

DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES
United States Military Academy
West Point, NY 10996

MADN-MATH

1 January 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR Students taking MA104 during Spring 2009 term

SUBJECT: Message from the Course Director

I would like to welcome all of you into the course and I sincerely hope all of you enjoyed your winter break. Time away from studying and work is important to catch up on needed rest and put things into perspective. With that, I hope you have returned energized and prepared to succeed in all your endeavors this semester.

As for my course, I know all of you are capable of passing with at least a grade of C; otherwise, you would not be here at the Academy. I also know that none of you approach the course saying I want to fail and take this one over during the summer. Then let me help you out and give you some advice over two areas I have observed to cause a majority of the problems for students taking this course: fundamentals and procrastination.

First, fundamentals are critical for your success in this course (and follow on courses). As with MA103, you are expected to KNOW the topics that appeared on the Fundamental Concepts Exam (FCE). This course does require some use of algebraic manipulation and knowledge of geometry. Additionally, the first 10 lessons of this course are designed to establish a foundation for finding the derivative of a function. Learn it early; you will be evaluated on it on every major examination to some extent. Also, I expect most of you to pass the Fundamental Derivatives Exam (FDE) on Lesson 10, but do not get lulled into a false sense of security. Our first Written Partial Review (WPR) should not be taken lightly. Your performance on the FDE does not translate to success on the WPRs. By doing these things, you should set yourself up for success in this course.

But to achieve success, we need to avoid procrastination, it often stems from poor time management, but regardless it will result in your not performing to your potential. I know that there are several times that you left a lesson and thought what just happened. I have been there too. The time to figure it out is not the night before the WPR, but as soon as you can. Seek help from your instructor, peers, or company tutors. Additionally, when you have a graded out-of-class assignment, do not just stick it in a folder and look at it for the first time the night before it is due. Read it that first day and if you do not understand, get clarification on what is required. It follows that if you know what you need to do, then you can better manage your time, even if it is the night before.

Addressing these two areas will greatly increase your chances of success. Also, as most of you are aware, MA104 is a 4.5 credit course. That means that besides being almost every day, for a single class, it has the most impact on your overall standing here at the Academy. But also recognize that a solid understanding in MA104 will help prepare you for at least two of your classes during your next year: MA205 and Physics sequence.

I am looking forward to a great semester. I understand that each of you will have a different view on how the course should run during the semester. If you have an issue of concern about how the course is run, then please bring it up to your instructor first. If that is not an option, then please bring it to me. My door is almost always open.

See you on the third floor.

MICHAEL A. HARDING
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MA104 Course Director