

# MGF1130 – Mathematical Thinking

## Credit Hours: 3 Gen Ed Math (M)

### Sections: FA06, FA07

### Fall 2025

## I. General Information

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### Class Meetings

- This course is an asynchronous online course. Course content is delivered through video lectures that can be viewed on Canvas. Students may attend lecture recording sessions if desired.

### Instructor

- Name: Ross Ptacek
- Office: 442 LIT
- Office Hours: MWF 1:55-2:45 PM (Zoom and in-person). Additional hours by request.
- Email: [rptacek@ufl.edu](mailto:rptacek@ufl.edu)

### Course Description

Through this course, students will utilize multiple means of problem solving through student-centered mathematical exploration. The course is designed to teach students to think more effectively and vastly increase their problem solving ability through practical application and divergent thinking. This course is appropriate for students in a wide range of disciplines/programs.

### Prerequisites

None.

### General Education Credit

- This course covers 3 credit hours of General Education Mathematics (M) requirements.

The [General Education](#) objectives for Mathematics are as follows:

*Courses in mathematics provide instruction in computational strategies in fundamental mathematics including at least one of the following: solving equations and inequalities, logic, statistics, algebra, trigonometry, inductive and deductive reasoning. These courses include reasoning in abstract mathematical systems, formulating mathematical models and arguments, using mathematical models to solve problems and applying mathematical concepts effectively to real-world situations*

This course will accomplish these objectives in the following ways.

1. Students will solve equations and inequalities in a variety of settings. These settings include percentages, proportions, rates, growth rates, and various numerical descriptions of data. Applications will be made to real world scenarios such as tax calculation and population growth.
2. Students will use formal logic to analyze the structure of plain English statements, assess the validity of arguments, and use deductive reasoning to identify logical fallacies. Applications will be made to real world examples of arguments such as those seen in advertisements or persuasive speeches.
3. Students will use mathematical models such as growth models or the normal distribution to solve problems.
4. Students will reason about the abstract mathematics of symmetry and fractal geometry and will make application back to objects seen in daily life.

## Required Readings and Works

Our main text is *Math in Society* by David Lippman. The textbook is available as a PDF from <https://www.opentextbookstore.com/mathinsociety/>. The most recent edition (2.6) is also available as a paperback on Amazon, typically for under \$30.

### Additional Readings

- *College Mathematics For Everyday Life* by Maxie Inigo, Jennifer Jameson, Kathryn Kozak, Maya Lanzetta, and Kim Sonier. We will use this text only for the section on Rigid Motion and Symmetry. A link to this free book will be posted on Canvas.
- *Math for Liberal Arts Students (2e)* by Darlene Diaz. This textbook will only be used for the section on the normal distribution. This book is also free, and an electronic version can be found at the following link: [https://math.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Applied\\_Mathematics/Math\\_For\\_Liberal\\_Art\\_Students\\_2e\\_\(Diaz\)](https://math.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Applied_Mathematics/Math_For_Liberal_Art_Students_2e_(Diaz)).
- Notes for the relevant material from these additional textbooks will also be posted on Canvas and my personal home page: <https://rossptacek.github.io/>. For many students, these notes will be sufficient.

### Additional Materials

We will use the following free software in this course:

- Google Sheets (<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/>). Google Sheets is an incredibly powerful tool for calculations and for data visualization. I will create a number of useful

spreadsheets and distribute them. All UF students can log into Google Sheets with their UF credentials.

Materials and Supplies Fees: n/a.

## II. Graded Work

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### Description of Graded Work

The following is a list of all graded assignments in the course and their point values. All assignments are accessed and submitted through Canvas. Following this list is a table showing how final grades are assigned.

### Exams

- There are three proctored exams during the term. We will use Honorlock for proctoring.
  - Exam 1 covers the first five weeks of the course (percentages, proportions, growth rates, and logic)
  - Exam 2 covers material from the next five weeks (data visualization, statistics, experimental design, and normal data)
  - Exam 3 covers material from the final five weeks (rigid motions, symmetry, fractals, and complex numbers)
- You are allowed pencil and scratch paper on the exams but no other notes are allowed.
- Depending on the exam you will either be allowed a four-function or scientific calculator. The **only** allowed ones are the ones built into Honorlock or the ones at Desmos (<https://www.desmos.com/fourfunction>, <https://www.desmos.com/scientific>). To reiterate, **handheld calculators are not allowed**.
- Each exam is a 60 minute exam, but an extra 15 minutes are added to account for any delays caused by Honorlock. Exam time accommodations are applied to the base 60 minutes, not the extra 15 minutes.
- There is an optional, comprehensive final exam which serves only to replace one of the during-term exams. The final exam will be open on Honorlock Tuesday 12/9 – Thursday 12/11.
- **General Education SLOs Met:** Communication, Content, Critical Thinking.
- **Value:**  $3 \times 180$  points = 540 points.

