1. Basic Information

I am Dr. Kevin O’Bryant; my research is in number theory and combinatorics, and I do a fair amount of programming along the way. Numerical Analysis is a bit outside my wheelhouse, but not by much. Currently, my focus is on Padé approximation, which we will learn about in the 7th week of the course.

My office is in Building 1S, room 202. You can contact me rapidly by emailing kevin.obryant@csi.cuny.edu. My office has a phone, but I don’t answer it. I use Facebook, but will not be ‘Friends” with a current student. I encourage you to ‘Friend” me after grades have been posted, and those of you who are already ‘Friend”s with me will find that I have unfriended you for the duration of this class. I’m also a G+ user, and as I keep that very professional you are welcome to follow me. Or not. Sorry, that’s how this game plays out. If you will want a reference letter from me, strongly consider connecting with me either through G+ or Facebook, so that I will still remember who you are a year or two from now.

2. Textbook


There are very many editions of this book. Make sure you get the 9th edition. It was published in 2010, so there should be used copies around.

We will cover every section of Chapters 1, 2, 3, 8, 6, 7, 10, 9, in that order. If we cover each section in 1 lecture period, we would have 11 periods left over. These 11 periods will be sprinkled throughout the term as problem solving, review, and classes covering current events.
3. Structure of the class

There are a number of tasks (listed below) for which you can receive credit. With each task, which must be submitted in \( \text{\LaTeX} \), you will assign a difficulty (in the form of a real number) for that task. At the end of the course, I will normalize your “difficulties” to have mean 10 and standard deviation \( \sqrt{10} \); note that this normalization happens to your difficulty ratings individually, not as a class. For each task you completed you will receive the mean of the difficulties for that task, excluding your own and any outliers. Each task will therefore be worth 10 points on average.

Your letter grade at the end of the course will be at least as high as everyone’s who earned fewer points than you, and no higher than anyone’s who earned more points than you. If you get 1500 points, you will get an A-; 1300 points a B-; 1100 points a C; 900 points a D. These lines are guarantees: they may be adjusted to give the class a higher grade, but will not be adjusted to give lower ones.

Note, by the way, that the points you receive from a task depends on how difficult everyone else who did that task found it. If more people complete a task and found it easy, then the points you earned may become less than they were. In other words, once you get to 1500 points, you aren’t done. 1500 points today might not be 1500 points tomorrow.

There will be no midterm exams. The final exam, which will consist of 10 tasks, will be open book (our textbook only) and open note (only your solutions to tasks). I encourage you to set up a system for keeping track of your tasks.

If you attempt a task unsuccessfully, there is no penalty and no reward. I will tell you what was unacceptable, and you have the opportunity to fix it. When you attempt a task for the second (or more-th) time, you must also re-submit all earlier attempts with my written comments. You either get full credit for a task, or no credit. To count for your grade, all tasks must be completed on or before the day of the final exam.

Some tasks require you to use a \( \text{\LaTeX} \) template, available on our course website. The templates may be updated as the course progresses, so inform me if you have any suggestions. Also, try to use the most recent template available for your task.