Michigan Math Club

Thursday at 4pm in the Commons
Free Pizza and Pop

The Isoperimetric Problem

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Abstract for 14 January 2010

According to legend, princess Dido founded the city of Carthage around 800 BC. She asked the local inhabitants for a small bit of land for a temporary refuge, only as much land as could be encompassed by an oxhide. They agreed. Dido cut the oxhide into thin strips, made a rope, and with it enclosed a huge piece of land. At its peak, the population of Carthage is estimated at half a million.   This talk will describe what is the isoperimetric or Dido problem in the calculus of variations: How much area can be enclosed by a curve of given length?   It can serve as an introduction to the Marjorie Lee Browne Colloquium by Rodrigo Banuelos on January 18.