Class policies and grading system

There will be 3 hour tests in the course and weekly quizzes, and occasional collected homework. Each hour test is worth 100 points. Grades for quizzes and homework will be weighted at the end of the semester on a scale of 0 to 100. The final exam is three hours long and is worth 200 points.

A penalty is assessed for more than 4 absences; each subsequent absence counts for 1/9th of a letter grade, up to 9 absences. (By a "letter grade" is meant the difference between an A and a B+, a B+ and a B, etc.) Conversely, fewer than 4 absences mean that borderline cases can go up to the next letter grade, with perfect attendance counting for 1/3 of a letter grade.

Students who leave class early or arrive late risk getting counted absent. If you know you will have to leave early, let me know about it at or before the **beginning** of class.

Quizzes will be feature problems very similar to exercises either worked in class or assigned as practice problems.

Only simple calculators are needed for this course, and they will be needed only a small fraction of the time. Neither the hour tests nor quizzes nor the final exam will require their use, although they will save some time on a few problems. **Programmable calculators are not permitted for either quizzes or hour tests or the final exam**.

If you have a privacy concern about your scores on quizzes or tests, fold the papers lengthwise and put your name on the outside, and they will be handed back to you in the same way with your scores on the inside.

Years of experience have taught me that there is no perfect way to handle absences for tests and quizzes. The following system seems to be as good as any. **Please do not ask for exceptions from it!** If I were to grant them, we would merely be moving to another imperfect system, usually inferior to the one described below.

There are no make-up tests. If you are absent for a test, please give me a note explaining why, and **for you the questions on the final exam that correspond to the material covered by the test will be used to compute your grade for the test.** (Thus these questions are counted twice, but with different point values. For instance if the questions on the final exam that serve for your test grade have a total value of 50 points as far as the final exam is concerned, they will count double for the test grade.)

To get full credit for homework, you must hand it in at or before the beginning of the class for which it is due, or if you are late, when you come in. If you are absent for that class, you must either arrange to have the homework handed in by someone else for you, or you must hand it in yourself (for example, by putting it in my mailbox, or slipping it under the door of my office if I am not in) prior to the time it is due.

Half credit will be given for late homework that is handed in before the homework is returned to the rest of the class after it is graded. Once graded homework has been returned to the class, later homework will not be accepted.

I will drop the lowest quiz grade. If you are absent for a quiz, the 0 you would have gotten for the absence will be the score dropped. The grading scale on quizzes and hand-in homework, percentage-wise, will be at least this lenient:

Percentage
85 and up A
78 - 84 B+
70 - 77 B
63 - 69 C+
55 - 62 C
48 - 54 D+
40 - 47 D

The grading scale for the tests and final exam may be a bit higher than this, but not by much. Your grade is based on the total number of points you get, not simply the letter grades you got on various tests, etc. The following example, including two illustrative performances similar to two students' records in an earlier course, illustrates the method:

Cutoff Scores

Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Hw+quiz	Final exam	Total	Course grade
90 A	89 A	91 A	85 A	175 A	530	A
85 B+	84 B+	86 B+	78 B+	160 B+	493	B+
80 B	78 B	80 B	70 B	145 B	453	B
75 C+	74 C+	76 C+	63 C+	130 C+	418	C+
70 C	68 C	70 C	55 C	115 C	378	C
65 D+	64 D+	66 D+	48 D+	100 D+	343	D+
58 D	56 D	60 D	40 D	85 D	299	D

Student 1

Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Hw+quiz	Final exam	Total	Course grade
97 A	81 B	76 C+	88.6 A	136 C+	478.6	B

Student 2

Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Hw+quiz	Final exam	Total	Course grade
70 C	62 D	68 D+	33.1 F	119 C	352.1	D+

"Cutoff scores" for A, etc. are defined to be the lowest scores one could have received and still obtained an A, etc. on that particular item (test, homework score, final exam). As you can see, cutoff scores for each letter grade are totaled up at the end, and the student totals are matched with the respective totals to arrive at the course letter grade.