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NOTES ON THE "PROMISING SYLLABUS" EXERCISE

- This was a very serendipitous exercise, because I had previously made a note to myself to try and insert learning outcomes on my syllabi in student-centered language for next semester. This was motivated by reading accreditation reports and seeing how very heavily it's emphasized there.
- I started by reading this article: https://chronicle.com/article/The-Promising-Syllabus/46748
- (In regard to that article, one challenging suggestion was to have the students actually participate in designing assignments after the syllabus was written. This seems, like assessment, to be something you'd want in synch with your discipline practices itself; might make sense in sociology, not so much for the universal language of math.)
- Note that whenever I add something, I'm also committed to deleting something – this principle applies to syllabi, course presentations, game-design rules, etc. The document must not be allowed to bloat without limit. In particular, I want my syllabus to fit on the front & back of one sheet of paper.
- In this regard I made the following cuts: Deleted the copy of the catalog description (which was mandatory at a prior school). Cut the detailed notes on the school's academic calendar. Cut language on media under attendance, and softened it in test policy (in the last year I've surrendered on a previously very strict no-phones rule; this greatly reduces conflicts and bizarrely reduces phone usage itself [!?]). Cut link to academic integrity policy (added in the last year; recommended elsewhere; but has never been used or come up and makes p. 2 look bloated).
- Things I added: List of student-directed course goals at top of p. 1. Description of specific skill prerequisites (this was copied in from my lecture notes where I've been writing this on the board). Removed the box around assignments and added it to the course goals to highlight attention there.
- One thing I wrestled with was putting prerequisites first. It seems to make more temporal sense there, but then detracts from the course goals highlight. So currently I have it further down the page where I'm worried it gets lost a bit. (I also had it 2nd but it was visually confusing amid the bullet-point lists.)
- A thing I've argued in the past (and in my own experience) is that students can't parse college catalog course description, until after they've taken the course, because it uses technical terms and vocabulary that don't get defined until within the course. But I've been pleasantly surprised that I could sort of turn these goals around into something that is understandable pre-course.
- Following pages: Current syllabus for M2 Elementary Algebra, followed by revised syllabus. A one-page homework listing and review of prior skills had been deleted.

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KINGSBOROUGH
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

COURSE SYLLABUS
MAT M2: ELEMENTARY ALGEBRA
FALL 2014, SECTIONS 45 & 62

Course Description

Coverage of fundamental topics in elementary algebra for students who fail the elementary algebra portion of the CUNY Mathematics Skills Test (COMPASS). Demonstration of proficiency in subject matter via exit exam is required for successful course completion. Students may not repeat M200 after receiving two (2) R grades.
Prerequisite: Successful completion of Kingsborough Pre-Algebra proficiency exam.

Required Materials

- Textbook: Yarmish, J. & R. Sturm-Beiss. ***Essential College Algebra: Preparation for the CUNY Elementary Algebra Final Exam***. Boston: McGraw-Hill Learning Solutions, 2014. ISBN 9781259234649. (Alternatives: Any prior edition, i.e., 1st Ed.: ISBN 0131877348. 2nd Ed.: ISBN 007804202X. 3Rd Ed.: ISBN 0078045029.)

Assignment Schedule

- Once Each Week – Online Quiz (Thu-Sun)
- Wed Oct-1 or Thu Oct-2 – Test 1 (Ch. 1-3: Introduction to Algebra)
- Mon Oct-27 or Tue Oct-28 – Test 2 (Ch. 4-5: Exponents and Radicals)
- Mon Nov-17 or Tue Nov-18 – Test 3 (Ch 6-7: Factoring and Graphing)

Notes: There are no classes Wed Sep-24 or Thu Sep-25. The college is closed Mon Oct-13, and on Tue Oct-14 follows a Friday schedule. The last date to withdraw is Tue Nov-4. There are no classes Thu Nov-27. Class meetings end Fri Dec-5. Final examinations occur the week of Tue Dec-9.

Attendance Policy

For the first week, attendance will be taken by sign-in; afterward, it is officially recorded by submission of the most recent online quiz or test. Students who attend no class in the first few weeks will be de-registered from the course and receive a WN grade. In case of absence, any material or assignments remain the student's responsibility to complete on time. All media and communication devices (cell phones, music players, headphones, bluetooth headsets, wireless access, etc.) must be silenced and put away while inside the classroom.

Online Management

Documents, quizzes, practice tests, and current grades are posted to CUNY Blackboard. Make sure you can log in and access our section; on the web, go to www.cuny.edu > Log-In > Blackboard. (If you have not used Blackboard before, then follow the link and click on Log-In > CUNY Portal > Register for a CUNY Portal Account.)

