

Guest Talk

Thursday, November 10, 2022, 6 p.m. s.t.,

Hörsaal A, Room 1.3.14, FB Physik, Arnimallee 14, 14195 Berlin

Sealing-Wax and String: How Everyday Things Carried Gender into the Physical Laboratory

Donald L. Opitz (DePaul University, USA)

How was the ‘sociomaterial’ culture of experimental physics gendered historically? How did the gendering of laboratory materials draw on everyday practices? This talk focuses on everyday and physics laboratory contexts in which practitioners utilized commonplace, domestic tools like sealing-wax and string, precisely during a period in which laboratories and their technologies grew in scale and sophistication. Notoriously a male bastion, the physical laboratory beckons for detailed, gendered analyses. The gender status of ‘things’ in physical laboratories are inextricable from the gendering of the cultures of the experimental sciences more generally. The transit of sociomaterial things across laboratory thresholds provides an opportunity for observing how the gendering of things at times remains durable and at other times is reconfigured. This case study of sealing-wax and string offers critical clues for understanding the wide gender gap that has historically persisted in the physical sciences and engineering.

Donald L. Opitz is Associate Professor at DePaul University (USA). His research engages themes in the areas of women, gender, and science, especially in the British Empire. He is an editor of *For Better or For Worse? Collaborative Couples in the Sciences* (2012) and *Domesticity in the Making of Modern Science* (2016). He is a general editor of the forthcoming series, *Gender, Colonialism, and Science: A Cross-Cultural Compendium of Primary Sources*.

