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How to Teach Your Own Liberal Mathematics Course

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Abstract / Synopsis

The article encourages Mathematics faculty members to design Mathematics courses by using their own interests and expertise in the world of their students. The author argues that any such course should follow these five principles: Draw on the interests of each individual student; go slowly enough so students have a sense of mastery; let students use the mathematics they already know; and let students choose topics they choose and then share their projects with the class. The author describes how she implements these principles in two of her own Liberal Arts courses: "Mathematics, Philosophy, and the 'Real World'" and "Mathematics and the Real World." The article includes examples of the materials used in these courses and an extensive bibliography. It also lists a set of actual student projects. The author concludes that courses designed according to its principles result in students who are more willing to do mathematics, and knowledgeable and enthusiastic about mathematics in the wider world.

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