

First Year Graduate Student Seminar

August 29, 2020 - ZOOM

Today:

Goals of the FYGSS; program information; applying to fellowships

Next meeting:

Sept. 2: David Manuel will talk about grading and help session assignments

Outline

- Goals of the FYGSS
- Additional Seminars
- Grading and help session assignments
- Applying for Fellowships
- Language Requirements
- Annual Review
- Feedback
- Calendar for the Semester

This talk will be available at the following web site:

<http://www.math.tamu.edu/~bonito>

Goal of the FYGSS

- Give first-year students an overview of the department and information that will help them choose a research topic and advisor.
- Address common questions associated with graduate study in mathematics.
- Give students information about the mathematics profession.
- Give first-year students from different areas (mathematical and geographical) a chance to meet and talk.
- Provide the graduate director with an opportunity to communicate with students (announcements, reminders, etc).
- Provide first-year graduate students with an opportunity to ask questions about the program.

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FAQ

- How should I prepare for the qualifying exams?
- Can I get summer funding?
- How can I get a fellowship? How can I get supported on a grant?
- What are my responsibilities as a TA? How should I balance these responsibilities with my studies?
- How do I go about choosing an advisor?
- What sorts of jobs will be available to me when I graduate, and how do I go about applying for them?
- Should I participate in outreach activities? If so, what sort of activities are available?
- What should I start doing *now* to get ready for the job search?
- Many, many more...

Rest of 2020 Fall (tentative)

- Sept. 2: David Manuel will talk about TA / grading duties
- Sept. 9: Kari Eifler, Pablo Ocal and Alex Ruiz de Perez will talk about outreach opportunities;
- Later: Panel discussion – Adjusting to graduate school
- Later: Panel discussion – preparing for the qualifying exams
- Later: Preparing for Spring 2021

2021 Spring (tentative)

- Student panel discussions: Finding an advisor and advice from graduating students
- The current job market for mathematicians
- Summer 2021 and future years in the program

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ADDITIONAL SEMINARS

GSO Seminar - VIRTUAL

- The graduate Student Organization (GSO) seminar meets on Wednesday 4:00-5:00 in 506A.
- “Come for the cookies, stay for the pizza.”
- This is a good chance to meet your fellow graduate students and to learn about the research programs of professors in the department.
- For more information:
<http://gso.math.tamu.edu>

Industrial and Applied Math Seminar - VIRTUAL

- The department's SIAM Student Chapter co-organize a seminar on applications of mathematics outside academia.
- Cookies and Fruit, but no pizza.
- The first talk is yet to be scheduled.

More Seminars - VIRTUAL

- Information about all seminars in the department is available on the seminar's web page:

<http://www.math.tamu.edu/seminars>

- Subscribe to the seminars mailing list!

More info:

<https://www.math.tamu.edu/computing/help/majordomo.html>

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GRADING AND HELP SESSION ASSIGNMENTS

General Information

- David Manuel will talk about these assignments in more detail in the next FYGSS.
- The expected workload is 10 hours per week. Could be an average for grading assignments.
- Pick up a textbook for your assignment in Blocker 305 (Sherry Floyd)
- Read your emails!

Grading Assignments

- Students with grading assignments should already have contacted the professor they are grading for. Make sure you know:
 - What the schedule will be for collecting and returning graded work
 - Who will keep track of the grades
 - Any grading preferences the professor has
 - If you will be asked to grade any exams

Help Session Assignments

- David Manuel should have emailed you today about nametags and sign-in sheets.
- Do not make students hunt you down in the back of the room. If you are not working with a student, introduce yourself to students as they come in.
- Do not tutor students for a course that is not covered by your help session. Direct them to the appropriate help session.
- Do not (!!) tutor for pay during help session.
- If you do not know, ask!

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APPLYING FOR FELLOWSHIPS

Why apply for a Fellowship?

