

“Pathways to Contemporary Math”
by James Olsen

Math has never been my strong suit, in fact, for most of my time in education it has been anything but. I have struggled mightily trying to understand concepts that were at times extremely vague at best, and at others completely stupefying.

So you can imagine it was with some trepidation that I entered the Weber State University mathematics courses. I made it through 950 fairly successfully but was really concerned about what awaited me in 990. On the last day of class I was directed towards the 810 course as a possible alternative, given I only needed 1030 for my degree it seemed like a logical step. It is a decision that I am extremely glad to have made.

From day one Janette was a breath of fresh air, she made it clear that her rules were firm but she and this course were there to help us succeed. She made us feel welcome and gave us hope that we had a chance to succeed in math, something I hadn't really experienced before.

What I noticed right away was the approach was different, it wasn't just a bunch of esoteric concepts being thrown at us, and it was real world concepts that we could apply to the things that we did everyday. This made all the difference for me as I could see how each idea worked and began to understand just how much of what I do everyday involves math. The way the course was broken down was also a dramatic change than what I had been used to. The amount of group work, while initially a little off-putting turned out to be a great boon, we experienced stuff together and could cheer each other on, something I think far too few courses in the sciences and math do. Also the use of the focus problems to bring together everything we had done in a unit was equally impressive as it allowed the groups to really get into the meat of the math while at the same time exploring real world situations.

What I also really liked as the semester rolled on was the way each of the concepts from module to next built on one another, it made it so by the end of the semester it was easy to understand how to get to the next step in what we were supposed to do. For someone like me who needs to know how one concept is affected by another concept this was a real boon.

Recommending this class to fellow students is an easy thing to do, if you struggle with math and are wondering how you are going to make it through 990, 1010, let alone 1030, well then this is the class for you! It is a lot of hard work, but the end results are worth every moment.

A few tips for people taking this class:

- 1) Do all the homework, especially the book stuff that is where the meat of the course comes from.
- 2) Get involved in your groups, the more the merrier when it comes down to learning math.
- 3) TALK TO YOUR TEACHER! They don't bite, and are there to help you with the course.
- 4) Try to avoid the "Help me solve this" button in the online homework, keep at it until you get it right it will really benefit you in the long run
- 5) Show up to class, and be on time! There is a lot to go through and it goes very quickly!

As I said above I cannot recommend this course enough, and I hope others manage to have the same success that I did!