**IAN HAMBLETON**, McMaster University

*Geometric extensions of surface groups*

Let $\pi$ denote the fundamental group of a closed aspherical manifold $\Sigma$. A *geometric extension* of $\pi$ is a group $\Gamma$ containing $\pi$ as a normal subgroup, with finite quotient group $G$, such that the action of $G$ on $\pi$ by conjugation arises from a G-action on $\Sigma$ with non-empty fixed set. The talk will focus on geometric extensions of surface groups and discrete co-compact actions of $\Gamma$ on certain products $\mathbb{R}^m \times S^n$. This is joint work with Erik Pedersen.