

Department of Mathematical Sciences Colloquium

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WHAT IS MATHEMATICS? AN INTRODUCTION TO MATHEMATICAL PHILOSOPHY

Mathematics, with its careful emphasis on rigor and proof, is deemed one of the most certain and unquestionable subjects among the sciences. Yet, even with its proclaimed certainty, there is a fundamental question about mathematics that remains unanswered by mathematicians: What is mathematics? To the common person, mathematics is about numbers or shapes. To the mathematician, however, the question is not so easily answered.

As remarkable as it may seem, within the mathematical community, there is currently no consensus as to what the definition of mathematics should be. Mathematicians and philosophers alike, such as Plato, Russell, Frege, Hilbert, and Godel, have all wrestled with this question, without an answer unanimously accepted by the greater mathematical community. However, their pursuits of the answer to this fundamental question have lead to the development of several philosophies about mathematics. Among the topics to be discussed in this colloquium include Platonism, Constructivism, Formalism, Logicism.

**Friday, February 6, 2009 at 3 pm in Bell Hall 143
The University of Texas at El Paso**

Refreshments will be served in front of the colloquium room,
15 minutes before the start of the colloquium.

For further information, please contact Dr. Andrzej Pownuk, Bell Hall 201.

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