Hello everyone,

I am writing to give you a brief introduction to the course you will be taking. First off, I am Dr. Matthew Caputo, and I will be the instructor for this course. My office is located in PGH 207 (it is the building at the end of the horse-shoe road across from the Stadium Garage).

You can contact me with one of two email addresses, (mgcaputo@uh.edu or caputo@math.uh.edu). When you email me, please give your course and section number in the subject line of the email, so I know how which course you are referring to. Also, please do not email me expecting a response within five minutes. I do try to reply to emails promptly, but I cannot always reply immediately. Please do not email me to complain about the difficulty of the course or an assignment, and certainly use respect when sending me messages. Emails that have an abrasive tone to them will not be answered. I do not send out emails to talk about the weather or to remind you to attend class. If I am sending you an email, it contains important information, so make sure you read it.

I will not be answering emails asking specific homework questions on the day that the assignment is due. Too often students wait until the last moment to begin an assignment, and then expect me to bail them out when they do not understand material that had been covered a week ago. If you need to ask me a homework question, please do so in a timely manner, not right before the assignment is due.

Many times, I have had students upset about missing a deadline or being unaware of a change in an assignment because they ignored an email I sent out assuming it was not important. You can access course materials (blank notes, completed notes, course calendars, exam schedules, homework assignments, etc.) through the courseware site (http://casa.uh.edu). You will need to buy an access code from the bookstore by the third week to continue accessing the site. On a weekly basis (minimum) you should be checking all the tabs in the Courseware site and well as my website to receive any information or changes that may occur. While the course calendar is on the main page for the course, it has a lag when in refreshing when new material is added into it. If an assignment “disappears” from the calendar, check the appropriate tab within casa to see if it is still there. Sometimes things change that are beyond my control, and I have to make an adjustment to the timeframe of certain lectures or assignments. This is why it is important to check this site as well as your email for updates. The courseware website will contain your electronic bubble-sheets (EMCF) to answer your homework assignments. When completing and homework electronically, please be mindful of the deadlines, and allow yourself enough time to upload the work. If you wait until 11:55 to upload an assignment that is due at 11:59, the server may be crowded and you will be unable to complete the assignment on time. Do not wait until the last minute to try loading in your work. Also, keep track of all the deadlines for homework, exam dates, etc. I am not going to send you weekly reminders to complete your work.

WE DO NOT USE BLACKBOARD AS THE COURSEWARE SITE. Due to the number of symbols used in our text and equations, the math department tends to overload Blackboard and this can cause serious issues. The courseware site described in the paragraph above is what this (and all other math courses at the university) will be using.

My website (http://math.uh.edu/~caputo) will contain general information about the course and certain university policies. This will include items such as course syllabi, my hours in the casa tutoring center, Frequently Asked Questions, and this letter.
Poppers will begin in the third week of the semester. Since this is an online course, there is no popper bubble sheet to purchase from the bookstore. Poppers will be given in the recorded sessions and the completed notes, and will be answered in the EMCF tab of the courseware website. These will be due at the start of the lecture for the following week, so please keep up with these deadlines. The purpose of the popper questions is to ensure that you are watching the videos and reviewing the completed course notes, which is why they are available only within those notes and not separately. In an online course, many students are tempted to wing the assignments without reviewing the material and hope for the best. This is a small measure to counteract that trend.

The live session of the course will be on Tuesdays from 8:00am – 10:00am. I picked this time because there is a small likelihood of it interfering with people’s schedules whether this involves other classes, work or familial obligations. However, I know it is impossible to find a time when everyone is available. You are not required to attend the live sessions. They will be posted as recorded sessions through the casa website in the same location you would find the blank and completed notes. It is your obligation to find time during the week to review these sessions. Do not attempt to complete the quizzes or homework assignments unless you have watched that week’s lesson first.

In addition to normal office hours (held in the casa tutoring center on campus), you will be permitted to attend online office hours as well. These will be held on Mondays from 1:00-3:00, and can be accessed through the same link you use to access the live lectures. These sessions will not be recorded and posted afterwards, but they are visible to anyone that is logged in at that time. For this reason, please do not use this time to discuss person issues such as your grade.

All exams in the course will be handled through the casa testing center. You will be able to schedule them through the Proctored Exams tab in the courseware site. Slots fill up quickly and you do not want to have an inconvenient or not possible for you. Any difficulty with scheduling the exam should be referred to the testing center. I have no control over their scheduling of the exams.

You will be required to download Blackboard Collaborate to participate in the live sessions or watch the recorded sessions. You will also be required to download R Studio to complete a number of the content related materials. Links to these (1 link for Blackboard Collaborate and 2 links that must both be done for R Studio) are available in the courseware site. For this course, all exams will have R Studio available through the testing center, or a calculator that you provide may be used instead. For purposes of the lectures, R Studio will be used rather than a calculator.

A note about incomplete (I) grades: This is a grade assigned in rare circumstances only. There are two criteria required for you to be considered for a grade of I, and then your case has to be approved to the department chairperson. The criteria are (1) you having a passing grade at the time you put in the request, and (2) you are unable to complete to course to unexpected issue, such as an accident or illness. This is not an option to consider if you think you are going to fail the course and you missed the deadline to withdraw.

Some things to take care of within the first week (preferably the first day) of the semester include creating your log-in to courseware, signing up for the first exam, familiarizing yourself with the courseware site (including the location of the textbook, the proctored exam scheduler, online assignments tab, uploaded assignments tab, and the EMCF tab), purchasing from the bookstore an access code for the courseware site, reading the syllabus, reading the frequently asked questions, the
departmental policies for 13XX courses, and taking the Course Policies Quiz. (I know this sounds overwhelming, but within the first two weeks of the semester, all of this will be second-nature to you.)

If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to ask. I look forwards to a great Spring Semester with all of you.

--Dr. C