The Merit Philosophy  Merit discussions provide a great opportunity for you to attain a high level of understanding of the course material and to learn to think critically about math in general. The Merit section is not a review session or tutoring session. We will incorporate aspects of lecture material into the questions that we consider, but this is not meant to be a repeat of lecture nor is it intended to take the place of time you should be studying outside of class. During this time (where you will be receiving Math 199 credit), you will learn to think critically about complex problems and work with others in small groups to solve them. You will learn new ways to tackle problems, feel more comfortable about sharing your ideas, make new friends, and realize what you do and don’t understand in a comfortable, supportive environment. You are encouraged to share your opinions in class, but please be aware and respectful that others may have different opinions. You don’t have to agree, but must learn to attack ideas, not people. The biggest benefit of Merit will be gained by students who come to class already familiar with the material and prepared to discuss it, hear new ideas from peers, and apply their understanding to novel situations.

But the format is not a traditional one with an instructor giving information that you are to learn and reproduce. I will be a “non-traditional” instructor for much of the time. I will often not answer questions directly, but will ask you to consider them further in your groups or to find the information on your own. We will all need to think in new ways about our roles in this class. While there is the possibility for frustration inherent in this, I’m confident that we can work together to make this a remarkably valuable experience.

This course will be like learning how to find your way in the forest of mathematics. Showing you the way won’t do as helping you learn the signs of the forest when you are placed somewhere new in the forest on the exam. At times, you may feel lost and overwhelmed by the forest, but remember that we are in this journey together. Acknowledge your mathematical demons (such as the vampire of math confusion), but then go to war with them. When you conquer them, it will be all the more satisfying. Just as you cannot be a great athlete by watching ESPN, you cannot become a great mathematician by watching others– you must actively engage the mathematics. You and your classmates will form a team in your discovery of mathematics. I serve as your coach– I know the subject and am there to guide you, to challenge you, and to root for you, but ultimately you must work hard and play the game.
Merit Discussion Session Grades
Each student may earn up to 10 points for their performance in each Merit session. The points will be assigned on the basis of Attendance, Preparation and Participation. These points count towards the MATH 199 grade, not the MATH 285 grade.

Attendance: Attendance is required and will be counted as follows:
- **0 to 5 minutes late** 0 to 3 points awarded for attendance (TA’s decision)
- **5-15 minutes late** 7 points maximum possible for that session
- **15-30 minutes late** 5 points maximum possible for that session
- **Unexcused absence or > 30 minutes late** 0 points for session

These guidelines also apply in returning from break and for any student who leaves class early for an unexcused absence. Apart from exceptional circumstances, excused absences should be communicated in advance and provide documentation of the circumstances.

Preparation: You will be expected to come to class having studied your notes from lecture, read the text materials assigned, and completed any homework due that day. By studying the material before each class you will be ready to discuss the material in more depth and have specific questions to ask about material that may be giving you difficulty. This will help you immensely during your time in the Merit sessions. Preparation will be checked in a variety of ways, possibly a short warm-up assignment, and counts for 1 point of your daily grade.

Participation: A large part of how the Merit program will benefit you comes from how you interact with the class. You are expected to contribute your ideas and insights as well as your questions. Please use this opportunity to its greatest advantage. The remaining 6 points come from participation, and these points are awarded based on my observations and on your participation on in-class activities. Because they serve as a distraction to working with your group, electronics (cell phones, music players, laptops, tablets, calculators) may not be used in class, with the exception of electronic versions of the textbook. If you expect an essential phone call, please talk to me before class. You may use these devices during the break, but are encouraged to interact with your classmates.

Grading Scale: The anticipated grading scale for this course is below. At my discretion, this scale may be adjusted, but only in your favor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>92-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82-87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>78-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>72-77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>68-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>62-67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course Website The course website is there as a resource to you. Worksheets from each Merit workshop will be posted (so if you miss Merit you may access the worksheet), as well as any additional resources.

If You Have Concerns If you are having trouble with any aspect of the course, please seek help as soon as you recognize a problem. You may visit me in my office hours or set up an appointment. If you have concerns about some other aspect of the course, please contact me and set up an appointment. Email is the easiest way to contact me, and I will respond to emails promptly. You are also welcome to leave a note in my mailbox in 250 Altgeld Hall. This may be done anonymously, but I may be better able to address your concerns one-on-one. I will not necessarily be able to solve your problem, but am always willing to listen to your concerns and will try to explain my policies. I want you to succeed, and so please let me know if there is something I can do to help you with that.

Merit expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You will...</th>
<th>You won’t...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>work in groups.</td>
<td>work alone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prepare for discussion by reviewing your lecture notes and working on the homework.</td>
<td>use discussion as a chance to catch up on lecture material or homework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get to know each other and work together outside of discussion sections.</td>
<td>be rude, hurtful, racist, sexist, intolerant, or generally uncivilized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listen to other students.</td>
<td>seldom contribute because you are shy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tell me of a problem with lectures, homework, or exams.</td>
<td>stew in seething resentment towards the instructor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>record your solutions on a separate piece of paper.</td>
<td>stew in seething resentment towards me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make sure your group brings a book to class.</td>
<td>cram the solutions into the margin of your worksheet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will...</td>
<td>I won’t...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>help you sift through your logic if you feel stuck.</td>
<td>answer direct questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>write challenging worksheets that will improve your understanding of the lecture material.</td>
<td>write worksheets intended to trick you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>help you with homework and answer direct questions during office hours and appointments.</td>
<td>talk about homework during discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arrange appointments if/when necessary.</td>
<td>be available all the time. (I am in graduate school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can...</td>
<td>I can’t...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talk with the instructor and make reasonable guesses about exam content while writing mock exams.</td>
<td>read the instructor’s mind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be your advocate if I agree that your quizzes or exams have been incorrectly or unreasonably graded.</td>
<td>change your grade if the instructor doesn’t agree with me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>determine your Math 199 grade.</td>
<td>determine your Math 285 grade.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I look forward to sharing this discussion with you! I am sure we will have a great semester!

I reserve the right to make changes as necessary throughout the semester. Any changes will be announced in class and posted to the course website.