Syllabus
UTK – Math 531 – Ordinary Differential Equations I
Fall 2016, Jochen Denzler, MWF 12:20–01:10 Ayres 111

Textbook: Gerald Teschl: Ordinary Differential Equations and Dynamical Systems (AMS Graduate Text)

Exams: There will be one midterm exam, to be announced at least 1 week ahead of time with precise date. The final exam is scheduled by university policy dependent on the class meeting schedule. In our case, this will be Wednesday Dec 07, 12:30–02:30.

Homework: Homework will be assigned on a flexible schedule, in various forms (for grading, or simply for self-assessment). Peer collaboration for homework is permissible and encouraged, as needed. However, your submitted writeup needs to be individual, and individually understood and digested.

I will grade *some* homework problems for scores, but usually not announce beforehand which; and offer sample solutions for all, to allow you to self–check.

Grade: Your grade is calculated based on
• 30% midterm exam,
• 30% graded homework,
• 40% final exam.

I will not curve more harshly than $A \geq 90\% > B \geq 80\% > C \geq 70\% > D \geq 55\%$, with $+$ and $-$ grades interpolated, but I may curve slightly more leniently, as difficulty of exams may vary a bit. Details outlined below under FAQ.

Office hours: My office hours are posted on my homepage `http://www.math.utk.edu/~denzler` (NOT the course webpage, b/c students from other classes may want to access the same office hour).

For now, the following apply: Office hours MWF 10:10-11:00 and 13:20-14:00. I may step out briefly during unattended office hours. As needs depending on student schedules become clearer during the semester, I may update the precise times.

I am widely available for drop in (at your risk of finding me available or not) or appointment at a mutually agreed time. Drop-in immediately *preceding* a class is however discouraged.

To make an appointment fitting your own schedule, send me an e-mail. I also accommodate evening hours, either in-office for early evening, or by skype for later evening.

My coordinates: My office is **Ayres 317, phone 4-5325**. Email is **denzler@math.utk.edu**. Email does not guarantee immediate attention as I am not setting up a 'new e-mail ping' on my computer (and I am a happy user of a vintage cell phone that doesn't even do e-mail). I appreciate if your e-mail contains 'M445' as part of the subject line.

For issues that require immediate attention, please use my office phone number 865 974 5325, or send a *brief* ('vintage phone', remember?) text message to my cell 865 604 7173.

My home page is `http://www.math.utk.edu/~denzler/`

Course website: `http://www.math.utk.edu/~denzler/M531-Fa2016/`. This website is publicly accessible and will not contain material that needs confidentiality. I am requesting OIT to put the course on Canvas, rather than Blackboard, but will not rely heavily on such software.

Disabilities: Students who may need formal accommodations based on documented disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services 974-6087 in Dunford Hall.

The **Campus syllabus** contains more info about ODS accommodations, as well as academic honesty and other issues. It is linked on the website

FAQ: "How do you convert percentages into letter grades?" Answer: The precise cutoff thresholds will be determined at the end, but you will gain an increasingly better idea about them as the semester progresses. This is done in the following way:

After each in-class exam is graded, I will tell you which number of points on that exam is the minimum for it to be considered an A, or a B, or a C, or a D. (You can imagine how the $A-$, $B+$ etc fit in between, roughly). There is a minimum commitment that the curving will not be harsher than what is outlined above under 'Exams', but it may be more lenient if the exam is more difficult.

There will be four virtual students on the class roster, called Amin, Bmin, Cmin, Dmin, who, by definition, will always have the minimum percentage for an A, B, C, D respectiviely, on each of the exams. The scores for Amin, Bmin etc on the final exam and in the homework will be determined after the final exam is graded, and they will be roughly consistent with the thresholds revealed earlier for the in-class exams.

You compete against these four virtual students. If your percentage is at least as high as that of Amin, you'll get an A. If it is at least as high as that of Bmin, you'll get a B or better, and so on. Cutoff thresholds for intermediate grades will at this time also be set in between.

I intend to use the freedom retained in setting the final cutoffs only at the very end (as opposed to giving a fixed scale at the beginning) in order to avoid 'awkward cutoffs' where $\frac{1}{10}\%$ difference would make a difference of 0.3 in the letter grade.

In exceptional cases (if material later shows up as clearly mastered in the final exam, after that same material had caused a bombed in-class exam for special reasons, like extended sick absences, family emergencies or similar), I may deviate slightly in favor of the student. Deviations disfavoring the student will not be made, except as penalties for academic dishonesty in accordance with applicable policies.