How to Teach Your Own Liberal Arts 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 to link mathematics to the world of their students. The author argues that any such course should be guided by these five principles: Draw on the interests of each individual student; teach important mathematics; go slowly enough so students have a sense of mastery; encourage the students to use the mathematics they already know; and let students create projects on 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 in Many Cultures." The article includes examples of the materials used in these courses, and provides an extensive bibliography. It also lists a set of actual student projects from each course. It concludes that courses designed according to its principles result in students being able and willing to do mathematics, and knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the role mathematics plays in the wider world.

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