

Math 582 Teaching Core College Mathematics Winter 2026

Instructor Amites Sarkar

Text How to Solve It
George Pólya

Course content

This course has two purposes: to help you pass the graduate qualifying exam at the end of March, and to prepare you to teach courses in calculus and linear algebra. These are very different goals, but for both of them you will require:

- A thorough understanding of the material
- Problem solving strategies
- The ability to present a mathematical argument clearly and precisely

You will have two assignments each week. First, I will assign three questions from past qualifying exams for you to solve, and possibly present in class. Second, you will have to read either an essay (see below – you can start now if you like), or part of Pólya's book. Class time will be split between lectures (given by me), presentations (given by you), and discussions on the essays and on the book.

Essays (These are the first three: I will add more...)

N. Baker, Wrong answer: the case against Algebra II, *Harper's Magazine*, September 2013.

U. Dudley, What is mathematics for?, *Notices Amer. Math. Soc.* **57** (2010), 608–613.

P. Lockhart, A Mathematician's Lament, available at
http://www.maa.org/external_archive/devlin/LockhartsLament.pdf

Office hours

My office hours are 9–9:50 am on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, and 1–1:50 pm on Fridays, in 216 Bond Hall. My e-mail is amites.sarkar@wwu.edu.