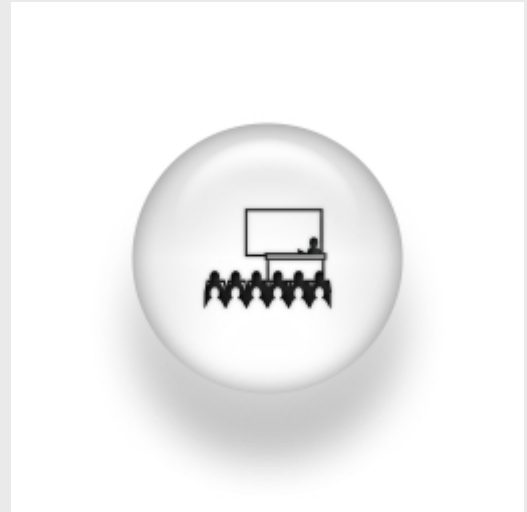


## Hard Superconductivity in Soft Quantum Films

Thursday, 14 June 2007, 12.00-13.00



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Superconductivity is inevitably suppressed in reduced dimensionality. Questions of how thin superconducting wires or films can be before they lose their superconducting properties have important technological ramifications and go to the heart of understanding coherence and robustness of the superconducting state in quantum-confined geometries. In this talk, I will show how quantum confinement of itinerant electrons in a soft metal, Pb, can be exploited to stabilize superconductors with lateral dimensions of the order of a few millimeters and vertical dimensions of only a few atomic layers. These extremely thin superconductors show no indication of defect- or fluctuation-driven suppression of superconductivity and sustain enormous supercurrents of up to 10% of the theoretical depairing current density. Their magnetic hardness implies a superconducting critical state with strong vortex pinning that is attributed to quantum trapping of vortices. Our study paints a conceptually appealing, elegant picture of a model nanoscale superconductor with calculable critical state properties and surprisingly strong phase coherence. Finally, I will show how the quantum growth and superconductive properties of the films can be tailored by Fermi surface engineering, and I will discuss the possibility of multi-gap superconductivity in quantum-confined thin films. This work was done in collaboration with M.M. Ozer, J.R. Thompson, Yu Jia, and Z.Y. Zhang [1,2]. [1] M.M. Ozer et al., *Nature Phys.* 2, 173 (2006) [2] M.M. Ozer et al., *Science*, June 15 (2007)