

Teaching mathematics to students who are not primarily interested in mathematics

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Most of the students enrolled in mathematics courses are not primarily interested in mathematics. They are there because they have been told that they need to take mathematics in order to become engineers, physicists, chemists, biologists, computer scientists, economists etc., and they seem to regard this advice with increasing skepticism. There are several challenges in teaching students of this kind. The most obvious one is perhaps how to motivate them, but there are deeper, underlying questions on how to teach them and what to teach them. As far as I know, there are no magic solutions to these questions, but I'll try to make the questions a bit clearer and present a few insights that might be helpful.