STAT 301 FAQ – **PLEASE READ THOROUGHLY!** (..and click the links)

1. **GENERAL INFO**
   - **I know this course is required, but I SOOOO do not want to take it. What can I expect?**
     This is a completely **self-contained introductory course** in basic statistical techniques... no previous knowledge of statistics or computers is assumed, but you should have some very basic math skills. You can expect to work hard in this course, but it does pay off for most people.
   - **I've had a basic stats course before, and it was an easy A. This course will be pretty similar, right?**
     Wrong. This is not a “baby” statistics course, that only regurgitates calculator formulas and numerical answers with no comprehension or interpretation. It is a **high-level** introduction that will include computations, but will also emphasize concepts (which actually make the formulas much easier to understand). Even if you had an introductory statistics course before, but never heard of “hypothesis testing” for example, then you may be in for a rude awakening. **If you don’t intend to do any work, then click here!**

2. **LECTURES**
   - **How will lectures be presented?**
     Mostly via animated **PowerPoint** slides, which are posted online, **along with all of the other course material**. I will rarely use the board, unless there is some sort of computer and/or AV equipment problem.
   - **Do I really need to attend the lectures? Can’t I just read the notes (and the textbook)?**
     The lecture notes are just that – **notes**, i.e., “bare bones.” They do not include many important and subtle details, that are crucial to truly understanding the material. **You are strongly encouraged to attend all lectures, to see ideas “fleshed out.”** Sorry, but there is no posted lecture schedule (i.e., syllabus), since my pacing varies over semesters. (But HW deadlines, exam dates, etc. will be announced well ahead of time.)

3. **DISCUSSION SECTIONS**
   - **When do they start meeting?**
     The **second** week of classes; this semester (Spring 2015), that begins on **Monday, Jan 26**, and I strongly suggest that you attend. TAs will go over assigned HW problems, as some can be a bit challenging, especially those from the Lecture Notes, and there will be plenty of them.

   - **I am registered in one discussion section, but would like to attend another. Can I, and if so, how?**
     Doing this is not a problem, **as long as you inform the TA(s) of the switch**, for grade recording purposes.

4. **OFFICE HOURS**
   - **Where and when are they?**
     TAs will announce their office hours. I don’t “officially” hold them, since they always seem to conflict with one or more of the TAs’ office hours or discussion section times. However, most days I will be in my office, **1227 MSC**, and will be glad to help you if I am not too busy. Otherwise, by appointment. More info later…

5. **FINAL COURSE GRADE COMPUTATION**
   - **How will final grades be determined?**
     There are four, **AND ONLY FOUR**, components to your final course grade:

     \[
     \begin{array}{ccc}
     \text{Exam 1} & = 100 \text{ points} & 20\% \\
     \text{Exam 2} & = 100 \text{ points} & 20\% \\
     \text{Final Exam} & = 150 \text{ points} & 30\% \\
     \text{HW + Quizzes} & = 150 \text{ points} & 30\% (20\% + 10\%) \\
     \text{Total} & = 500 \text{ points} & \\
     \end{array}
     \]

     Your “total course score” is computed out of a maximum possible 500 points. Final grades will be determined from this **overall distribution**, **STARTING FROM** the standard **general** guidelines: A = 90-100%, B = 80-89%, C = 70-79%, D = 60-69%, F = 0-59%. **However, these cutoffs will almost certainly be tweaked slightly, as I prefer to maintain flexibility to allow for exam difficulty, etc.** For scores that fall **just below** a borderline between successive grades (such as B and AB), overall trend in exam performance will be taken into account. If the trend indicates steady improvement, then we will **consider “bumping up”** to the next highest grade (AB). Otherwise, the grade will generally remain where it is (B). Scores that fall just above a borderline will normally not be “bumped down,” regardless of exam trend.
6. EXAMS / QUIZZES

- **Are the two midterm exams in-class?**
  Yes, during normal lecture time.

- **How are they structured?**
  Both exams consist of ~ 4 problems, each divided into several parts (a), (b), (c), ...

- **How will they be graded?**
  Partial credit is allotted for both correct method and solution.

- **Are they cumulative?**
  No. Each exam, including the final, picks up where the last exam leaves off.

- **What are we allowed to bring?**
  A calculator, and a sheet of notes (8.5” × 11”, both sides). Detailed info will be sent in class emails...

- **Are there makeup exams?**
  No! I must have at least 24 hours prior written notice (email is fine) of any exam that is to be missed for a documented, legitimate reason. In case of an emergency (such as illness) on the day of an exam, I will expect to see some form of official written documentation upon your return. The exam will then be dropped from the computation of your final course grade, and its weight distributed evenly over the remaining exams.

- **What’s the best way to study for the exams?**
  Practice exam problems and solutions are posted online. If you “solve” a selected problem by peeking at its solution when you get stuck, you have not solved it. Repeat the process on the same problem as many times as necessary, until you can quickly (~ 10-12 mins) and completely solve it without peeking. It works!

- **What about quizzes?**
  Timed multiple-choice quizzes will be posted on Learn@UW. Practice quiz problems and solutions are also posted online. NOTE: Your lowest quiz score will be dropped at the end of the semester.

- **Will there be a curve for the exams?**
  I DO NOT “CURVE” INDIVIDUAL EXAMS, AS I DO NOT USE THEM IN THE COMPUTATION OF FINAL COURSE GRADES, WHICH ALSO INCLUDES HW + QUIZ SCORES. HENCE IT IS NUMERICALLY POSSIBLE TO DO “ABOVE AVERAGE” WORK ON EXAMS, HW, AND QUIZZES ALL SEMESTER, BUT STILL RECEIVE A COURSE GRADE NO HIGHER THAN B.

7. HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

- **How are they structured?**
  All HW (with due dates) will be posted online, and consist of reading assignments (which should serve as a modified syllabus) and problems from the textbook (7th ed only) AND the Lecture Notes; an email notification will go out to the class immediately afterward. You will have between 1-2 weeks to complete them and, as they are substantial, you will need it. DELAY, AND FORFEIT YOUR RIGHT TO COMPLAIN!

- **To whom and how should I submit my homework? How will they be graded?**
  Your TA will grade them, so unless (s)he tells you otherwise (e.g., use a Dropbox on Learn@UW), you should do one of the following, in order of preference:
  - Ideally, hand it in to him/her in person.
  - Place it in his/her Dept of Statistics mailbox, immediately to the left of the front entrance of MSC.
  - Send him/her a scanned copy as an email attachment.
  
  WHICHEVER YOU CHOOSE, MAKE A BACKUP COPY!!! ONCE IN A GREAT WHILE, AN ASSIGNMENT GETS LOST OR STOLEN! UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD YOU SIMPLY SLIP YOUR ASSIGNMENT UNDER A TA’S OFFICE DOOR, OR PLACE IT ON HIS/HER DESK, AND WALK AWAY! WE WILL NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR MISSING ASSIGNMENTS. WITHOUT A BACKUP COPY, WE WILL ASSUME YOU DID NOT TURN IT IN, AND ASSIGN 0!!!!

  Because more homework problems are assigned than TAs (who are students themselves) can be reasonably expected to grade for everyone, they will generally grade a different random subset of ~ 5 problems per discussion section, in order to cover as many problems as possible, overall. As with the exams, problems will be graded for both correct method and answer; partial credit will be allotted. So if you elect not to complete a particular HW problem, you do so at the risk of that problem being one of those chosen to be graded, and you will receive NO credit for it! **YOU are responsible for correctly completing ALL of the assigned problems, and obtaining help if necessary!**
8. COMPUTERS

- I don’t have any programming experience. Will we be using computers for this course?

Yes, but only for a few HW problems from the Lecture Notes (with computer code given), that require the use of software called R (read this gentle introduction to R; your first “unofficial” assignment is on it). For most purposes, a basic, non-graphing calculator is certainly more than enough. Exams (which will include copies of all statistical tables from the textbook and Lecture Notes) will be written in such a way that those who have high-end calculators will not have an advantage over those who don’t, and answers generated solely from a calculator with no work shown, correct or not, will receive NO credit! R will not appear on exams or quizzes.

9. HELP!

- I’m really getting lost in this course. Where can I go for help? Should I hire a tutor?

THE TIME TO SEEK HELP IS BEFORE YOU GET TOTALLY LOST. THIS IS NOT ABOUT YOUR EGO!

  o The Statistics Tutoring Lab is a good resource if you just have a quick question or two. Otherwise…
  o If you feel you’re slipping, and need more help than that, **DO NOT HIRE A TUTOR!** Even if (s)he is free, a tutor is an outsider, and generally unfamiliar with what material is emphasized in the course. Furthermore, I am not convinced that tutors make a significant improvement in students’ grades.
  o **ASK ME AND/OR YOUR TA ASAP BEFORE EXAMS… DON’T WAIT!** Use the resources that you already paying for! But we aren’t mind readers… We can’t help if you don’t tell us! Don’t be shy.

10. FINAL COURSE GRADES

- My grade does not reflect the time and energy I put into this course! Can’t you take that into account?

Afraid not. There is no way to measure that. Besides, should the student who learns quickly be penalized for it? I can only issue fair grades based on what I can see: HW, exam, and quiz scores. Sorry…

- Is there any “extra” work I can do to improve my grade?

Nope. Again, your course grade will be determined solely on the basis of the outline above. If you can’t handle the basics, there is no reason to think you will be able to handle more advanced material. There are no extra projects or assignments (unless you are registered for Honors credit; see below). Once you turn in an exam, it is final! Please do not ask for extra time, or other special exceptions (unless you are a registered McBurney student with documentation; see below).

11. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- I am registered for Honors credit. Is there anything special I need to do?

Yes, you must see me ASAP about completing a small project. You cannot receive Honors credit without it.

- I am a registered McBurney student. Is there anything special I need to do?

Yes, please show me the documentation, so that we can make the necessary exam and quiz accommodations.

- I am not yet a registered McBurney student, but do have a legitimate condition that requires medication, and that might indeed affect my performance in this course, especially on exams (e.g., migraines, panic attacks, epilepsy, heart condition, etc.) Is there anything special I need to do?

Yes! Let me know immediately!!! Otherwise, if something happens during an exam and you choose to submit it anyway, then you will have made your decision, and I will be able to do NOTHING about it!

12. OTHER

- I HATE THIS COURSE, DESPISE THE INSTRUCTOR, AND WILL LEAVE THE MOST NEGATIVE FEEDBACK IMAGINABLE TO MAKE THEM ALL PAY, PAY, PAY!!!

Of course, that’s your prerogative. However, since you are an adult, be aware of the following…

  o The course rules are explicitly given above. If you don’t like them, you can switch to another lecture.
  o It is the university, not the instructor, that determines if Stat 301 is required for you. Don’t confuse the message with the messenger.
  o Although the presentation style differs from instructor to instructor, the material is mostly the same.
  o If you need help during the semester, but never see the instructor or your TA, then what do you expect?
  o The instructor is trying to help you get through this required course, not weed you out.
  o If you don’t follow these, you may end up here!