Math 221 First Class Question Responses

Here are my responses to the questions that you wrote down on the handout given on the first day of class.

1. What is your favorite thing about Madison?
   It’s a very comfortable small city and I like how bike-friendly it is here.

2. When will you have your office hours?
   See my course page for the most recent office hours.

3. What do you hope to accomplish after grad school?
   I hope to get a job, possibly as a professor.

4. What made you move here from New York?
   UW-Madison was the best graduate school I got into.

5. How difficult will the course be for those who have never taken calculus?
   As long as you have a good background in pre-calc basics, it should be no big deal. I don’t think that having seen calculus before will give you much of an advantage.

6. Where in New York are you from?
   I was born in Manhattan and I’ve lived in a variety of places along the east coast while growing up, but for the past 8 years or so my family has resided in Albany, NY.

7. How far behind would I get if I have to miss one day for work?
   Probably not so far behind, as long as you read the appropriate sections in the book and keep up with the homework.

8. Do you like calculus?
   I really enjoy doing tricky advanced calculus problems.

9. What is your spirit animal?
   My spirit animal is this cat.

10. What is your favorite genre of music or band?
    Some things I’ve been enjoying recently are J.S. Bach, Philip Glass, and Caspian.

11. What nationality are you?
    Since I look rather ethically ambiguous, people often ask this question. I am born and raised in the United States, so my nationality is American. Similarly, my father is American of French and German ancestry. However, my mother is fully Japanese and was born and raised in Japan.

12. How much time are you willing to take to see that every student is successful in your class?
    I like to see my students do well, so I do my best to provide the resources that students need to learn to the fullest of their ability. However, it is up to students to make use of these resources. Part of being a student is learning how to digest information on your own. I don’t have the time or the energy to spoon-feed students who won’t put in work.

13. If you only have five years left to live (from now on), what are three things you would hope to accomplish?
    A 650 lbs deadlift, a 500 lbs squat, and a 315 bench.
14. What are good strategies for studying mathematics?
   Don’t just read it; fight it.

15. What is your favorite food?
   For breakfast I like hot rice with natto (Japanese fermented soybeans). Otherwise, I really enjoy leafy green vegetables.

16. What do you plan to do with a Ph. D. in math?
   Take over the world.

17. What made you come to Madison?
   Mostly the fact that the graduate program here is very strong.

18. Why did you choose to study mathematics?
   Math is really hard, and you need to do hard things if you want to grow as a person. Doing math improves my ability to think clearly and to solve problems.

19. Why did you want to go to grad school here?
   The program is very strong and prestigious.

20. Is Chaumont, your last name, French?
   Yep, I even have a chateau in France (just kidding).

21. What’s New York like?
   Weather-wise it’s not so different from here. But people-wise it’s quite a different place. I really like how diverse it is.

22. What is your favorite book?
   This is a great question. Probably the Brothers Karamazov, but I’m a big fan of Haruki Murakami’s works.

23. How much trig will be involved this semester?
   You should know what the basic trig functions are and how they relate to the unit circle (basically SOH-CAH-TOA). I don’t think it will be necessary to know very many trigonometric identities.

24. Who’s gonna win the Superbowl?
   The Seahawks.

25. Do you speak French?
   Unfortunately I do not.

26. What suggestions would you make in order for students to successfully comprehend and pass this class?
   Try not to think of calculus as just a bunch of disjoint facts or techniques to memorize. Everything you learn builds upon previous knowledge, so if you can build the mental framework to put the facts into context you’ll have a much easier time learning and remembering things.

27. Do you have any tips or tricks to help me do well in this class? I know calculus is very difficult and it is sometimes hard to balance our time.
   Once a week (maybe a Sunday morning) spend 30 minutes to an hour going over the concepts and techniques the class covered in the past week. Don’t just read over your notes or the textbook, pretend you are explaining the material to a friend. It helps to do this out loud.

28. Is this your first time leading discussion for 221?
   Nope. I was a TA for 221 my first semester as a graduate student.
29. When you were a freshman in California, what did you think of the dormlife?

My dorms were fantastic. After my first year I always had a spacious single in a suite with a common room, and during my senior year I lived in a newly-built, super-fancy dorm with full sized beds. Living in the California sunshine was great.