Many people view mathematics as a complex series of equations and variables that complicate the problem at hand, overwhelming and mystifying them. For some, this perception has created a view of math as an elite discipline, inaccessible to those outside the field. However, mathematics is just like any other science: it tries to find answers to practical and abstract problems and better explain how things work and how the universe operates. Scientists take complex problems, break them down into accessible parts and experiment to solve for the unknown - so do mathematicians.

Professor Lu will explain the procedures mathematicians use to solve a problem. By using examples from his work in differential geometry and string theory, he will illustrate how mathematicians think, why so many abstract concepts are introduced, and why all statements in mathematics have to be “proven.”

Born and raised in China, Zhiqin Lu received his B.S. and M.S. from Shanghai Jiao Tong University. He earned his Ph.D. from the Courant Institute at New York University in 1997. He served as Ritt Assistant Professor at Columbia University before joining the UCI faculty in 2000.

Professor Lu’s main research interest is in geometry, especially the differential geometric aspect of super string theory. As part of a collaborative group, he proved a mirror symmetry conjecture predicted by string theorists. Professor Lu received a 2003 Alfred Sloan Fellowship and a 2004 NSF CAREER award.

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