

CH 301 Random Musings, November 23, 2010—Turkey Day (and how grades work)

1. Have you ever stopped to think that in a class of 500, someone is having a birthday in here, just about every time we hold class. So if that person would like to stand up, we will sing happy birthday.

2. It is a Thanksgiving tradition that we have pie and ice cream. As you can imagine, pie and ice cream for 500 is a bit of a trick unless you all are going to be a lot of help. I plan on us making, serving, eating and cleaning up in less than 25 minutes. So I will need about 50 of you to help make this work. Please come when called.

Step one, I need about a dozen of you making sure everyone ends up with:

A plate for pie, a cup for ice cream, a napkin, a spoon or fork, a scantron.

Step two: I will need about 20 helpers to make the ice cream as well. Come on down. After a bowl of ice cream is made you will take it to a row and send it across.

Step three: I will also need a dozen helpers to dole out the pie. Where you sit determines your kind of pie—but remember it is about the experience, not whether you get your favorite, so don't go screaming for pecan when someone hands you cherry.

Step four: I will need help with the chocolate and strawberry sauce.

Step five: I will need someone to pass the trash bags along. By all means, clean up after yourselves.

Step six: I will need people to explode the Thanksgiving hydrogen turkeys.

4. After pie and ice cream we will have a quiz. We will not be holding office hours on Wednesday or academic communities on Wednesday. We will be back to a regular schedule after the break.

5. There is an exam next week!!!! Everything is pretty much the same as for the first two exams and the details about where the exam will occur will be provided next Tuesday. But be aware of boring things like:

- We will provide a practice TA exam and practice Laude exam this weekend
- I will hold a review session on Monday evening at 9 pm in WCHogg 1.120
- Travis will hold a review session on Tuesday evening at 9 pm in WCHogg 1.120
- All of the video clips for the course (lectures 1 through 25) will be up by tonight.

6. Remember that I posted the following useful information last Thursday in the musings:

- The 60 question types on the final exam (a good thing to learn over Thanksgiving)
- The 30 question types on exam 3 (a good thing to learn over Thanksgiving)

7. Extra Credit Opportunities. I am providing three extra credit opportunities this semester.

Extra Credit 1—Converting a Science Hater

- I want you to teach a science-hater something interesting about chemistry that you have learned in this class. The person you teach has to say to you, “gee, I had no idea chemistry was that interesting” when you have finished (you can make them say it even if they don't mean it.). You can choose what you teach but I would recommend that it be something of interest and utility. This year I am not providing ideas because last year 80% of the students used one of my three examples and I was deeply saddened by the lack of originality. This year you are on your own so choose anything from the course and have a fine conversation.

- Submit the assignment as simple text in an e-mail (no attachments)
- Use the specific text written below as the subject heading of the e-mail:
Ec1f10 your uteid
and send it to dalaude@mail.utexas.edu.
- If you do not use the correct e-mail subject title and provide your UTEID you will not receive credit.
- Due Date: Friday, December 3rd at 5 p.m.

Extra credit 2—core course assessment on Quest.

A second extra credit worth 1% of your grade is earned by participating in a brief core curriculum assessment survey implemented through Quest. Every year the university is required to demonstrate that its students are learning and part of this effort includes assessment of core curriculum courses like CH301.

Beginning November 15th, you will receive an email from the college asking you to complete a short on-line assessment. The data from the assessment will be used to gather data for UT's accreditation process. The assessment consists of 6 short multiple choice questions covering some of the concepts that you've discussed in class. It should take about 10 minutes to complete.

You will not receive a grade for this assessment. The purpose is to gather data on how well students in the core courses are learning important course concepts. The data for the entire class will be pooled, and the overall performance will be reported to SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools).

The College greatly appreciates your participation and to make it worth your while (not that you wouldn't do it anyway) I am offering a 1% extra credit that can be applied to any grading scheme I use.

A couple of things:

1. I will automatically be recording the fact that you participated do don't e-mail to let me know.
2. Try. The software will be able to tell who the students are who simply log in and log out and I won't be giving credit for that.
3. If you are taking more than one core course, you may be asked to complete the assessment for the other course (a biology, calculus, statistics, etc. course.) You only have to do one assessment, but even if it isn't for my course, I will be able to give you the credit.

