

M371E: Learning Assistant Experience in Mathematics

Spring 2021

Instructor:	Richard Wong (He/Him)	Section:	55235
Email:	richard.wong@math.utexas.edu	Time:	M 17:00 – 18:00 central
Office:	Online (PMA 11.142)	Place:	Online, via Zoom.
Office Hours:	By appointment	Canvas:	Website here.

Course Description

This course is a hands-on experience in what it is like to teach and support students in the learning of mathematics in undergraduate courses. In this course, you will participate in classroom training and discussions, and you will practice your skills as learning assistants in CalcLab.

The goals of the course are that you acquire (1) a basic understanding of the fundamental principles of learning, particularly in mathematics; (2) a realistic perspective of your own strengths and weaknesses as developing professionals and educators; and (3) a compelling interest in learning about and confronting the challenges that lie before you in the remainder of your education and in your future mathematical lives. In this regard, this course will also expose you to ethical issues and to the process of applying ethical reasoning in real-life situations.

The intention is that by the end of this course, you will become effective teachers that (1) have reflected upon the ethical issues related to supervising and instructing others, and (2) have developed the leadership characteristics needed for this situation. To do this, you will develop a coherent framework for understanding of human learning in the context of mathematics instruction. Furthermore, you will gain experience implementing this framework while working in CalcLab, and planning your own class lessons and presentations.

This course carries the **Ethics and Leadership Flag**, and will expose you to ethical issues and to the process of applying ethical reasoning in real-life situations. The Ethics and Leadership requirement equips you with the tools necessary for making ethical decisions in your adult and professional life.

The dates in this syllabus are subject to change. Any changes will be announced on [Canvas](#).

Required Materials

- We will be using online handouts and articles, which will be found on [Canvas](#).
- We will have synchronous meetings virtually **via Zoom**. Recordings and accessible asynchronous materials will be available on [Canvas](#).

Class Structure:

This class is offered in an online, synchronous format. **All class meetings, as well as CalcLab, will be held virtually via Zoom.**

You will attend and participate in an online discussion section for M371E for 1 hour each week from 5-6pm central time on Mondays. I will let you know beforehand if we will go over this time, but this should not extend past 6:30pm.

You will also apply what you have learned in these discussions sections during your time in the CalcLab, where you will work **online, via Zoom** for 2 hours per week. You will receive a scheduling email in the first or second week of classes.

Course Objectives

During the course of the semester, you will learn about pedagogy and frameworks for learning, and learn how to effectively communicate mathematics as an instructor. You will also learn to:

1. Increase your awareness of ethical considerations in teaching mathematics, and how to be your best self in difficult situations.
2. Provide concise and helpful feedback to your peers.
3. Reflect and analyze the effectiveness of your teaching.
4. Plan and present suitable lessons.
5. Construct a teaching philosophy statement.

Main Assignment Types

1. Throughout the semester, many articles on pedagogy will be discussed in class. **Before class**, for each article assigned as homework, you will write a concise 1-2 paragraph response on [Canvas](#).
2. You will perform various classroom and homework tasks related to a reflection on the various aspects (such as ethics and leadership) involved in supervising, teaching, and working with others.
3. You will observe an instructor or a teaching assistant during the semester. An observation protocol will be filled out and submitted, and we will discuss the observations in class. This will be due on **March 8th**.
4. You will plan and then teach a 15-18 minute lesson on a non-Calculus subject of your choice to your peers, who will provide you with constructive feedback. Asynchronous options are also available for this assignment. A non-graded draft of the lesson plan will be due on **March 29th**, and the final draft will be submitted with the presentation. Lesson presentations will begin **April 12th**.
5. For your final paper, you will write a Teaching Philosophy statement. A non-graded draft will be due on **April 26th**, and the final draft will be due **May 10th**.

Policies:

Attendance Policy

Since this class meets only once per week, it is important that you attend the synchronous meetings. However, I acknowledge that there are external factors out of your control that can prevent you from attending discussion sections or CalcLab. If this is the case, you should send me an email (richard.wong@math.utexas.edu) or a Canvas message, and we will work out an alternative way for you to receive participation credit. Typically, this would involve reading or watching the asynchronous class materials, and submitting a one-page reflection / response, or making up the time in CalcLab.

Grading Policy

I reserve the right to curve the scale dependent on overall class scores at the end of the semester. Any curve will only ever make it easier to obtain a certain letter grade. The grade will reflect your performance using the following proportions:

- 20% of your grade will be determined by your participation and attendance in CalcLab.
- 30% of your grade will be determined by participation (both synchronously during class, and asynchronously via online discussions).
- 10% of your grade will be determined by your submitted teaching observation.
- 20% of your grade will be determined by your submitted lesson plan and your lesson presentation.
- 20% of your grade will be determined by your submitted teaching philosophy.

Late Assignment Policy:

Sometimes we have bad days, bad weeks, or bad semesters. This is especially true in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and this crisis, as well as any other unexpected, unfortunate personal crisis should not unduly affect your grade.

If you happen to miss a deadline once or twice for a **minor participation assignment** (such as a discussion post on Canvas), you may email it to me within 24 hours of the deadline. However, if you are having consistent problems keeping to the schedule, you should reach out to me via e-mail or Canvas.

For **major, submitted assignments** (such as the teaching observations, student lessons, or the teaching philosophy), I am using the policy of “time banks” in an effort to accommodate any unexpected issues. You may use this policy one of two ways (please choose, and let me know):

- You may have a two-day grace period for one submitted assignment, OR
- You may have 2 one-day extensions for two different submitted assignments.

You do not have to utilize this policy, but if you find yourself struggling with unexpected personal events, I encourage you to email me (richard.wong@math.utexas.edu) as soon as possible. I will also give some case-by-case flexibility depending on the severity of the issues.

Resources:

Online Learning Resources:

This course will be offered in an online format. If you are looking for ideas and strategies to help you feel more comfortable participating in our class, please explore the resources available here: <https://onestop.utexas.edu/keep-learning/>.

Furthermore, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the **Student Emergency Fund** is able to distribute grants for laptop computers, and technology support. Similarly, there is also **CARES Act funding**, which can also be used for technology. These grants are not considered loans, and do not require repayment.

Services for Students with Disabilities

The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so that I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course.

If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations, please contact the **Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD)**. If you are already registered with SSD, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

Counseling and Mental Health Center

The **Counseling and Mental Health Center** serves UT's diverse campus community by providing high quality, innovative and culturally informed mental health programs and services that enhance and support students' well-being, academic and life goals. To learn more about your counseling and mental health options, visit their website, or call CMHC at (512) 471-3515.

If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, call the 24/7 CMHC Crisis Line at (512) 471-2255.