Instructor: Kevin Woods, King 220B, Kevin.Woods@oberlin.edu. Call me Kevin!

Class: MWF 1:30-2:20pm, King 239.

Office Hours:
MWF 9:20-9:50am & 11-11:30am, TTh 3:30-5pm. Also, feel free to stop by any time my door is open (but be understanding if I say I am too busy), or you can make an appointment via email.

Textbook:
None! Probability is really a course in problem solving. There are not a huge number of definitions and theorems, so this is material that is best learned by doing problems. I will give you handouts with problems that we will work, plus basic definitions, etc. I do like the free book available at www.probabilitycourse.com. You do not need to read this, but you are welcome to. I will notate on the problem sheets what sections we’re currently covering, and I suggest that you read it after we have covered the material.

Blackboard:
I will post homework, reading, other announcements, and grades on Blackboard.

Grading:
Written Homework (30%),
Presentations and Participation (20%),
Two Take-Home Midterms (17% each),
In-Class Final Exam (16%).

Written Homework (30%).
You will have a written assignment due pretty much every day of class. Generally Wednesday’s assignment (starting on the September 9) will be a standard problem set. Monday and Friday’s assignment will be a shorter one designed to get you ready to participate in class (writing up a solution that I may ask you to present). I’m looking for not only correct solutions, but clear ones too.

Presentations and class participation (20%).
Much of class-time will be spent on student presentations. You may be called on to present a solution to a problem that was assigned for that day. Or I may ask for volunteers to present a solution or to talk about how they started attacking a problem.

I have office hours MWF 9:20-9:50 & 11-11:30am, as well as other times: I would be happy to hear you give a practice presentation and then let you present that problem in class. I know this can be scary for many of you (it used to be scary for me too!), but it is valuable, and you will get better and more comfortable, I promise.
When one person is presenting, every student in the class has a responsibility. Ask yourself, “Is this presentation correct, and is it clear?” We are helping each other learn the material, at the same time as helping each other improve our presentation skills.

Two things go without saying (yet I’m saying them anyway). Firstly, all of this must take place in an atmosphere of respect and encouragement: we have to create an environment where it is ok to tell someone that you think they are wrong or unclear without offending them. Secondly, you cannot participate if you are not here and here on time. I understand that you may have to miss a class or two. Excessive absences or lateness will hurt this portion of your grade.

You will be learning most of the material solely by working problems and hearing presentations. Besides learning the material, there is another reason to follow the presentations carefully: I will always put at least one of these problems, word for word, on the midterms.

If you show up (on time) basically every day, work in groups well when instructed, and present adequately when requested, you will earn a B on this portion of your grade. To earn a higher grade, you should impress me by presenting harder problems, asking good questions in class, etc.

Take-home midterms (17% each).
Tentatively due Wednesday, October 7 and Wednesday, November 18. You will choose a continuous 48 hour period within the span of about 4 days in which to take the test. The exams will be designed to be doable in about 4 hours, but you’ll have the extra time to “sleep on it.” You will work alone and be able to use my handouts and your notes, but no other outside sources (e.g., no textbooks and no photocopies of someone else’s notes).

In-Class Final Exam (16%).
Friday, December 18, 7-9pm. The final exam will cover the entire course. It will be closed book, but you will be able to use something like an 8.5x11 sheet with notes.

Working, and working together:
You will get out of this class what you put in it (cliché, but especially true in this class). To me, this means doing the following day-to-day:

- Read the notes on the handouts carefully, so that you will be familiar with any definitions, etc.
- Attempting every problem before it is presented on the board (you will probably not solve every single one ahead of time, but the more work you put into that, the better problem solver you will become).
- Looking back at your notes after class and fixing them so that you have a careful solution to the problem that you will be able to comprehend later (say, exam time). To encourage this, some questions on the midterm exams will be problems that have been presented in class.
• Actively listening when someone is presenting. You should be asking yourself, “Is their presentation correct and clear?” If it isn’t, we should discuss it as a class afterwards.

Math goes much easier with someone else around to bounce ideas off of. I encourage you to work together on everything but the exams. I suggest that you take a minute at the end of class today to write down contact information for two other students:

Name: ______________________ Contact Information: _______________________

Name: ______________________ Contact Information: _______________________ 

Honor Code:
I encourage you to work together on everything except the exams. Written assignments must be in your own words, however. Work on the problem together, and then go back home and write up your solution. In particular, you should never look at someone else’s write-up before it is due.

Some of the problems presented in class will have solutions in the suggested textbook. I recommend only using the textbook for review, but if you do read a problem and solution beforehand, please do not turn in that problem or present it in class. You may not consult other textbooks or solution manuals.

Disabilities:
If you have a disability of any sort that may affect your performance in this class, please consult with me and with Jane Boomer in the Office of Disability Services. All requests for accommodation must go through that office.