BI-CO MATHEMATICS COLLOQUIUM

Mathematics Awareness Week Keynote Speaker

Leila Schneps
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"Mathematics in the Courtroom: Uncharted Territory"

Monday, March 3, 2014

Talk at 4:00 – Park 243
Tea at 3:30 – Park 355, Math Lounge

Reception to Follow Talk

Abstract:
   The more that modern methods in forensic science advance, the greater the role that probability and statistical calculations will necessarily play in criminal trials. But such calculations can be fraught with risk, as they are often more complex than they seem. It is important that they should only be performed by competent experts in the domain, but in fact, because there are no standard guidelines in place to control the use of mathematics in trials, there have been many cases in which mathematical misunderstanding or misuse by lawyers or less-than-expert witnesses led juries to wrongful verdicts. In this lecture we will examine several recent cases, some quite well-known (for example the Amanda Knox murder trial in Italy), each of which illustrates a common mathematical pitfall.

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