### Exam Reviews

- Each exam has a corresponding review with questions similar to exam questions.
- Students get unlimited attempts, but the correct answers will only show after the due date.
- Exam reviews are always due at midnight before the exam window begins.
- **General Education SLOs Met:** Communication, Content, Critical Thinking.
- **Value:**  $5 \text{ points} \times 3 = 15 \text{ points}$

## Quizzes

- Every two weeks (non-exam weeks) there will be quiz on the week's material.
- Quizzes are timed (45 minutes) but not proctored.
- **General Education SLOs Met:** Communication, Content, Critical Thinking.
- **Value:**  $6 \times 30$  points = 180 points

## Lecture Quizzes

- Each lecture (approx. 30) has a corresponding lecture quiz to test comprehension of the basic principles of the lecture. Questions on lecture quizzes come directly from the lecture.
- The quiz is not timed and is not proctored.
- Two attempts are given per question. If you are following the lecture live, you should only need one!
- Lecture quizzes stays open until the beginning corresponding homework is due.
- **General Education SLOs Met:** Communication, Content, Critical Thinking.
- **Value:**  $30 \times 1$  points = 30 points.

## Homework

- Homework is assigned on a roughly weekly basis. Some questions may depend on lectures from later in the week.
- Each question in a homework assignment can be reattempted in order to improve score. If you find yourself missing a question repeatedly, you should reach out for help on the discussions.
- There are some introductory orientation assignments valued at a total of 10 points.
- Students are all given one "LatePass", which allows a single homework deadline to be extended by a day. An additional LatePass is given after the first two exams.
- **General Education SLOs Met:** Communication, Content, Critical Thinking.
- **Value:** Total 215 points (205 weekly + 10 intro)

## Participation

**Rationale.** I believe that actively participating in mathematical discourse is an important part of the learning process. Being able to communicate your solution to a problem to others is possibly more important than having a correct solution to begin with. In this class, Canvas discussions will be created for each of the three exams. Each is worth 5 points.

- Participation points can be earned by contributing meaningfully to Canvas discussions. Some examples include.
  - Sharing partial work and asking for help: In order for the contribution to count, the student should explain what they have tried, not just ask for answers.
  - Assisting someone with a question: The student should attempt to explain their solution. The instructor or TA will also contribute and help clarify the answer.

- Participation points can be lost by doing things that hinder the class running smoothly. This includes making disruptive comments on the Canvas discussions but also includes repeatedly asking questions that have been answered in the syllabus or in course announcements.
- There is a general pool of 5 participation points used for handling issues that arise outside of the Canvas discussions. Students begin with all 5 points, but points are deducted for disruptive behavior. A warning will always be given prior to a deduction.
- **General Education SLOs Met:** Communication, Content, Critical Thinking.
- **Value:** 20 points

## Grading Scale

Your final grade is computed by summing up your total points and rounding to the nearest full point. A letter grade is then assigned using the chart below. For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Letter Grade	Point range		Letter Grade	Point range
A	900+		C	660-699
A-	860-899		C-	620-659
B+	820-859		D+	580-619
B	780-819		D	540-579
B-	740-779		D-	500-539
C+	700-739		E	0-499

*A minimum grade of C is required for General Education credit. Courses intended to satisfy General Education requirements cannot be taken S-U.*

## Grade Disputes

Grade disputes must be brought to the instructor's attention before the date of the final exam and must be based upon actual errors with the grading of a particular assessment or with applying the grading scheme in the syllabus. A good rule of thumb is to try and make sure that you contact the instructor within a week of getting your grade back, if you have any questions or concerns about the grade - to make sure we have plenty of time to resolve any issues before the final exam date.

