



Lights Out!

The Rise and Fall of Scientific Authority

Speaker: Robert P. Crease, Stony Brook University

Date and Time: Wednesday, February 19, 2020 from 11:00 AM

Location: Room 3438, Ingersoll Hall, Brooklyn College

Abstract

Over the past 400 years, the US and other nations have built up what is now in effect a global scientific workshop which has made great contributions to human life. What went wrong? How has mistrust of science, its institutions, and its findings become an established feature of the political landscape? It is tempting to think that scientific authority is natural and will soon reassert itself, like a sturdy, self-righting boat knocked over by a rogue wave. But as I argue in *The Workshop and the World: What Ten Thinkers Can Teach Us about Science and Authority*, the very strengths of science create vulnerabilities that allow detractors to question scientific findings with a veneer of plausibility. In this talk I will review some experiences of early proponents of the authority of science, the resistance that they encountered, and how they responded, in order to help understand and confront modern-day science denial.

Robert P. Crease is a professor in the Department of Philosophy at Stony Brook University, New York, and chairman of the department. He has written, translated, or edited over a dozen books on history and philosophy of science. Crease is Co-Editor-in-Chief of *Physics in Perspective*, and writes a monthly column, “Critical Point,” for *Physics World* magazine, on the philosophy and history of science. His articles and reviews have appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Newsday* and elsewhere.