

MSCS



Mess

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Department of Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science
St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN 55057

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Visit by Manil Suri

Manil Suri, a best-selling novelist, essayist, and (not least) a mathematician at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, will visit St. Olaf on Tuesday, October 21. Two not-to-be-missed public events are planned:

- a multimedia **talk** on "The Mathematics of Fiction" at **4:00 pm** in RNS 150
- a reading from and book-signing of his latest novel, *The Age Of Shiva*, at **7:30 pm** in the **Viking Theatre**.

In his 4:00 pm talk, Suri will describe the experience of being both a novelist and a mathematician, and the synergy generated between the two endeavors for him. The presentation will show how fundamental ideas from mathematics can be used to compose a symphony, create an image, make Marilyn Monroe smile, and, surprisingly, create a fictional piece.

Among Suri's publications are the well-regarded novels *The Death of Vishnu* and *The Age of Shiva*. He recently published a short, elegant, and amusing piece about teaching calculus in the New York Times Magazine. To find more information about Suri's literary and mathematical work, visit his website at www.manilsuri.com.

Practicum Interviews Start Monday!

The Mathematics Practicum (Math 390) is an interim course that gives you the chance to work on real life math problems formulated by local companies and nonprofit organizations.

The course ends with group presentations given to executives at the company offices.

The course is primarily for junior and senior mathematics majors. Admission is by permission of the instructor and an interview is required for admission.

Signup sheets for the interviews, which start on Monday, October 20th, are posted outside Tina Garrett's office (SC 220). If you are interested in taking the course, please sign up for a slot as soon as possible. If you want to learn more about the practicum, or have any questions about the interview process, please feel free to contact either of the course professors, Tina Garrett and Steve McKelvey.

2nd Annual Mathwarts "Happening"

Thinking about becoming an MSCS major or concentrator? Wondering about registration for next semester? Already an MSCS major or concentrator and wondering where that choice might lead after St. Olaf? If you answered yes to any of these, Mathwarts is something you can't miss.

Mathwarts is a chance to get information about becoming a math or computer science major, or

a statistics concentrator. We will discuss options within each program and how the programs fit together. It won't all be about classes. We'll talk about job prospects, off campus opportunities, contests, performance venues, social events, the whole MSCS experience.

Who	Anyone interested in the prospect of studying more mathematics, statistics or computer science at St. Olaf (or elsewhere)
What	An early evening of fun and information. We begin with a gathering of everyone, then we eat, and then you'll have the chance to visit stations focusing on a particular subset of the MSCS experience, an opportunity for you to ask detailed questions of the experts. There will also be good food.
Where	The initial gathering will be in SC 282 (the Coen brothers should be gone by then) with breakouts following in the Science Center Lobby. (Old Science, NOT Regents Hall.)
When	5:30pm on Wednesday, October 22nd.

See your favorite MSCS professor, or Steve McKelvey, if you have any questions or want to come but won't be able to.

Statistics Graduate School Panel

Are you interested in attending graduate school in statistics? Come to Regents Hall 207 (the CIR room) on Monday, October 20th for food (subs served at 5:30) and a panel discussion (begins at 6:00). Four Ole alums who are currently in (or recently completed) graduate programs in statistics or biostatistics will participate in the panel discussion. They will provide insights and answer questions such as: What is graduate school like? How does one choose a program? How does St. Olaf prepare

you? What can one do with an advanced stats degree? Is it true they really pay you to go to grad school?

Panelists will include Colleen Curran '04 (Minnesota biostats; now at Boston Scientific); Haley Hedlin '06 (Johns Hopkins biostats); Allan Trapp '06 (Iowa State stats); David Vock '07 (NC State stats)

Bowling with the Profs!

Join your professors and fellow MSCS majors for the annual tradition of Bowling with the Profs! This year, Bowling with the Profs will be Sunday, October 26th, at approximately 2 PM, at Jesse James Lanes. The first game and shoes will be covered; additional games will be on your own. If you would like to attend and/or if you are able to drive people to the Lanes, email MAA president Jonathan Woolums at (woolums@stolaf.edu) by Tuesday, October 21st.

Problem of the Week

Evaluate the series $\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{\binom{k+n}{k}}$ for $n \geq 2$.

What is the result if $n = 1$?

Solutions to last week's problem are posted at SC 222. Send your solution to this week's problem to Prof. Gower (SC 222, gower@stolaf.edu) by Friday, October 24, 2008.

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If you would like to submit an article or math event to be published in the Math Mess, e-mail koche@stolaf.edu.