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Ethnomathematics in a First Year Seminar.

I teach a Freshman Seminar at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point called “Are Numbers Real?” I want students to question the form, operations, even the meaning of the numbers they simply take for granted. Is mathematics universal, or is it tied to our perceptions and our culture?

The course opens with an ethnomathematics-like component which fills about 30% of the course time. Much of the material focuses on the linguistics of counting words and what the words tell us about a culture and how its members might perceive numbers – though we do touch lightly upon other cultural aspects of numbers as well, primarily in Polynesian cultures. We also spend time studying early historical counting systems for similar reasons.

In my presentation I will discuss the topics and material covered in this course component, as well as examples of student work. Student feedback for the course in general and this section in particular will be discussed, as well as a short list of resources I found helpful in developing the course. (Received September 16, 2014)