

Academic Year 2025-2026
Syllabus
“Calculus”
CFU 12
Prof. Alfonso Sorrentino and Rafael L. Greenblatt

Course Description

One of the things we learned from the 20th century is that complex phenomena arising from social and life sciences cannot be deeply analyzed and understood unless we make use of the universal language of mathematics. This goes back to Galileo's intuition that universe can be written in mathematical symbols, a principle nowadays applied to human sciences as well as to natural ones. The purpose of this course is to introduce students to those basic notions in mathematics that are essential to describe, understand and analyze possibly different models of quantitative phenomena. Main concepts and tools of differential and integral calculus are taught in order that students become familiar with functions of real variables, notions of growth, limits, rate of change, optimization, time evolution, all of them being necessary to approach mathematical models in applied sciences as well as to pursue further studies in probability and statistics. Students are expected to learn the main concepts, to practice with basic tools of calculus and to understand the use of mathematical language in applied models of real life.

Teaching Method

The course is essentially taught in the traditional way through classroom lectures, where theory and practice become intrinsically linked. Additional tutorials will be devoted to extra practice, based on exercises from the used textbook as well as from previous exams.

Schedule of Topics

Topic 1	Real numbers, elementary functions and graphs
Topic 2	Sequences and limits
Topic 3	Exponentials and logarithms, applications.
Topic 4	Derivatives: rules and applications, rate of change in applied models
Topic 5	Optimization: maxima and minima, convexity, curve sketching
Topic 6	Integration: areas, antiderivatives, Fundamental Theorem of Calculus
Topic 7	Differential equations and growth models: equilibrium points, stability
Topic 8	Multivariable calculus: partial derivatives, optimization.

Textbook and Materials

Laurence D. Hoffmann, Gerald L. Bradley, Dave Sobecki, Michael Price: *Applied Calculus for Business, Economics, and the Social and Life Sciences, Expanded Edition*, ed. Mc Graw-Hill, 2012-2013.

Further readings:

Not mandatory - Claudia Neheuser: *Calculus for biology and medicine*, 3rd ed. Pearson International, 2011.

(especially devoted to models in biology and life sciences, it may complement the main textbook on topics like discrete and continuous time growth models, differential equations)

Pre-requisites: Students are required to have adequate knowledge and practice of the mathematics which is taught in standard high school programs in Italy. This includes, in particular: elementary rules of computation involving numbers, fractions and polynomials, representation of points in the plane through Cartesian coordinates, basic notions concerning lines and parabolas and their representation in the plane, methods of resolution of first and second order equations and inequalities, definition and basic properties of logarithms, exponentials and trigonometric functions. All the arguments in the above list are included among the topics of the math Pre-courses so that all students can go through a quick review of those notions while attending the Pre-courses. However, a quick review may be not enough for all students who have a weak - or even very weak - background in mathematics. In this case, students are strongly encouraged to work hard even before the beginning of Pre-courses in order to catch up with the expected level. Any school textbook can be used for reviewing the above mentioned topics.

Assessment

Two mid-term written examinations are given, roughly corresponding to Topics 1-5 and 6-8 respectively, although variations may occur according to the updated lesson program. These exams will consist of multiple-choice questions.

At the end of the lecture period, a final written examination covering Topics 1 to 8 is given. The final written exam consists of two parts. The first part requires students to answer a set of multiple-choice questions, which will account for 60% of the final grade. The second part requires them to solve exercises through detailed written explanations containing all necessary steps and computations, which will account for up to 40% of the final grade. Achieving a sufficient score on both parts is necessary to pass the exam. Students who successfully pass the midterms will be exempt from taking the multiple-choice part of the final. Attendance at the final is compulsory to pass the exam.

The mid-term exam is open to both attending and non-attending students.

Students who fail or reject the grade of the final examination will need to take a new complete examination on different exam dates and forfeit their previous mid-term results. Students who do not attend the first final examination can retake it without forfeiting their mid-term results in the second exam of the winter session. Students who retake the exam in the September session must forfeit any results from the winter session and take a new complete examination.

Office hours: by appointment.

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NOTE: If you are an Erasmus or a non Global Governance student who would like to attend one or more courses in the Global Governance program, please be aware that, before enrolling in the course, you should have read the code of conduct and the procedural rules characterizing our program. We assume that, if you enroll in the course, you have read and accepted all Global Governance values and rules. Notice that attendance is expected from the very first lesson and you need to attend at least 80% of the course to be considered an attending student.

Description of the methods and criteria for testing learning

The examination assesses the student's overall preparation, ability to integrate the knowledge of the different parts of the program, consequentiality of reasoning, analytical ability and clarity of presentation, in accordance with the Dublin descriptors (1. knowledge and understanding; 2. applying knowledge and understanding; 3. making judgements; 4. learning skills; 5. communication skills).

The examination will be graded according to the following criteria:

Unsuitable: important deficiencies and/or inaccuracies in the knowledge and understanding of the topics; the topics are exposed in an incoherent manner and with inappropriate language.

18-20: barely sufficient knowledge and understanding of most of the topics, with some missing items; sufficient capacity for analysis; the topics are sometimes exposed in an inconsistent manner and with inappropriate/technical language;

21-23: basic knowledge and understanding of most of the topics; ability to analyze and synthesize correctly with sufficiently coherent logical argumentation, with possibly some inaccuracy in the technical language.

24-26: good knowledge and understanding of most of the topics; good analytical and synthetic skills with rigorously expressed arguments, though with possibly a few inaccuracies in the technical language.

27-29: complete knowledge and understanding of the topics; good capacity for analysis and synthesis. Arguments presented in a rigorous manner and with appropriate/technical language, with only minor inaccuracies.

30-30L: very good level of knowledge and thorough understanding of topics. Excellent analytical and synthetic skills and independent judgement. Arguments expressed in an original manner and in appropriate technical language.
