

## APM120 advice/FAQ

- [HW-00](#) reviews linear algebra material you need to master as a prerequisite. It gives you a clear idea of whether you can take the course and is therefore necessarily long. It is not meant to deter you from taking the course, and the next HW will be shorter. “*so please, for the love of Larry Bacow, start it early*” and come for help!
- The [course notes](#) are dynamic and keep changing to make sure they are clear/updated/consistent with the lectures and to correct errors. To make sure you have access to the most up-to-date version, the notes are provided as a non-downloadable dropbox link. Please report any mistakes/unclear explanations!
- [Hand calculations on HW](#): the teaching of this course is based on the belief that the only way to understand big-data methods is to do explicit calculations with small data sets. Calculations in HW may be done using Matlab/python **unless you are told explicitly to use hand calculations**. If you are concerned about not understanding what is allowed and that this may affect your HW grade — come and seek help.
- [Hand calculations on quizzes and the final](#): are similar to HW problems that **explicitly require hand calculations**.
- [Sections](#): APM120 has a special section format — weekly HW help sessions that help you understand the course material and solve HW problems. The help session allows more direct interaction with TAs & with other students than a lecture-style section. There are also plenty of office hours during the week for additional help.
- [Course grading](#): Grades are not curved, and we are interested in the success of all students. Class averages, or how you are doing relative to other students, are therefore irrelevant. The distribution of past final course grades indicates that the vast majority of students do very well, but that still **requires consistent hard work**.

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- **Coding:** students taking this course have a wide range of coding experiences. If you have significant experience, you may get more from the class by writing your own code. Otherwise, use the starter codes given in Sources folder linked from Canvas and do your best to understand the code rather than just modify a line and hope for the best. Coding may initially be frustrating and confusing, so come seek help.
- **Lecture speed:** similarly, students come to this course with a wide range of math preparations. We ask for your feedback a couple of weeks into the semester and adjust as needed. You may still find the lectures going too slow or too fast. Please use extra credit HW problems to challenge yourself if you are in the first category and come to office hours for help if you find the material challenging. We strive to make the course experience good for all students regardless of their preparation.
- **Feedback on your HW and quiz work:** course assignments are graded/returned *promptly*. See Gradescope rubrics for an explanation of what you may have missed, and come to office hours for further help.
- **Practice exam solutions** are meant to allow you to verify your answers; they do not contain all steps and are not meant to teach you how to solve these problems. For that, see course notes and review problems.
- **Final exam vs. a final project:** while a final project would have allowed students to get deeper into one or two of the methods covered in the course, it does not provide the overall review that the quizzes and final exam do. The two monthly quizzes allow you to review the material covered and reduce the study load at the end of the term. Quiz/ exam questions follow closely those given in HW to minimize any uncertainty/stress.