

REVIEW OF “HIDDEN FIGURES”

MATH 300I-01, FALL 2017

1. WHAT IS TO BE DONE

You are to watch the movie, “Hidden Figures” (20th Century Fox Films, 2016), and write a review of it. This review is to be written from the perspective that we are interested in the history of mathematics.

Writing a review is different from telling your friends about the movie. Some say you should plan to watch it twice: once to just watch the whole movie, follow the story, and enjoy; a second time to follow some special elements on which your review will focus. You may want to follow both thematic and technical content on one hand, and the “formal” methods (photography, lighting, editing, sound, etc.) that are used to tell the story.

Your review must tell something about the film, including a brief summary (since many readers of reviews have not seen the film yet). You must also tell something of your personal impression of what the film looks, feels, and sounds like.

Your review must also tell about the math and the mathematicians (and other characters who do, use, or purvey mathematics). To what extent were these details historically accurate? Were any inaccuracies serious, or were they merely natural and harmless artistic license, or the limitations of the form?

Helpful insights on writing about film can be found on the following web pages:

- <http://twp.duke.edu/sites/twp.duke.edu/files/file-attachments/film-review-1.original.pdf>
- <http://twp.duke.edu/sites/twp.duke.edu/files/file-attachments/overview-vis.original.pdf>
- <http://hogans101z.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/dartmouth.pdf>

You can also find a model review of this film (written for an audience of mathematicians) by mathematician Fern Y. Hunt in the *Notices of the American Mathematical Society*, volume 64 (2017) number 6, pp. 620–621. The book from which the film was adapted may also be helpful to you.

I am placing both the film and the book on reserve in the library.

2. DUE DATE

Your review is to be turned in on or before November 1.

3. GRADING

In addition to the usual criteria, I will assess the following content questions:

- (1) Does the review tell something about the film, including a brief summary? Does it tell something of the reviewer’s personal impression of what the film looks, feels, and sounds like?
- (2) Does the review tell about the math and the mathematicians (and other characters who do, use, or purvey mathematics). Does it account for the extent to which these details historically accurate, and for the seriousness of any inaccuracies?