When I think back on all the crap I learned in high school, it’s a wonder I can think at all.

Paul Simon

This is a 5-unit course in elementary algebra. The required prerequisites are either a grade of “C” or better in MATH 200 or appropriate placement test score. Course credit is applicable toward the Associate Degree. Classes meet daily, Monday through Thursday. This course represents a time commitment of approximately fifteen hours per week.

Materials
The required text is Introductory Algebra, third edition (2004), by Kaseberg, Brooks/Cole. The optional text is the accompanying student solutions manual. I strongly recommend having a scientific calculator. Cell phone calculators are not allowed. The Foothill College Mathematics Department currently does not permit the use of calculators capable of symbolic manipulation (e.g., TI-89, TI-92, and HP-48) during evaluation activities. Graph paper is helpful.

Instructor
Patrick Morriss; office 4110; phone & voicemail 650.949.7548; email morrisspatrick@foothill.edu;
Regular office hours: Monday 3:00 – 4:00pm 4215 (Math Center)
Tuesday 8:45 – 9:50am 4110
Wednesday 8:45 – 9:50am 4110
Thursday 12:20 – 1:20pm 4110
For what they're worth, you can find anonymous comments about me at http://www.ratemyprofessors.com/ShowRatings.jsp?tid=167895.

Academic Integrity
Read the Foothill College Academic Honor Code, available at http://www.foothill.fhda.edu/services/honor.html. This class will operate under the provisions of that code, which I consider more important than any mathematics. Be sure you're aware of your rights and responsibilities.

Attendance and Makeup Work
Attendance is recommended but not required, but excessive absences are likely to make all your effort in this course a waste of time. Please let me know if you must miss a class. I may drop a student from the class if the student 1) misses more than two consecutive class meetings, 2) misses more than five class meetings during the quarter, or 3) misses an exam. You are responsible for the material covered in class if you are absent for any reason. There will be no opportunity to make up missed assessment activities. Exams are scheduled on your course calendar; check for conflicts with religious holidays or athletic events and notify me this week. Arriving late is rude.

Pagers, Cell Phones, PDAs, Wireless Internet Connections
Turn off and put away all electronic communication devices. If you decide to take a call during class, I'll probably ask you to take the rest of the day off.

Grades
Your grade depends entirely on your performance on in-class activities. All assessment activities will be announced in advance, no scores will be dropped, and there will be no opportunity for extra credit. There will be frequent short tests, some of which allow for collaboration, two midterm exams, and a comprehensive final exam. Here's the breakdown for a typical academic term:

One office visit (6 points), approximately twenty-five short tests (6 points each), two unit exams (approximately 70 points each) and a comprehensive final exam (120 points). The point total for the entire course is approximately 400.

Before computing each grade, I apply a seven-step process that begins with the percent correct, on this scale:
At least 90% = A, below 90% but at least 82% = B, below 82% but at least 75% = C, below 75% but at least 60% = D,
below 60% = F. I also consider the relative difficulty of each assessment activity, the performance of the class as a whole,
natural grade breaks in the score distribution, conditions in the room when the test took place, my own teaching
performance, and the standard error of measurement. This last item is a statistical measure of test reliability; using it
reduces your chance of receiving a lower grade than you deserve. My primary objective is to record a grade for you that
is as fair and accurate as I can make it, based on the written evidence you provide.

Office Visit
I ask each student to visit me during regular office hours before the first scheduled exam.
Short Tests and Unit Exams
Test items measure progress against the course outcomes. Test item formats vary, including forms seen in classwork and homework, with possibly some novel forms. Tests may also contain problems requiring deeper thought and some writing in addition to computation. These items address issues raised either in class or in the textbook or both. I often ask you to state a conclusion in a complete sentence that demonstrates your understanding of the question as well as your solution. Some short tests allow for collaboration, but each student is required to prepare his or her own solution paper.

Problem Sets
To learn math, you must do math. I can’t be clearer about this. One approach that many successful students have taken is to read the section and try at least some of the homework problems before the class discussion on those topics. I have compiled a list of problems, but you should consider these to be suggestions rather than assignments, as they are neither collected nor graded. I encourage you to look through all the exercises on the topics we discuss. If you see a problem that looks interesting, by all means attempt to solve it, and ask about it either in class or during an office hour.

Final Exam and Quarter Grades
Our final exam will be comprehensive. It will be held at the time and place scheduled and published by the college. Make a note of it. Cancel your other plans for that time. If you are unable to take the final exam at the scheduled time, please drop this class today and try it again another time. Do not ask me to take the final exam at a time outside the schedule unless you experience an emergency during finals week. Students not taking the final exam for any reason will receive a score of zero for the exam, and I’ll compute their quarter grade accordingly. Students are responsible for verifying their grades within 30 days of the final exam. It may not be possible to correct any grading error after that time.

Additional Assistance
Should you find yourself in need of additional assistance, you’re in luck (sort of, I guess). Foothill College provides so many resources to help you succeed academically that it’s hard to list them all. Don’t hesitate to take advantage of these:

1) Your classmates. Many students find informal study partnerships and groups to be most helpful in learning math. I recommend that you study with others in this class. The effort to meet someone in class is worthwhile.
2) Me. If you paid your fees, you own me during my regular office hours (first come, first served). I’ll give you as much direction and assistance as I can, and refer you to additional resources as needed.
3) The Math Center (room 4215) is staffed with instructors and professionals tutors who provide math help for any student who drops in. The hours for the new term will be set soon. Opens the first Wednesday of the quarter.
4) Pass the Torch is a structured program to match students in need of academic assistance with peers in any subject. Regular meetings are required. If you’re interested in being part of this program, let me know.
5) The Tutorial Center provides peer assistance in any subject on a drop-in basis.
6) Puente is a campus program to help you connect with other students and get academic support. Contact Lety Serna (office 1946, phone 650.949.7059). Mfumo is another program with similar goals.
7) Students eligible for financial aid can obtain tutoring and other services through EOPS (call 650.949.7207).
8) Any student with a documentable disability who needs academic accommodations should contact Margo Dobbins in room 5801 (call 650.949.7038), and also please let me know.
9) When learning math, some students find it helpful to listen to KFJC 89.7 FM, your source for sound.

The key to being able to take advantage of any of these services is to be quick to recognize your need for assistance. It is always better to seek help sooner rather than later. Unlike fine wine, academic problems do NOT improve with age.

How to Succeed in this Class
Show up. On time. Pay attention. Do your homework. Work with a partner. Ask questions. (This is news to you?)