VIEW YOUR GRADES ON BLACKBOARD VIA "TOOLS > MY GRADES"

Grading Criteria

Final grades are based on the following formula (letter grades are assigned as per the Blackboard default):

Weighted Total = 10% Quizzes + 25% Tests + 65% Final Exam

Note that students in this class must both (1) score at least 60% Weighted Total as above, AND (2) score at least 60% on the comprehensive Final Exam at the end, or else receive a non-passing "R" grade for the course.

Normally, passing students receive a "P" grade for this course. However, if the weighted total and the final exam are both above 85%, then a superior grade of "S" is given. The higher grade allows a student to immediately register for college algebra, computer concepts, or statistics courses (MAT 09, 13, 20, or 22), bypassing any MAT R3 prerequisite.

Quiz Policy:

Multiple-choice quizzes are given online each week, via Blackboard, under "Quizzes". You must log in at least once during the availability period and submit the required quiz (days listed on first page; start time is 12:00 AM, end time 11:30 PM). No makeup quizzes are given under any circumstance. However, two will be dropped at the end of the semester.

Note that you may view any quiz, and return to it later, prior to submitting your answers. The "Save and Submit" button ends and finalizes the quiz. After a quiz is complete, you may then review test submissions and correct answers by clicking on: Tools > My Grades > Item > Calculated Grade (for example, you might click on the words Tools > My Grades > Quiz 01 > 80 if that was your grade). This can be accessed after the availability period ends for all students (e.g., Monday morning).

Testing Policy:

Short-answer tests are given in class on three dates (see first page), lasting approximately one hour each. They are closed book with no notes allowed (other than those provided by the instructor). No makeup tests are given under any circumstance. However, the lowest in-class test will be dropped from consideration.

Calculators and cell phones cannot be used during tests (nor any other media or communication device). If a cell phone rings or is visible during a test, then a penalty of 5% or more can be assessed for that test. Write with blue or black ink or a pencil. Sharing of materials is disallowed, and students may not leave the room while their test is in progress.

Final Exam Policy:

The CUNY Elementary Algebra Final Exam is comprehensive, covers all the material for the entire semester, and lasts 100 minutes. Sample finals and more information are available at www.cuny.edu/testing.

Homework Protocol

In this class, homework is neither collected nor assessed. However, it is expected that you practice problems from the book each week on your own, and come to class prepared with questions regarding specific exercises. Topics and homework are shown on a separate page; practice odd-numbered problems in the ranges indicated, and check your answers at the back of the book. Note that the usual expectation for any college class is to spend 2 hours of outside study and work for each hour in the classroom (see KCC College Catalog, section "Curricula").

Academic Integrity

The standard CUNY Policy On Academic Integrity will be observed in cases of cheating, plagiarism, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of official documents. Any of these can result in either academic or disciplinary sanction. See here for details: www.kbcc.cuny.edu/studres/Documents/CUNYAcademicIntegrityPolicy.pdf

Help Resources

The following additional help services are available at Kingsborough. Get help as soon as you need it, and avoid falling behind in the subject matter. It's best if you prepare a few specific questions in advance.

- **Math Workshop (F206)** – Walk-in help specific to mathematics.
- **Tutorial Services (L605)** – Scheduled tutoring for most college subjects.
- **Accessibility Center (D205)** – Support for students with disabilities and learning challenges.
- **Academic Advisement (M201)** – Advises students on academic planning.
- **Counseling Services (D102)** – Helps students deal with concerns, issues, or problems.

COURSE SYLLABUS
MAT M2: ELEMENTARY ALGEBRA
(KCTL "PROMISING SYLLABUS" EXERCISE)

Course Goals

As a student of this course, by the end of the semester, you will be able to:

- Read and write math properly with variables.
- Apply all the basic operations (add, subtract, multiply, divide, exponents, radicals) to variables.
- Have a deep understanding of how the order-of-operations connects all the basic operations.
- Be able to solve equations for previously unknown values, and explain your work to others.
- Sketch a graph for a 1st-degree equation in just a few seconds.

Required Materials

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Prerequisite Skills

This course assumes that every student has mastery of basic arithmetic (success in COMPASS arithmetic or MAT M1). The core foundational skills are: times tables, negative numbers, and order-of-operations. We also routinely use fractions, decimals, and percentages in our work.

Attendance Policy

For the first week, attendance will be taken by sign-in; afterward, it is officially recorded by submission of the most recent online quiz or test. Students who attend no class in the first few weeks will be de-registered from the course and receive a WN grade. In case of absence, any material or assignments remain the student's responsibility to complete on time.

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