AM121/ES121 Course Logistics

Contents

1 Setup

- Get AMPL setup sooner than later. You will need to use AMPL for a majority of your problem sets. Look over the resources section of the course website for a quick startup guide and the links to the AMPL files. The AMPL files will be taken off the (public) website shortly, so you should download it soon!

- Use mathematical software (e.g., Mathematica or Matlab) to your advantage. If you ever have questions about how to do this, see if it is already addressed by guides in the resources sections on the course site. If not, ask a question on Piazza.

- It is very highly encouraged to use LaTeX or another document formatting system so that you can hand in your problem sets electronically. Many LaTeX resources, including AM121/ES121 code snippets and a AM121/ES121 assignment skeleton LaTeX file, can be found under Resources.

2 Assignments

- Each homework assignment will include specific instructions about what you need to submit. Please follow these instructions carefully and type your name into the top of the files you edit (in comments). All assignments will be due at a uniform date for all students.

- The AM121/ES121 grading policy is designed to be fair and objective. You will be evaluated on much more than simple 'correctness'; thus one-word or even one-sentence answers to thought questions are rarely sufficient. Solutions must follow the specifications of the problem set.

- Read instructions carefully and do everything the problem sets tell you, regardless of how trivial it may seem. Many students are frustrated when they lose points on quizzes and problem sets for careless omissions.

- If you have a question or concern with your performance on an assignment or the manner in which it was graded, please talk to your TF after class or during office hours. Your TF will explain to you why you missed the points or how to correct your mistake. If your work was graded incorrectly, your grade will be adjusted; however, the grading standards are not negotiable. If you are still unhappy with the grading of your assignment after you have spoken to your TF, please see the instructor.

- Lateness policy: note that the lateness policy for this course is slightly complicated, but reasonable. Please make sure that you understand it, so that you are not surprised later. Each student is given 4 late days, with no more than 1 day used per assignment. Use them wisely. Remember that these days are not divisible, so even an assignment submitted two hours late will require a full late day. Contact the instructor if you have extenuating circumstances concerning late days. If you have any questions about the exact application of the late day policy - ask, do not guess. Late days apply to most, but not all problem sets, and not to Extreme Optimization assignments.

- When in doubt, ask a question. The course is set up for you all to succeed. Post your questions on Piazza, and do not make them private unless it is something very specific to you. When you have an emergency, email your TF directly rather than posting on Piazza.

3   Lectures, Sections, Office hours

- Attending lectures is essential to keep pace with the course. They will cover most of the material that you will need to complete the assignments.

- Copies of course handouts distributed in lecture are available on the web. If you miss a lecture (or the handouts run out during lecture), you should try to get a copy of the handouts and go over it before the next lecture or section.

- Sections are not intended to be a regurgitation of lecture. There will be time to clarify difficult concepts, but most weeks they will be extensions of lecture, often giving you a chance to practice the material from lectures through various interactive exercises.

- Section will cover in depth those concepts and topics that you will need to complete the assignment. Section will try to make clear how to apply the material covered in lecture to the current assignment. For that reason, it is in your interest to come to section having read and started on the current problem set.

- Each TF holds two hours of office hours each week. One advantage of office hours is that the TFs are familiar with the common pitfalls of the current assignment. You will also get to meet some of your classmates and all of the teaching fellows. The TFs are there to help you, so do not hesitate to utilize them as a resource. In addition to office hours, you are encouraged to make appointments with your TF should you have general concerns about the course or your performance. Office hours are designed to help you tackle problem sets, but your TF will be happy to meet with you to discuss any other questions or concerns that might fall outside of a specific assignment.

4 The course website

- The course website is your go-to resource for course information and material. It is your responsibility to check the website and Piazza for any announcements. You can 'follow' posts on Piazza to get updates emailed directly to you.

- Use the AM 121 Piazza page. TFs will be monitoring this board and answer posted questions. In addition, you may look at questions posed by your fellow classmates. Make use of this great resource!

- There are a lot of guides and tutorials in the resources section of the course website. Many of the softwares / tools mentioned there will save you lots of time on homework assignments.

- Browse through the AM121/ES121 AMPL User Guide, which contains tutorials for AMPL syntax that's useful on assignments.

5 Tips to succeed

- Actively attend, engage, and participate in lecture, section, and office hours.

- Pay attention during lecture and take detailed notes (don't assume that everything you need to know is already written on the slide).

- Look over the slides and your notes again after lecture, and do the relevant readings.

- Read over the section notes after section and do any uncovered exercises.

- Study with friends and try explaining difficult concepts to them - teaching is the best way to learn.

- Getting help in this course is extremely easy. Here are several of your best resources:

  - Check and/or post to the AM121/ES121 Piazza page.
  - Learn to use course software (see guides in resources section of course website).
  - Go to TF office hours.
  - Go to the professor's office hours.
  - Form study groups (but beware the course collaboration policy).

6   Don't cheat.

Don't cheat. There is a fine line between collaboration and plagiarism. Don't be tempted by the idea of "just a peek." Just a peek at your fellow student's solution is crossing the line. See the syllabus for more details on the collaboration policy.