Please take this opportunity to test your own knowledge and assist us with this important responsibility.

Extra Credit 3—Periodic Table Competition

- Choose the TAs to win, they win, you get 1%
- Choose Dr. Laude to win, he wins, you get 1%
- Choose both to win, they both win, you get 1%

Fill out your sheet at the beginning of class to play. Void where prohibited by law.

Grading: The Cutoffs

8. I remember the glory days when being pre-med meant being able to calculate your grades to several decimal places in your head—this were pre-calculator days, though, and nowadays there seems to be less enthusiasm for the math involved in figuring out how you are doing in a course. Kind of sad.

So provided below is a master scoring table for people who don't like calculating their grades in this course themselves. Note that there are three ways to earn your grade, and depending on whether you did the extra credit, two sets of cutoffs for those three grading schemes. These are the number you should be evaluating as you stare at your Quest test and quiz scores. Don't use the Quest's idea of a grade. It is not based on my grading schemes.

course grade	no extra credit submitted			three extra credit submitted—3% reduction		
	exemption (700 points)	cumulative (1000 points)	final (300 points)	exemption (700 points)	cumulative (1000 points)	final (300 points)
A	630	900	270	609	870	261
B	x	800	240	x	770	231
C	x	700	210	x	670	201
D	x	600	180	x	570	171
F	x	<600	<180	x	<570	<171

Grading: Information on Exemptions.

9. When your score for Exam 3 is posted on Wednesday evening next week, the scores for exams 1-3 and quizzes 1 through 6 should be available to you--this should be enough information to determine exemption unless you have grading errors that have resulted in incomplete or inaccurate Quest scores.

10. Remember that in order to be exempt from the final you must score either 630 or 609 points out of 700 depending on whether you turned in the extra credit. The point totals to be used are the three 180 point exams and your four highest of six quizzes (a cumulative score of 700 points). Please don't use all six quizzes in determining your exemption status!!!!

11. If you are exempt, you will receive an A for the course without taking the final. Period.

12. There are a few special circumstances (people adding the course late or missed quizzes for nonacademic reasons) for which I will allow fewer than 630 or 609 points to be exempt.

13. Some of you are concerned that you may miss the exemption by just a few points. It is possible that I will lower the cutoff a bit but I won't know till all the grades are in. I typically have about 180 students earn exemption and that will be true in this class as well. Please don't hassle me about this and contact me only if you believe there was a grading error in determining your exemption status.

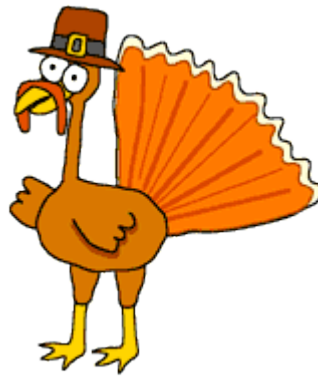
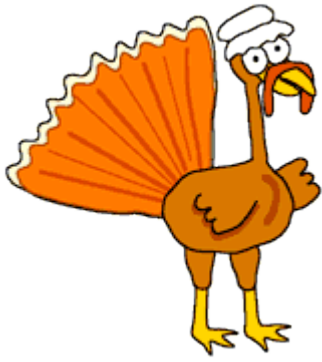
Grading: Information for those taking the cumulative final exam.

14. If you are not exempt, you must take the final exam.

15. Don't worry about which grading scheme I will use when you take the final exam. If the final exam for everything gives you a higher score, I will use that. If the cumulative score with the final gives you a better grade, I will use that instead. Unless you are exempt, there is no grading scheme that doesn't include your final exam score.

8. Poetry corner. A return to happy poetry. By the way, you are incredibly blessed to be sitting in this little corner of the world at UT eating pie and ice cream and watching hydrogen turkeys explode and heading home for the holidays soon. Thanksgiving is a good time for remembering this perspective. Travel safely and study hard (or hardly study, your call). Finals are almost upon us.

And now, a little Thanksgiving ditty:



A turkey is a funny bird,
Its head goes wobble, wobble,
All it knows is just one word,
"Gobble, gobble, gobble."

**And now, another great Thanksgiving tradition—
time to explode some Hydrogen Balloon Turkeys**

