Temple University Mathematics Colloquium

Joseph W. Dauben
Herbert H. Lehman College, CUNY

will speak on

Suan Shu Shu
(A Book on Numbers and Computations):
Five Problems from the Most Ancient Yet-Known Mathematical Text from Ancient China

ABSTRACT: In 1983-1984, archaeologists excavating the tomb of an ancient Chinese bureaucrat discovered a previously unknown mathematical work on some 200 bamboo strips, the Suan Shu Shu, or Book of Numbers and Computations. As the earliest yet-known work devoted specifically to mathematics from ancient China (circa 186 BCE), it has stirred considerable interest among historians of Chinese mathematics. While some sections of this work are straightforward and have been understood with little disagreement, others, due in part to missing, misplaced, or incomplete parts of the text, have been open to diverse and often divergent interpretations. This presentation will consider the various collations and explanations offered for these especially challenging parts of the Suan Shu Shu, and what they may tell us about early Chinese mathematics in general.

Monday, April 17, 2006
Lecture at 4:00 pm (♯)
Coffee, tea, and refreshments from 3-5 pm
Room 617, Wachman Building
Department of Mathematics