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Mathematics for the Liberal Arts

Mathematics did not emerge *ex nihilo*. It is a human endeavour that is motivated either by need (utility) or beauty (aesthetics). Awareness of mathematics as such will help to make it more meaningful and accessible to everyone in general, but to Liberal Arts students in particular. As such, we have developed two courses at SFU (Educ 211, Educ 212) that are specifically designed to increase the mathematical literacy, quantitative reasoning, and deductive argumentation of Liberal Arts students. In these courses, mathematics is presented as a meaningful and accessible human activity situated in relevant historical and cultural contexts. These courses focus on the aesthetics and utility of mathematical experience, emphasising the human experience of learning and doing mathematics. Though mathematical topics comprise the course content, the approach is deliberately and consciously pedagogical in orientation, drawing on knowledge and practices from education. Students focus on problem solving, participatory investigations and collaborative projects, rather than applying the standard lecture/tutorial format typical of most undergraduate mathematics courses.