

Physics Seminar

Wednesday, April 9, 4:30 pm
Science & Engineering Building Auditorium

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Watson, Crick, and the Ladder of Life

In 1953, James Watson and Francis Crick deduced the structure of DNA, and since then its twisted strands have become an iconic symbol of science. The polymer has enjoyed unusual popularity for a molecule, and in that popularity it is easy to lose the context under which the famous double helix was discovered. In particular, the story of Watson and Crick's work often sheds its human narrative, while Watson and Crick are themselves stripped of personality in the retelling. Other characters, like Rosalind Franklin, are often dropped entirely from the narrative. In reality, the story was so much richer, and even Watson and Crick's 1953 manuscript has a life and personality rare to scientific articles. It is the object of this seminar to highlight both the significance and the lessons of this seminal paper.