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Unleashing Enthusiasm: Teaching the History of Mathematics

Undergraduate courses in the history of mathematics are becoming more popular all over Canada and the US, as mathematics educators see the need to show their students the connections between human creativity and the discipline. Student response to our first offering of a course in the history of mathematics surprised everyone involved. The students' enthusiasm, curiosity, hard work and creativity made for a highly memorable semester—and create hope for the future, as many of these students plan to teach mathematics themselves. Our course is designed for students with considerable background in mathematics: could more people be encouraged to get involved in mathematics through the offering of history of mathematics courses at lower levels? Which successful elements of our course might work in such courses?