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Calculus III and the Four-Color Theorem

Abstract for the Combinatorics and Number Theory Seminar 2001 April 5

Louis Kauffman showed that the four-color theorem is equivalent to the existence of solutions of certain equations. These equations involve the cross products of the standard three unit vectors in Euclidean 3-space. We will outline Kauffman's argument and discuss how the equations are "parametrized" by elements of one of Thompson's finitely presented groups. An invitation will then be given to the audience to find a simple proof of the four-color theorem.

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