### III. Annotated Weekly Schedule

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Week	Topic	Summary	Required Readings/Works	Assigned Work Due
Week 1	Orientation, Problem Solving Techniques	Orientation to the course and technology. Percentages and Rates.	Syllabus, Orientation Module of Canvas, Lippman pp. 1-6	Intro assignments
Week 2	Problem Solving Techniques	Proportions, Relative and Absolute Error, Dimensional Analysis.	Lippman pp. 7-18	Week 2 HW
Week 3	Growth Rates	Linear, Exponential, and Logistical Growth.	Lippman pp. 187 – 192.	Week 3 HW Quiz 1
Week 4	Sets Logic	Set operations and counting. Logical Form (And, Or, Not, Conditional). Logical Equivalences.	Lippman pp. 319-328 pp. 407 - 422	Week 4 HW
Week 5	Logic	Quantifiers. Truth Tables. Euler Diagrams.	Lippman pp. 413 - 440	Week 5 HW Quiz 2
Week 6	Statistics	Types of Data. Populations and Samples.	Lippman pp. 227- 232	Week 6 HW Exam 1 Review Exam 1
Week 7	Statistics	Sampling Methods. Sources of Bias. Experimental Design.	Lippman pp. 233 - 242	Week 7 HW
Week 8	Describing Data	Median, Quartile, and Percentiles. Mean and Standard Deviation. Data Visualization.	Lippman pp. 243 - 272	Week 8 HW Quiz 3
Week 9	Normal Data	Properties of Normal Curves. The empirical Rule.	Diaz 11.1, 11.2	Week 9 HW
Week 10	Normal Data	Central Limit Theorem.	Diaz 11.3	Week 10 HW Quiz 4 Exam 2/Review
Week 11	Symmetry	Rigid motions and symmetry. Reflections and rotations.	Inigo et al. pp. 336 - 348	Week 11 HW
Week 12	Symmetry	Translations and glide reflections. Symmetry type of finite objects.	Inigo et al. pp. 349 - 356	Week 12 HW

Week 13	Symmetry Fractal Geometry	Frieze Patterns. Fractals and fractal dimension.	Lippman pp. 367 - 373	Week 13 HW
Week 14	Fractal Geometry	Geometric series. Measurements of Fractals. Complex Numbers.	Lippman pp. 373 - 378	Week 14 HW
Week 15	Fractal Geometry	The Mandelbrot set.	Lippman pp. 378 - 381	Week 15 HW Quiz 6 Exam 3/Review
Finals	Review			Final Exam

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## IV. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

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This course satisfies the following General Education Area M SLOs.

- **Content:** Employ strategies in fundamental mathematics, including at least one of the following: solving equations and inequalities, logic, statistics, algebra, or trigonometry.
- **Critical Thinking:** Reason in abstract mathematical systems and use mathematical models to solve problems. Apply mathematical concepts effectively to real-world situations.
- **Communication:** Formulate mathematical models and arguments. Communicate mathematical solutions clearly and effectively.

These general education SLOs are accomplished through the course specific SLOs listed below.

- Determine efficient means of solving a problem through investigation of multiple mathematical models (**Gen Ed Area M Critical Thinking**).
  - Assessed through lecture quizzes, homework, quizzes, and exams.
- Apply logic in contextual situations to formulate and determine the validity of logical statements using a variety of methods (**Gen Ed Area M Content**).
  - Assessed through lecture quizzes, homework, quizzes, and exams.
- Apply mathematical concepts visually and contextually to represent, interpret and reason about geometric figures (**Gen Ed Area M Communication**).
  - Assessed through lecture quizzes, homework, quizzes, exams, and contributions to Canvas discussions.
- Recognize the characteristics of numbers and utilize numbers along with their operations appropriately in context (**Gen Ed Area M Content**).
  - Assessed through lecture quizzes, homework, quizzes, and exams.
- Analyze and interpret representations of data to draw reasonable conclusions. (**Gen Ed Area M Critical Thinking**).
  - Assessed through lecture quizzes, homework, quizzes, and exams.

## VI. Policies

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### Attendance Policy

As this is an asynchronous online class, there is no attendance policy. However, it is in the student's best interest to make contact with the course material multiple times a week, as though there were scheduled class meetings. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

## Students Requiring Accommodation

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

## UF Evaluations Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online. Students can complete evaluations in three ways:

1. The email they receive from GatorEvals,
2. Their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or
3. The central portal at <https://my-ufl.bluera.com>

Guidance on how to provide constructive feedback is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

## University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. See the UF Conduct Code website (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>) for more information. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

## Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/> , 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

## Free Help-The Little Hall Math Lab

In addition to the Canvas discussions and visiting the office hours of your instructor and teaching assistant, for help, the Little Hall Math Lab located in Little Hall 215 offers free drop-in assistance with math homework Monday through Friday from 9:30 to 4:00. It is staffed by mathematics graduate students and undergraduate tutors. Please note that this space is not designed for intense one-on-one tutoring, but rather as a resource for quick questions and explanations. You should not expect the staff to help you if you have not at least begun your homework and have specific questions. Moreover, they absolutely will not assist you with quizzes or any other such work. More details are available here: <https://oas.aa.ufl.edu/students/tutoring/>