

MACALESTER COLLEGE
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COLLOQUIUM SERIES

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“Epistemic Structural Realism and Poincaré's Philosophy of Science”

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11:30

Carnegie 06

Abstract: “Structuralism” in philosophy of science today is dominated by “structural realism”. This approach comes in two varieties: epistemic structural realism (all we know is structure) and ontic structural realism (all there is is structure). Advocates of each face the persistent criticism that they have failed to articulate a clear position. One way to gain clarity is to look at the arguments offered in support of a given position: what exactly do they, and don't they, entail? John Worrall, the leading epistemic structural realist, cites Poincaré as a historical source for his position. Prompted by this, we will explore Poincaré's structuralism in his philosophy of science, the arguments he gave for his position, and the extent to which these arguments are relevant to today's debate.

Katherine Brading received her Ph.D. in Philosophy from Oxford University. Her areas of interest include Philosophy of Physics, especially symmetries and conservation laws in contemporary physics, and including quantum mechanics, relativity, and seventeenth-century cosmology.

There will be a light lunch served—everyone welcome!