- \$\$\$ and reduced or no TA duties
- Prestige (looks good on your CV).
- Practice: most researchers in the mathematical sciences continue to apply for grant funding throughout their careers, and it is beneficial to get accustomed to this process as soon as possible: *the more application you write, the better you will get at writing them.*
- Writing a proposal forces you to take a step back and think more broadly about what you genuinely want to be working on, build a research program.

What Fellowships are available?

- The American Mathematical Society (AMS) collects information about fellowship opportunities in the mathematical sciences on its website:

<http://www.ams.org/programs/students/gradinfo/>

- This is a useful site on its own, but the fellowship information is at the bottom of the page.

NSF Graduate Fellowships

- This is the single biggest source of graduate fellowships in the country
(2,000/yr)
- For 2017, 11 fellowships were awarded to students from Texas A&M
- For 2018, 12 fellowships were awarded to students from Texas A&M

NONE IN THE MATH DEPARTMENT

NSF Graduate Fellowships

- Unfortunately, there are restrictions on who can receive these fellowships: (1) applicants must be US citizens, nationals, or permanent residents, and (2) students must apply no later than the fall semester of their second year of graduate school. (Students with MS cannot apply.)
- The due date is October 22
- The math department awards a \$250 book allotment to students who apply and receive honorable mention and double the travel allotment to students awarded.
- More information:

<http://www.nsfgrfp.org>

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LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

English Language Requirement

- International students must have English Proficiency Certification to serve as teaching assistants, and the department expects students to achieve this during their first year.
- Certification can be obtained in three ways:
 - Completion of an undergraduate degree at an accredited U.S. college or university (MS not sufficient).
 - Achieving a sufficiently high score on an appropriate standardized test.
 - Scoring at least 80 on the English Language Proficiency EXAM (ELPE) oral exam.

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ANNUAL REVIEW

Good Standing

Many department policies specify that a student must be in *good standing*, so it's worth reviewing what that means. To be in good standing, PhD students should:

- Maintain a 3.0 or better cumulative GPA every semester
- Adequately perform their TA duties every semester
- Pass all breadth requirement courses with a B or better during their **first 4 years**
- Pass one qualifying exam during the first 1.5 year
- Pass two qualifying exams during their first 2 years
- International students must obtain the English Proficiency Certification during their first year
- Receive positive progress reports from their advisor every year after filing a degree plan
- Not violate the ethics code of the university

Review Procedures by the Graduate Committee

- At the end of each semester, the graduate committee reviews the standing of each graduate student.
- A full progress evaluation for each student during the summer is carried out. This includes a report from the student's advisor (once the student has an advisor), and a full review of the student's file.

General Punitive Action

- If it is judged that a student is no longer in good standing, the student will be placed on probation for the next semester.
- In practice, there is no penalty associated with probation (no loss of funding).
- At the end of the probation semester, if the student is still not in good standing, the department will no longer support the student with either tuition or a stipend.

Example Case

- For a student who begins the program Fall 2020, the last chance to complete the qualifying exam requirement is August 2022.
- Failing to do so will trigger a probation status in Fall 2022.
- If the two quals are not passed by January 2023, all department support will be dropped.

Tuition and Fees Policy

- The upper administration of the university (i.e. provost's office) pays tuition as follows:
 - 5 years for students entering with only a baccalaureate degree
 - 4 years for students entering with a master's degree
- For students beyond this mandate, but still in good standing with the department, tuition is paid from alternative sources until 5.5 years. Depending on the availability, the department may continue to cover T&F longer. So far, we have been able to pay tuition in all such cases.
- Transition to GAL
- This tuition schedule does not affect assistantships.

Dates to Keep in Mind

- Aug. 28: last day for drop/add with no penalty
- Nov. 10: last day for Q-drop
- Dec. 2: MSRI 2021 student summer graduate school applications

<http://www.msri.org/web/msri/scientific/workshops/summer-graduate-school>