

Puzzled? NSC451

Time: F 1.30–3.20pm

Place: Sci217

Level: Introductory

Credits: 2, pass/fail

Instructor: Matt Ollis

Email: matt@marlboro.edu

Website: <http://cs.marlboro.edu/courses/spring2011/puzzled/home>

Blurb: This course will give students a chance to test and develop their puzzle-solving ingenuity. We'll attack a series of puzzles, going from Lewis Carroll's logic problems via the classic "recreational math" puzzles of Lucas, Loyd and Dudeney to modern crazes such as the sudoku.

While my not-very-hidden agenda is to include some mathematical aspects this is far from the sole aim of the course. Expect a variety of completely non-mathematical puzzles. Similarly, don't expect this course to do much towards building general mathematical competency; if this is your aim you will probably be better off in *Topics in Algebra*, *Trigonometry and Pre-Calculus* or *Statistics* this semester. What I hope you will gain is a greater appreciation of what mathematical thinking entails and the pleasure to be had from a sharp mathematical insight.

Grading: This is a pass/fail course. You will earn a pass by being sufficiently engaged with the material. At a bare minimum this means attending class sessions (if you have to miss a session then let me know as soon as possible, preferably in advance; I'll assign some make-up work, usually a write-up of one or more puzzles of an appropriate type for that session), participating in class (you'll be expected to present solutions and/or problems occasionally and in the week(s) immediately after Spring Break to give a presentation on a connection between puzzles and some area of academic inquiry—more details closer to the time) and keeping a puzzle journal for occasional submission.

What now: Do some puzzles! *Puzzle Set 1: A Miscellany* is available on the website (or, if you are reading this in the intro class, right here). Try some of these before class tomorrow. You are not expected to completely solve them all! Also, come to class prepared to describe your favourite styles of puzzle.

Academic Integrity: You are expected to be aware of the college's policy on academic integrity and to abide by it. It can be found on the college website, and is linked from the course website. Please come and talk to me if anything is unclear.