Welcome!

Welcome to the self-paced online version of Mathematical Thinking (Math 193) at St. Cloud State University!

Before I start in on the details of the course, I want to (perhaps once again) suggest that you may wish to take the "traditional" version of this course on campus. My experience suggests that for many people it is more difficult to succeed in the online version of this course than the on campus version. This should not be a surprise. On campus, you get interactive lectures and are (in theory) much more motivated to stay on pace to finish. I do find, however, that students who do succeed in the online course do exceptionally well since they really master the material (through the extra work it requires). As a general rule, those students that stick to the suggested schedule succeed and those that do not, well…don’t let that be you.

A good analogy is to liken taking this course to the process of buying a house.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buying a house</th>
<th>Succeeding in this course</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location, location, location!</td>
<td>Motivation, Motivation, Motivation!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prerequisites: Good credit and down payment</td>
<td>Prerequisites: Mathematical skills from high school algebra and geometry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Big commitment required (money)</td>
<td>Big commitment required (time)</td>
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I appreciate any feedback you are willing to send. Either email me within D2L (Desire2Learn) or contact me at drbuske@stcloudstate.edu. I am open to change and much of what you see in the current course can be attributed to past student suggestions.

Also remember that I want to help! One of the reasons an online math course can work is that you can get quick feedback from me when you have difficulties. Whether it is a technical problem or a mathematical problem, there are some things a computer simply cannot do! I strongly recommend you post to the “Discussion List” in D2L. It is likely that a fellow student knows the answer and can beat me to the punch!

Getting Started – Day 1

To get started in this course, you will need to acquire the required textbook and a scientific calculator. Information regarding these can be found on the course syllabus. In fact, reading the course syllabus is the second item of business you will find on “Day 1 (Getting Started)” of the course “Checklist” (reading this letter is the first item).

I have designed the course to have you finish in 45 days. That is 45 academic days. During a normal semester, each week consists of roughly three academic days (just as if you were on campus taking the class in person!). The flexible schedule allows you to do most of your work on weekdays, weekday evenings, or weekends – whatever works for you. Under “Checklists” on D2L you will find a specific list of tasks (both required and
optional) to complete on each of these days. **When you complete each task, check it off and save it so that both you and I can track your progress.**

The exams are each written for a pair of chapters: 2 and 9, 10 and mini-excursion 3, 11 and 15, and 13 and 16. They each have two parts. For example, Exam 2a and 2b make up Exam 2 which covers chapter 10 and mini-excursion 3. **You may take each “part” of an exam separately if you wish. Some students find that less stressful.** This is encouraged if you live close to campus with easy access to the Continuing Studies testing center. Many students find chapters 9, 10, and 15 to be more difficult than the others (plan to spend a bit more time preparing for these!).

The 45-day plan suggests when I would like you to take your quizzes and exams. **Only the exams will have deadlines**, but the quizzes should (obviously) be taken prior to taking the exams. One purpose of the quizzes is to better prepare you for the exams.

The biggest obstacle to your success will be your self-motivation! So do not to fall behind (though you may certainly work ahead!). Comments from previous semesters indicate that many in the course think it should not be self-paced since it is too easy to fall behind. While I continue to believe that the course needs to be somewhat flexible (since if you are taking this course, it is likely that your life is such that you need the flexibility), I have put these exam deadlines in the course to achieve greater success from students. So far, that approach has worked very well.

Note: If you plan on using the testing center at our Continuing Studies office, please schedule your proctored exams at least 24 hours in advance so that they have a space open for you. In fact, scheduling your exams 24 hours in advance is a courtesy you should provide for all proctors whether they be at SCSU or not.

**General Structure of Day 2 – Day 45:**

The first day of a new topic **begins with reading a new chapter 1 or 2 times** noting all important terms. While reading each chapter in a math text, you should proceed to **work through the examples given in the text on your own.**

After your initial reading, many days require that you view a video illustrating what I hope are key examples. If you have trouble accessing these, please let me know. Student feedback suggests that they can be very helpful (perhaps even indispensable).

On the first few days of study for each topic a list of problems in the back of the chapter is recommended. Take this seriously! **This is the best thing you can do to prepare yourself for the exams.** **WARNING:** Some problems in the text that are not on this list (Running exercises for example) are quite difficult!**

**If you get stuck on any of the suggested problems (or on the later practice quizzes), post a note to the discussion list. Someone, perhaps myself, will probably respond shortly. One of the best things you can do in this class is post to the discussion. It won’t**
make you feel as if you are “all alone” in conquering the material in this class! You should also note that I have posted both hints and full solutions to the odd problems from textbook on D2L under Content (the back of the book also has brief answers to odd problems; they are just not worked out for you). I also post solutions to even numbered problems (past feedback suggests this would be helpful). Use the hints wisely…TRY each problem before resorting to a hint. **Resort to a hint before resorting to the answer.**

From time to time I will offer an Adobe Connect session (virtual office hours) in which I can answer questions you have. This software allows you to see me via a webcam, allows you to hear me talk, allows you to either talk or chat back, and allows us to write on a whiteboard or on other documents. Even if you cannot attend, I have some previously recorded sessions available.

At the end of the study of each topic is a Walking Quiz and a Jogging Quiz for that particular chapter. **Questions on the Walking Quiz are similar to problems assigned from the text.** I need to (re-)grade your responses by hand so be patient for a response (1 or 2 days maximum, usually much faster). **Remember, the computer doesn't do a great job in auto-grading these so I manually re-grade quiz questions.**

Throughout your study of a particular topic, I recommend you try one of the many optional Practice Quizzes & Exams.

As listed on the checklist, a few days prior to taking an exam you will need to make arrangements with your proctor. The proctor will need to enter a password in D2L in order for you to take the exam. The final exam will also require a password. **Contact Continuing Studies (ecs@stcloudstate.edu, 308-3081) if you need help arranging a proctor. Remember to give your proctor at least 24 hours notice before taking a proctored exam.**

**Monitoring Your Progress:**

You can monitor your progress in the course using “Grades” in D2L. **Remember, falling behind is a recipe for failure.** My experience tells me those following the timeline (or even moving slightly faster than the timeline) tend to have the most success. And success is what both of us want.

Finally, have a fun time. I hope you will find the material interesting. I certainly do.