



29th Vienna Circle Lecture

Alisa Bokulich

Alisa Bokulich is Professor of Philosophy at Boston University and Director of the Center for Philosophy & History of Science. She is an Associate Member of the History of Science Department at Harvard University, series editor for Boston Studies in History & Philosophy of Science, and an elected member of the Governing Board of the Philosophy of Science Association. She is author of the book *Reexamining the Quantum-Classical Relation: Beyond Reductionism and Pluralism* (CUP 2008) and is currently writing a new book on the Philosophy of the Geosciences, focusing on data, models, and uncertainty, which is supported by a fellowship for the 2021–22 academic year at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University.

Abstract

Although Charles Sanders Peirce is widely recognized as a founder of American Pragmatism, what is lesser known is that his primary career was with the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, working as a geodesist to improve the precision and accuracy of gravity measurements (gravimetry). My aim in this talk is threefold: First, I examine Peirce's contributions to gravimetry and metrology and argue that this is a critical but surprisingly unappreciated source for his pragmatic philosophy, in particular his views on truth and inquiry. Second, I trace two possible routes of influence from this work of Peirce's: one to the "first" Vienna Circle and another to more recent work in the philosophy of metrology related to the periodic adjustment of fundamental physical constants. Finally, I show the continuing relevance of Peirce's program of model-corrected gravity measurements to the recent redefinition of the kilogram.

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C.S. Peirce, Gravity Measurements, & the Philosophy of Metrology

Friday, December 10, 2021
4.00 p.m.

Online talk, link t.b.a.