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Left: Alyssa Rands is eager to learn about polynomials in Math 111. YouTube videos and other Internet media create a new learning environment in a new style of teaching for the class. Right: Rhonda Hull, Clackamas Community College math instructor, demonstrates the use of a graphing calculator with an overhead projector.

YouTube class creates sum worshippers

By Joshua Dillen
Associate News Editor

Some students would rather poke out their eyes than endure the lecture portion of a college algebra class. The standard learning environment in this class may be the reason it's one of the most hated and feared classes at community colleges. The boring stream of math rules and graphs that govern functions and lines gets easily replaced by the more enjoyable thoughts in a student's head. Who wouldn't find it hard to follow and actually retain enough of the information to pass the course?

Clackamas Community College's math department has been changing the way Math 111 is taught, to hopefully increase the pass rate of this required course for many transfer students. Rhonda Hull, math instructor, has helped to design a new and different approach to teaching this difficult part of the math curriculum. During her sabbatical two years ago, she

worked closely with Carrie Kyser, math department chair, to develop and create an engaging and fun learning environment to make the class more enjoyable and fun.

Hull seems to be almost exuberant when describing how the math paradigm has changed in her class. "We really talk about the math, and we really DO the math in class. I don't just give the students one long boring lecture and then hope students ask questions about what they don't understand," she said.

The result of the project led to the development of a hybrid class that utilizes the best of both Internet learning and real classroom dynamics. Gone are the expensive textbook and long boring lectures. The interactive "e-book" used is a virtual textbook accessed through the course's Moodle page to be printed off as the term progresses. This virtual textbook is an internet gateway to lessons and pertinent math links which include YouTube videos and a plethora of other videos and sites that

cater to a visual learning style.

Lectures have been replaced with groups of like scoring students that work together to complete exercises and work on developing skills rather than listening to the drone



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of a lecture. The same groups work together on pre-exams (a longer version of each actual midterm/final) during the class to ensure they are even more prepared for the real test.

"There is a post quiz online that must be completed 24 hours after each in class lesson. Research has shown this type of repetition helps students retain what they have learned" said Hull.

Kyser described that they use social media to dial into the way students build math skills. Most would not associate polynomials and functions with YouTube, but that is precisely what this class does. A familiar way of interacting socially in today's world may be key to teaching math.

"People go to YouTube and the Internet to view music video clips and all kinds of popular videos," she said. "We're using a vehicle that is typically used for recreational purposes to help us teach a math class," said Kyser.

Kyser has taught the same class and believes her students enjoyed the new method of learning. She also made it clear she had tremendous fun teaching the course and even sometimes had to kick students out of class when it was over.

Alyssa Rands is pursuing

her transfer degree and really enjoys the class. She intends to work in the fashion industry. She expressed that it was a lot of work, but she feels she has actually learned about math, rather than just retaining information.

"I like that a lot of learning is accomplished on your own," said Rands. "It requires you to fully understand the concepts, rather than just absorbing information in the classroom then exuding it back out onto the test."

Kevin Douglas, student and volunteer at the information desk in Streeter, took the new class last year after not completing the traditional college algebra course. He really feels the new type of learning setting helped him to succeed the second time.

"The type of lessons and all the different links really helped me to get it. All the work made it easier to pass the tests," said Douglas. "The course does an outstanding job of teaching you the material and keeping you on track."

RULES: Follow them and share the road

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Rule of the road No. 2: Let people merge!

Now this is the one thing that makes my blood boil on the road: when you need to

get right to make an exit and nobody will touch their brakes or let off their accelerator long enough for you to slide into the lane and to your exit without trouble. What is even worse are people who close the space

between them and the car in front of them to keep people from merging onto the highway at on ramps or to get to exits. Are you so pathetic that your sense of self-worth can be challenged by letting someone pull in front of you? Everyone is going the same direction and if it weren't for people who close the gap when it is most important, we could all be going a higher speed.

Rule of the road No. 3: Don't suddenly speed up because traffic has cleared up a little.

Traffic is stop and go for a mile or so, but suddenly it breaks up and starts to flow a little only to be stop and go

again another exit down. Do you know why this is? It is because you can't keep a pace. You feel the need to catch up with the traffic and make it worse. If traffic is bad and suddenly you are lucky enough to be going 30 mph, don't take that moment to speed up more and more because all you do is catch up to traffic. Use your little brain for a change. Look ahead. If traffic is still bad half a mile ahead of you, there is no reason to catch it. Split the difference. Traffic is going slow ahead of you, don't go 60 mph and catch them in 45 seconds. Try going 30 mph, giving traffic a chance to clear up on its own. The less you hit

your brakes, the better traffic will be.

More than anything just try not to be a stupid child; remember that sharing is caring. Take the higher road. If someone is tailgating you, let them pass. If the person in front of you is going the speed limit; just be happy they aren't going slower. Give yourself time to get places without having to speed, but if you get the chance to speed do it responsibly. There is never a reason to be going 15 mph over the limit try 5 mph. Go with the flow. You might find that if you are just not a total dick on the road, it will turn out to be a nicer place for everyone.

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