Faculty Spotlight with Dr. Tartir

For the next installment of our faculty spotlight, we interviewed Dr. Tartir, whose primary research interest is general or point-set topology. However, he is currently interested in Sub-Hausdorff properties. According to Dr. Tartir, many topological spaces have what is called a Hausdorff property; in the real number line this is like saying that if you have two distinct numbers, you can find a neighborhood around each point such that the two neighborhoods are disjoint. He is studying topological spaces that do not have this type of property.

When Dr. Tartir started out as an undergrad at Hiram College, he was originally studying pre-law because he wanted to go to law school and eventually become a lawyer. However, he had always liked math, so after taking a couple math classes in college, he decided to talk to his advisor who suggested taking discrete math and linear algebra to see how he enjoyed those. So, in his sophomore year, he became a double major in mathematics and management (with a focus in finance). But it wasn't until later, around his junior year, that he realized he was pretty good at math, and he didn't decide that he wanted to pursue a graduate degree in mathematics until his senior year.

Like many students, Dr. Tartir was not introduced to topology (where he now does his research) until grad school. It was his first semester of the master's program at Miami University that he took a course in topology. Although it was not part of his original plan, he went on to Ohio University to complete his PhD in mathematics. He knew he either wanted to study topology or analysis, so he asked some of his professors at Miami what some good schools in these areas were, and that's how he found Ohio University. This is a piece of advice that Dr. Tartir wanted to share with any YSU students who are thinking about applying to graduate school: if you have an idea of what area you are interested, ask your professors if they know any schools that are strong in that area. He encourages students to study in a field that they find interesting because grad school is going to be hard, and although there will be time that you have to do things you don't really enjoy, you might as well make the rest of it enjoyable.

Dr. Tartir had always known that YSU existed, since he had gone to schools that are relatively nearby, but it really came on his radar when his PhD advisor was going to give a talk at YSU and invited Dr. Tartir to come along. Unfortunately, he wasn't able to visit at that time. But, as if it was destiny, the AMS Joint Mathematics Meeting came to Washington D.C. where he had started working after graduation, and it was there that he interviewed for a position at YSU.

In his day-to-day work as a professor, Dr. Tartir used to spend a fairly even mix of his time on teaching, research, and service before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, due to all the changes that have come as a result, he finds himself spending a lot more of his time preparing for his classes, such as recording video lectures for his Calculus 3 class. This past summer, YSU was supposed to host the 2020 Summer Conference on Topology and its Applications, of which Dr. Tartir was a co-organizer alongside Dr. Rodabaugh of YSU and Dr. Melton of Kent State. This conference was supposed to have several international speakers and because a virtual conference was not an appealing alternative, it was decided that it would be postponed until the summer of 2022.

Dr. Tartir's goals for this year can be summed up in one phrase: getting ahead of COVID. Since he has had to spend a lot more of his time preparing for his classes due to the pandemic, Dr. Tartir hopes to get caught up on making his video lectures so that he can get back to work organizing the topology conference and working on a Sub-Hausdorff paper, both of which have gotten pushed to the backburner.

One of Dr. Tartir's favorite things about his job here at YSU are the people. He enjoys working with the students, faculty, and staff. He also thinks YSU is good at letting you choose your own path and explore your interests. His favorite class to teach is certainly topology, but he also really enjoys his calculus classes and has not gotten bored of teaching the subject in 20 years. He is also having fun teaching real analysis for the first time this semester. Outside of mathematics, Dr. Tartir also enjoys exercising and creating things. He even has a few things around his house that he has built himself or updated from existing pieces!

One final piece of wisdom that Dr. Tartir wanted to share with everyone pertains to getting ready for grad school but extends beyond that as well. He mentioned that it is important to look for something unique inside yourself. As you go along, there will be people who are better than you at certain things, but there will also be things that you do better at than other people. He urges students to find those strengths and interests and turn them into something positive. If you're not sure what those might be for you, don't worry; you just haven't come across them yet, just like how Dr. Tartir didn't find topology until he was already in grad school.

We're very thankful to have Dr. Tartir here at YSU and appreciate his time and participation in this interview!