“The Scientific Method in American Science Education”
John L. Rudolph
University of Wisconsin-Madison

In the world of science education there is perhaps nothing more familiar than the idea of “the scientific method.” Many accept that it’s what makes science unique in its approach to unraveling the mysteries of the natural world, that it’s what ensures that the knowledge science generates is reliable and trustworthy. Yet, as much of a fixture the scientific method is in schools and the public consciousness, its fortunes have ebbed and flowed among leading science educators and scientists over the years, rapidly rising in popularity following its introduction in education in the early 1910s before rapidly falling out of favor in the 1950s. In this talk, Rudolph will explore the conditions that gave rise to the scientific method in American education, trace its fate as it ran up against a scientific community that felt threatened by its depiction of scientific work in the fraught years after World War II, and discuss the broader implications of this history for science education.