GSTTS
September 24, 2013 Summary

- We started with a callback to our last topic: motivation. We asked the students to chat in their groups (organized roughly by courses taught: as always, we had one table with stats folks, one table of students doing recitations, and one table of people teaching math courses) about what they had done differently, and if they struck upon anything that either worked or was a complete disaster.

- After discussing this, we led a brief discussion on class participation, and asked the students directly if anything they were doing was helping (or hindering) participation amongst their students. Responses were mixed.

- Tim passed out a handout which he had typed and printed, and delivered a ten-twelve minute lecture on assessment. The handout can be attached. Topics included the differences in types of assessments (formal vs informal, diagnostic vs summative vs formative, norm vs reference, etc) and drew from a wide body of literature on the topic.

- We passed out our own mid-semester evaluation sheets. We started with a very brief and informal chat about when in the class period was optimal to pass these things out. There are benefits and drawbacks to any time (beginning of the class, middle of the class, end of class) which we promised we would discuss with them. Tim and Elliot then went outside and waited until everyone was done, about ten minutes.

- We discussed guidelines for their own mid-semester evaluations. We discussed what time was optimal, and also discussed the necessity of leaving the room (which is not required for mid-semester evaluations, though it is for end-of-year evaluations). We stressed that teachers should spend some time telling them why they were passing these things out, what they would and would not use them for, etc. We said that teachers should emphasize that only the teacher would be reading them, no one else. We also thought the optimal length was five or six open ended questions, with a few 1-5 checklists as well, and an open spot at the end for general comments. We also (and this may be the most important thing) stressed that teachers should tell students what they *cannot* control (i.e. pacing, webassign) so that the comments and complaints could be focused to things we can actually do something about.

- At this time, we had students work in groups and develop their own evaluations. They shared ideas for formats and for questions. We told them they could all use the same one as a group, or tweak them and make their eval a little more individual. This discussion was quite lively. It took about twenty minutes, then we told them to please email us a copy of whatever evaluation they decided to use (whether it was theirs individually or one agreed on by their group) before passing it out to their class. Then we let them go, with the homework assignment of administering the evaluation and writing a summary of what they found from it.