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Mathematical Probability Theory Topic of Spring's Final Science Cafe

UM algebra professor uses dice to demonstrate unique factorization

APRIL 17, 2015 BY EDWIN SMITH

FaTvLiErCoSMPrSh

UM mathematics professor Sandra Spiroff uses dice to demonstrate theories of probability.

OXFORD, Miss. – The theory of unique factorization, with an application to mathematical probability, is the topic for a monthly public science forum organized by the **University of Mississippi Department of Physics and Astronomy**.

The spring semester's third and last meeting of the Oxford Science Cafe is set for 6 p.m. Tuesday (April 21) at Lusa Pastry Cafe, 2305 West Jackson Ave. Sandra Spiroff, UM associate professor of mathematics, will discuss "Unique factorization and a roll of the dice." Admission is free.

"Starting from the familiar factorization of integers into prime numbers, we extend the concept of unique factorization to polynomials and beyond," Spiroff said. "In particular, we will discuss how unique factorization, or the lack of it, probably jeopardized early attempts to prove Fermat's Last Theorem."

Spiroff's 30-minute presentation will also present an interesting application to the probabilities associated with rolling a pair of dice.

"If time permits, we will run some experiments and play the casino game of craps," she said. "The mathematical difficulty of the majority of this talk is high school algebra, and many examples will be given."

Spiroff earned her doctorate at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a master's degree from Saint Louis University and a bachelor's degree from Indiana University. Her research areas include commutative algebra, with specialization in the topics of divisor class groups and Chow groups.

Undergraduate courses she teaches are linear algebra and abstract algebra. Previously, Spiroff held the position of VIGRE postdoctoral assistant professor-lecturer at the University of Utah.

For more information about Oxford Science Cafe programs, go to **http://www.phy.olemiss.edu/oxfordsciencecafe**. For more information about the Department of Physics and Astronomy, visit **http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/physics_and_astronomy** or call 662-915-5311.

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Campus Briefs

Donations Sought for 25th Annual Books and Bears Program

OXFORD, Miss. – The University of Mississippi is asking the community to help spread a little joy this holiday season by donating to the 25th annual Books and Bears program. Donations such as toys, books, dolls, bicycles and other children's play items are being accepted through Dec. 14. All donations will be collected and sorted

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Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship Aims to Build Leaders

OXFORD, Miss. – Twenty-five inaugural recipients of the Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship – a program hosted by the University of Mississippi School of Education in partnership with the Mississippi Association of Coaches and the Mississippi High School Activities Association – are expected to increase their impact on student-athletes and their communities. The coaching fellowship

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Clarion-Ledger: New Essay Collection Tells the Story of Meredith's Enrollment

Essays celebrate 60th anniversary of James Meredith's enrollment at University of Mississippi By Lauren Rhoades Oct. 1 marks the 60th anniversary of James Meredith's 1962 enrollment at the University of Mississippi as the school's first African-American student.

"James Meredith: Breaking the Barrier," a collection of essays edited by UM professor of journalism Kathleen Wickham, honors this historic milestone with

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