The tests and the final will take place in the regular meeting room. There will be an online practice test before every test worth bonus points (8% of your practice test score will be added to your test score, with 100 as the max). Makeup tests will be considered for extraordinary circumstances. You must contact your instructor immediately if you wish to be considered for a make-up test.

It is Math 151 course policy that the final exam does NOT replace any scores on any of the previous exams.

**Grade Calculation:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three Tests (1¼ hours)</td>
<td>15% each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam (3 hours)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Work</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>15%</td>
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</tbody>
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**Grading Scale:**

- A: 90% - 100%
- B: 80% - 89%
- C: 70% - 79%
- D: 60% - 69%
- F: 0% - 59%

**Course Administration:** Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this course beyond the scope of your instructor’s responsibilities, you may contact the Math 151 chair, Craig Larson (clarson@vcu.edu), the course coordinator, Joseph Hamelman (jhamelman@vcu.edu) or the mathematics department’s ombudsman, Dr. Joy Whitenack (jwwhitenack@vcu.edu).
Important Dates:
Sun., Jan. 18 Add/Drop period ends
Mon., Jan. 19 MLK Day, University closed
Sun., Mar. 8 – Sun., Mar 15 Spring Break
Fri., Mar. 20 Last day to withdraw with a ‘W’
Tue., April 28 Last day of classes (evening classes continue through May 2)
Wed., April 29 Reading day, no classes held
Thu., April 30 – Fri., May 8 Final exams

Statement on Americans with Disabilities Act: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 require Virginia Commonwealth University to provide an 'academic adjustment' and/or a 'reasonable accommodation' to any individual who advises us of a physical or mental disability. If you have a physical or mental limitation that requires an academic adjustment or an accommodation, please arrange a meeting with me at your earliest convenience. Additionally, if your course work requires you to work in a lab environment, you should advise the instructor or department chairperson of any concerns you may have regarding safety issues related to your limitation(s). The VCU Disability Support Services website is http://www.students.vcu.edu/dss/

VCU Honor System: All VCU students are presumed upon enrollment to have acquainted themselves with and have an understanding of the Honor System. Therefore, it is a student's responsibility to ask course instructors to clarify expectations for each assignment in order to be in compliance with the Honor System. The VCU Honor System policy statement and purpose is located at: http://www.students.vcu.edu/studentconduct/students/student_honor_system.html

Classroom Conduct: Professional conduct will be expected at ALL TIMES and disruptive talking or behavior will NOT be allowed. A description of the VCU Student Conduct in Instructional Settings Policy can be found at: http://www.ts.vcu.edu/policies/studentconduct.html

VCU Statement on Safety
- Sign up to receive VCU text messaging alerts (http://www.vcu.edu/alert/notify). Keep your information up-to-date.
- Know the safe evacuation route from each of your classrooms. Emergency evacuation routes are posted in on campus classrooms.
- Listen for and follow instructions from VCU or other designated authorities.
- Know where to go for additional emergency information (http://www.vcu.edu/alert).
- Know the emergency phone number for the VCU Police (828-1234). Report suspicious activities and objects.

University Counseling Services: http://www.students.vcu.edu/counseling/

Please refer to the document “Syllabus Statements” for additional VCU policies.