Mathematical Probability

Course description: Probability spaces, discrete and continuous random variables, special distributions, joint distributions, expectations, law of large numbers, the central limit theorem.

Learning objectives: The emphasis is on solving simple, concrete problems that exemplify the concepts listed in the course description and the variety of subjects in which probability is useful.

Prerequisite: Calculus II (Math. 148, 152, or 172)

Classes: MWF 3:00–3:50, BLOC 160

Web page: http://calclab.math.tamu.edu/~fulling/m411

Instructor: S. A. Fulling
Blocker 620H
fulling@math.tamu.edu

If I am not in my office, you can leave a note in my mailbox (in Blocker 603) or in the plastic pouch beside my office door.

Tentative office hours: M 10:20–11:10, W 2:00–2:50, R 3:00-3:50.
Permanent office hours will be announced later.


Grading system: Hour tests: 100 × 2 = 200
Final exam: 200
Homework and class participation: 200
Total 600

The “curve” will be at least as generous as the “standard” scale [i.e., 90% (= 540 pts) will guarantee an A, etc.].

Dates of hour tests: Monday, Sept. 30; Wednesday, Nov. 6.
Final exam: Tuesday, Dec. 10, 10:30(a.m.)–12:30.

Homework will usually be collected on Wednesdays. Assignments will be on the Web page.

Class participation: We will often discuss homework problems and other examples at the blackboard (or projector) in class. Sometimes I’ll assign problems for you to work on in class in teams. At other times volunteers and random draftees will simply be called on. (You may also be called to the board to help me introduce a new concept or technique “Socratically”. In such cases a good participation score is attained merely by being alert and cooperative.) Attendance records may influence class participation scores slightly.
Weekly class schedule (approximate)

1. Secs. 1.1–4  
2. Secs. 1.5–6  
3. Secs. 2.1–2  
4. Secs. 2.3–4  
5. Sec. 2.5, review  
6. test, Sec. 3.1  
7. Secs. 3.2, 3.4  
8. Secs. 3.3, 5.1  
9. Secs. 5.2–3  
10. Secs. 5.4–5  
11. review, test, Sec. 6.1  
12. Secs. 6.2–3  
13. Secs. 6.4–5  
14. Sec. 6.6, review

Make-up tests: Make-up tests are very hard to grade fairly, and they absorb a large amount of my time which would be better spent for the benefit of the whole class. Please cooperate in making these incidents as rare as possible. If you miss (or foresee that you will miss) a test, it is your responsibility to contact me as soon as possible to request, justify, and schedule a make-up test. (If you can’t reach me directly, you can leave a message at the Math Department office, (979) 845-3261.) If the absence is not clearly excused under the Attendance section of Student Rules, the request may be denied.


Plagiarism: Finding information in books or on the Internet is praiseworthy; lying (even by silence) about where it came from is academic dishonesty. Whenever you copy from, or “find the answer” in, some other source, give a footnote or reference. Otherwise, you are certifying that it is your own work.

Joint work: On a homework assignment (not a take-home test!) discussion with other students is permitted, even encouraged. However, the grader will not give homework credit for “work” that is parasitical (and your test scores will suffer, too!). To forestall problems, please follow these policies: (1) When two or more students work together on an assignment, they should all indicate so on their papers. (2) If the cooperation is of the divide-and-conquer variety, you are certifying that you have studied and understand every problem solution on your paper. Mindless copying is dishonest and academically worthless.

Calculators in exams: Calculators are to be used only to perform elementary operations such as addition, multiplication, and evaluation of simple functions such as square roots. Advanced facilities are prohibited, especially storing formulas in memory or executing programs to carry out algorithms that are part of the subject matter of the course. (Again, when in doubt, give a “footnote” describing what you did.) Violations of this rule may lead to total prohibition of calculators in exams (probably at the insistence of other students).

Copyright: Course materials (on paper or the Web) should be assumed to be copyrighted by the instructor who wrote them or by the University.

Disabilities: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Disability Services Office in Cain Hall, Room B118, or call 845-1637. See also http://disability.tamu.edu.