Welcome to College Algebra (Math 113) Online!

Hello! I’m Dr. Tracii Friedman and I am the professor for your online College Algebra course. My background includes 18 years of teaching college mathematics (8 of these at Mesa State College). I have taught across the mathematics curriculum from beginning algebra courses through to the 400-level major courses. I grew up in Philadelphia and earned my B.S. from St. Joseph’s University. My Ph.D. in Mathematics is from Lehigh University in Pennsylvania.

College Algebra is the study of high school algebra from a more sophisticated perspective. Therefore, you should expect many of the topics to be familiar to you, though you will be required to perform more challenging manipulations and obtain a deeper, more theoretical understanding of these familiar concepts. There may also be some topics included in this course that you have not studied in a previous course.

I want to encourage you, right from the start, to contact me for help if you have questions or concerns about course content or logistics of the course. The best way to contact me is via e-mail at tfriedma@mesastate.edu. For mathematical questions involving a lot of symbols, we can arrange to meet in the virtual classroom.

I have put together the information that follows so that you might have a better idea of what it will be like to take College Algebra online. Please take the time to read through this material carefully.

Is Math 113 the right course for you?

College Algebra is a required course for many majors. Some majors permit either College Mathematics (Math 110) or College Algebra. College Algebra does not satisfy the mathematics requirement for Elementary Education majors (Math 105/205 is the sequence required). If you are uncertain of your major requirements, please check at the following website:

http://www.mesastate.edu/academics/1011_program_sheets.html

The prerequisite for this course is a C or better in Math 091 (Intermediate Algebra) or placement. To place into Math 113, students should score at least 19 on the mathematics part of the ACT. Otherwise, it is strongly recommended that you enroll in one of the remedial algebra courses. Please see “Math Challenges” below for comments specific to the online College Algebra course.

If your Math ACT score is 24 or higher, you might consider taking Pre-calculus or Calculus. If you have any questions regarding your skill level or your placement in this course, I would be happy to discuss it with you.

Is taking mathematics online the right choice for you?

Taking an online class

As stated on the MSC website, “Online courses typically require more effort and student responsibility than on-campus courses.” The first question to consider is whether online learning, in general, is right for you. Tools that can help you to answer this question are available at:

http://www.mesastate.edu/online/learning.html

In particular, consider whether or not you have the “Characteristics of a Successful Online Student”. Also, the “Student Readiness Quiz” may be helpful. You will want to be sure that your computer meets the technical requirements for an online class. Mesa State College prefers online students to use the following technology minimums: DSL/Cable modem and high-speed Internet connection, Microsoft Windows XP or later, Microsoft Office 2003 or later, and Java Runtime Environment 6.0. You will also need the Firefox browser for WebCT.

Proctored Exams

Please note that this class will have three tests and a cumulative final examination all of which must be monitored by an approved proctor. Mesa State has a Testing Center on the main campus and one in Montrose. If you live too far away from these locations, then you will need find an appropriate proctor and obtain approval from me for this proctor. Proctor fees may apply. Additional information on this topic will be available when you log into the course. You are welcome to e-mail me if you have concerns about finding an appropriate proctor.
Math Challenges

It is expected that you meet the minimum prerequisite for this course (see above). However, as mentioned above, taking an online class is often more challenging than taking a traditional, lecture-based course. This is especially true in mathematics. Thus, it is critically important that you come into this course with a solid mathematics background. Students who meet only the minimum prerequisite for enrollment in Math 113 may be better served by a traditional lecture course. If you know that you have struggled with your math courses in the past, then you, too, would most likely benefit from having daily instruction and face-to-face office hours.

In order to be successful in this course, you need to be an independent learner and extremely self-motivated. It is expected that students will read and study the e-text, watch the video explanations given by the author of the text, take notes from the reading and videos, and be able to subsequently complete homework assignments.

Instructor availability for this course will be via e-mail, virtual classroom, and chat. If you think that you will need (or prefer) face-to-face office hours, then the traditional lecture course would be a more appropriate choice for you.

Additional comments

This is not a self-paced course. You should plan on logging into the course frequently – at least 4 times per week – so that you can keep up with discussions, announcements and e-mails. Keep the syllabus and course schedule handy so that you are aware of the assignments and deadlines. What characterizes successful students, especially in on-line classes, is a high degree of organization and self-discipline. This is a four-credit course, so you can expect to spend an average of 12 hours per week doing work for this course (including doing the reading and taking notes, asking questions about the material, preparing for and completing homework assignments and quizzes, preparing for and taking exams, etc.). If your mathematics background is weak, this number could be much higher. It’s a good idea to set aside specific blocks of time, several days per week, and dedicating that time to this course. If you plan on doing the work “when you get a chance,” chances are good that the work will not get done.

In order to successfully complete the course, you will need to be comfortable with the required technology. You will need to be comfortable navigating in WebCT so that you may access communication tools (such as announcements, discussion forums, chat, and virtual classroom). All course content and online assessments will be accessible only through the course portal associated with our e-text; it is called Course Compass and it includes the online homework tool, MyMathLab. You will be able to link to Course Compass from my WebCT homepage, however, it does require a separate login. Course Compass has excellent tutorials and Help links.

When you log into WebCT, you will be directed to an “Orientation” Learning Module that will provide you with an organized tour of all of the required tools (including MyMathLab) as well as some troubleshooting tips. If you are having technical problems, I will not always be able to help as I am not an IT person. If you are having difficulties in Course Compass or MyMathLab, go to


as you will find a wealth of information there and a help chat line operated 24/7. Other technical questions can be addressed to the Mesa State Help Desk (248-2111).

If you make a serious commitment to the course, you will likely learn quite a lot. If there are many students making such a commitment, we will be able to develop an online community that will make the course more interesting for everyone.

Let’s have a great semester!

Dr. Friedman