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.

Grading Policy of Math 199 Merit Section

Part of being in a merit section includes one credit of math 199. Every class you will receive a grade out of 10 points. This grade is based on these three things:

1. **Attendance** (3 Points): You are expected to be in class and ready to work when the bell rings. Any late arrival will result in a 1 point loss. After 5 min you will lose 2 points and after 15 min all 3 points. Note that staying until the end of the class is also part of attendance and any early packing (even if you are finished with your worksheet!) will result in a 2 point loss.

2. **Preparation** (2 Points): You are expected to come to class prepared. This means you have to attend the lecture, study the lecture notes, complete any homework assignments due that day (either assigned by the instructor or me). In case you have missed the lecture it is your duty to catch up, get the lecture notes and study them before coming to discussion session. Moreover, as part of your preparation you are expected to have your lecture notes or text book always at hand to be able to answer questions in class. Also, there will be a short quiz on most Fridays at the beginning of the class about the material covered in that week. The 2 points are determined in a holistic way based on your preparation in class.

3. **Participation** (5 Points): Participation is the fundamental element of the merit section. You are expected to actively participate in class. This means that you work on the worksheets given in class, work in your group, discuss the problems with your group mates and come up with solutions. There are 3 points for your group work and effort to solve the questions and 2 points for your performance on your worksheet. I will grade only one worksheet from every group, so make sure you work together. You cannot spend your time on other things. Texting or any other non-related activity on your phone will result in a 3 point loss. Also, spending you time to study other courses or solve homework (even of this class) will result in a direct 3 point loss. Note that if you come more than 15 min late, in addition to losing your attendance points, you will also lose some of your participation points.
Finally, repetitive offenses will result in a higher point loss, in particular in regard to coming late and using phones. Don’t forget, in order to continue in a merit section you need to get a B or higher in Math 199 and at least a C in Math 221.

**Absence Policies:** Please contact me as soon as you know you will miss a class. Provide me with the proper documentation in case your absence is excused (medical, athletic, ...) from the emergency dean or whoever else is responsible. Any unexcused absence will result in a complete loss of points for that day and several unexcused absences will hurt your 199 grade significantly.

**Worksheets:** According to the math 221 syllabus, 10% of your 221 grade is determined by your worksheets. However, as you are also math 199 students your worksheets carry extra significance. Everybody has to answer the question on their own worksheet but only one out of each group will be graded (note that the groups are normally determined randomly or determined by myself). You should always try to finish the worksheet, however, depending on the length of the worksheet, it is possible to get a full grade with an unfinished worksheet.

**Break:** As the class is 2 hours long I will (normally) give you a break which is between 5 to 10 min long. The time of the break depends on progress in class. Note that coming late to class after the break also results in a loss of participation points.

**Office Hour:** There are tutoring hours Monday through Thursday 4-8 pm in Altgeld Hall run by Math 221 TAs (I will be there Tuesdays 4-5 pm). In addition to that, I have a separate office hour which starts after I have determined the time. Besides those feel free to email me at any time and I can schedule meetings if you feel the need. Note, there are extra points for 199 for students who show up to office hour on a regular basis.

**Electronic Devices:** The basic principle is: You are not allowed to use any electronic devices in the classroom. This means you cannot use any calculator, as it is not allowed in your exams. Any use will result in losing your participation points (as mentioned above). If, by any chance, you need to use your phone for an emergency situation, then please ask me first. Do not act on your own.

**Mock Exams:** There will be a mock exam before every midterm. It is not mandatory, however, highly recommended as it can help you prepare for your midterm. Don’t forget that I don’t have any access to the midterms and so the mock exams might be different, however I am certain they will be helpful.

**Class Behavior:** It goes without saying that there are many different opinions in the class and I expect every student to act with the utmost respect towards the other students and their opinions. Disrespect, ridicule or similar behavior will not be tolerated at any given time.

Finally, as you can see I have set up very strict rules and I have very high expectations of you, which need your complete commitment. You have to constantly keep up with the lecture notes and study the new materials outside of class, and you have to constantly participate actively inside of class. This is only because I realize how important this course is for you and I want you to succeed. I also want you to have a great experience with this course and with your cooperation I will try my best to make it as enjoyable and interesting as possible.

☐ I have read and agreed to these conditions.

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*I very much look forward to work with you and support you in your efforts. Good Luck!*