For the past two millennia, architectural and structural engineering design has been guided by two main currents of thought: empirical and rational. Empirical design builds upon the basis of experience and previous successes, without a search for the cause of these successes, while in rational design, the causes are sought and a method of design is based on the presumed causes of success or failure.

Join Dr. Boothby for a discussion on nineteenth century structural design as a unique combination of empirical, analytical, and graphical methods of structural analysis and design as well as an investigation of how rationalism and empiricism fit into the history of knowledge.