Math 459 – Senior Seminar  
Spring 2008  
Course Syllabus

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Course Description  
Each student will give two, 45-mathematics presentations. One of the talks will be based on a chapter from one of the Devlin texts (listed below). The content of the other talk will be chosen by the student (subject to instructor approval). As a supplement to the talk, the speaker will assign at least 3 homework problems to the rest of the class. The assigned problems should be closely connected to the material covered in the lecture. The assignment will be due the next class meeting and will be graded (by the speaker) and returned within one week of the speaker’s presentation.

A successful presentation requires substantial research and preparation. To acquire the appropriate level of background knowledge on your topics it is strongly suggested that you consult multiple sources. Be aware that mathematics progresses constantly: Some of the statements made in the course textbooks are now out of date.

Prior to your presentation date you must meet with me to go over the details of your presentation. The homework problems that you intend to assign should be ready at this time. This appointment is mandatory and should be scheduled at least one week ahead of time – failure to schedule and/or attend this conference will result in a failing grade for the course.

In addition to the presentations, students will take a mathematics achievement exam. The results of this exam will be used to measure the effectiveness of the Cal Poly Mathematics Major; your test score will have no bearing on your course grade. This two-hour exam will be given during the final exam period scheduled for this course.

Textbooks  
You will need both of the following texts, which are available at the campus bookstore.

- K. Devlin, Mathematics, the New Golden Age
- K. Devlin, The Millenium Problems: the Seven Greatest Unsolved Mathematical Problems of Our Time

Grading  
The quality of your presentations is the major factor used in determining your grade (precise guidelines will be provided): Each presentation will contribute 40% to your course grade. Your homework grade will contribute the remaining 20%. Attendance will also be considered: the first two absences are penalty-free; each absence above this limit will result in a 10% reduction in your course grade (the final exam period counts as three class meetings).