

Gender and mathematics in modern plays



DR. SHELLEY COSTA

Swarthmore College

WHEN:

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 4TH

11:00 AM

WHERE:

SCP229

ABSTRACT

Whether the female mind was appropriate to the study of mathematics -- and vice-versa: whether mathematics was appropriate for an idealized female mind -- was for centuries a subject of reflection and debate. While we are far beyond the historic limitations of such biases, certain conceptual tensions remain. As idealized knowledge, isn't mathematics meant to be pure and gender-free? Yet if so, why should women's practice of it ever have invited any notice? Where there is tension, good drama is not far behind. In recent years excellent playwrights have grappled with these nuances. A comparative look at their work suggests the growing sophistication of our society in making room not just for women in mathematics, but for a concept of mathematics that is, finally, beyond gender. My talk compares Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia* (1993), David Auburn's *Proof* (2000), and Nick Payne's *Constellations* (2015).

Please contact: Dr. Kardos at kardosj@tcnj.edu or Dr. Marcus at marcuss@tcnj.edu for information/questions.