

History of Mathematics — First Seminar

This seminar is mostly a “get-to-know-you” session. Please read the short handout (*The Mathematical Experience*, pp. 6-12) and prepare answers to each of the questions below. You won’t be handing them in, but we’ll be discussing your answers during the seminar. Roughly one paragraph each should be fine, and you don’t need to write them up formally — just enough so you can talk coherently during the seminar!

1. *Your mathematical autobiography*: (feel free to answer as fully or sparsely as you like) What has been your general “relationship” with math in your education? What aspects do you like/dislike? Which experiences have been especially easy/difficult? If you wish, share a memory of a math teacher that “sticks out” in your mind, for good or bad.
2. What do you think mathematics is? Is it primarily a tool for use in daily life, a tool for the sciences and business world, or a way of thinking about the world? Is it a science or an art, or neither? How (and how much) have you used mathematics outside the classroom?
3. The first section of the handout talks about “proof” and “deductive” mathematics. Did you have much exposure to this in your education? Do you think you could recognize a mathematical “proof”?
4. What particularly caught your eye in the handout as surprising, interesting, or different from your current understanding? Are any issues mentioned that you would like to have raised in the course?
5. Which of the cultures mentioned in the handout particularly interest you?
6. What are your goals for this course (besides passing); i.e., what sorts of questions would you like to feel you have an answer to by the end of May?