

# Brown Bag to explain 'Mona Lisa,' VW's

By ERIC DORMAN  
Editor-in-chief

It's guided architecture and design for millennia, from the Parthenon to the Volkswagen Beetle. You can see it in sunflowers, pineapples and the "Mona Lisa." And this Friday, Math Instructor Jeff O'Connell will bring the Golden Ratio to Ohlone in the third Brown Bag Science Seminar of the semester.

The talk, which will take place from noon to 12:50 p.m. in Room 3201, will have basis in mathematics but an emphasis on art, said O'Connell. The Golden Ratio, though rooted in math, is more widely recognized for its aesthetic value, with huge influences in art, architecture and graphic design.

O'Connell originally got the idea for a talk exploring the relationship between math and art from his sister-in-law, a graphic artist. Whenever she discussed her projects with him, O'Connell explained, "we would always start out [talking about] graphic art and end up talking about math."

That link is the Golden Ratio, first formally introduced by the mathematician Euclid in 300 B.C.,

who called it "a pleasing ratio" in his famous work *The Elements*. It describes the ratio between two lengths whose sum, divided by the length of the longer one, is equal to the larger sum divided by the smaller one. Like pi, it is an irrational number that rounds to about 1.6.

Despite its technical derivation, the Golden Ratio can be seen most today in areas seemingly devoid of mathematics: art and nature. Leonardo Da Vinci, an avid scientist, took the Golden Ratio into careful consideration when painting the Mona Lisa, an attention to detail that is evidenced when measuring the relative distances between focal points on the painting: the proportions of the woman's nose and the size of her mouth and chin all correspond to the Ratio.

Curiously enough, the Golden Ratio can also be found in nature: the Ratio and its cousin, the Golden Spiral, happen to describe the most efficient distribution of seeds and leaves on plants in order to allow maximum exposure. As a result, the Golden Ratio can be seen in sunflowers, pineapples and pinecones, as well as elsewhere in nature.

O'Connell emphasized, however, that the Ratio is not just limited to flowers and 16<sup>th</sup> Century art. The profile of the VW Beetle conforms

to the outline of the Golden Ellipse, whose height and width make up the Golden Ratio.

O'Connell stressed that despite

the Ratio's mathematical foundation, the math at the presentation will be kept to a bare minimum, mostly focusing on the Ratio's uses.



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