



University of Miami, Physics Department Colloquium

Date: Wednesday, Feb 11, 2026

Time: 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Location: Physics Library – Rm 335, Knight Physics Building

That's Not Physics

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Abstract

Have you ever left a colloquium or a seminar and thought to yourself "that was interesting, but it wasn't physics"? If so, you are in good company, because there has long been disagreement in our community about which research specialties belong to the canon of physics and which do not, particularly when it comes to hiring faculty members into physics departments to train PhD students. In this talk, I discuss some aspects of this debate from the founding of the American Physical Society to the present day. Examples include a field that was once a part of physics but is not anymore; a field that was once "not physics" but is definitely so today; and a field whose status as "physics" remains unsettled in the minds of many.

Biography



A native of Pittsburgh, Andrew Zangwill is a graduate of the Buhl Space Academy, Carnegie-Mellon University and the University of Pennsylvania. He began his academic career at the Polytechnic Institute of New York, a university which no longer exists. This year, he is completing his 40th year on the Physics faculty at Georgia Tech. He is a Fellow of the American Physical Society and the author of the monograph *Physics at Surface* (1988), the graduate textbook *Modern Electrodynamics* (2013), and the biography *A Mind over Matter: Philip Anderson and the Physics of the Very Many* (2021).