

Physics Department Seminar

Friday March 7th, 2008

11:00am in PhSc 108

“Understanding Argument”

Dr. Leslie Atkins
Department of Physics
California State University Chico



Abstract:

I've been running around with a tape recorder for several years now, trying to capture scientific discussions as they happen: in classrooms, study groups, museums, and the SPS. In one informal discussion between high school teachers, a civil scientific argument turned into heated scientific arguing-- and after 8 hours



of enjoyable and productive conversation, the scientific discussion broke down. In this talk I will outline some reasons for the argument, drawing on a recent framework by Sfard (2008) that suggests that many conflicts that appear to stem from differing conceptual ideas actually stem from different rules of discourse. Using this framework as a lens and the argument as data, I'll look into some of the rules of scientific discourse, pulling out some implications for how we talk science, how we teach science, and how we conceptualize what it means to know science.