

## **Scholes Lecturer in chemistry details history of periodic table**

4/03/07

Any student who has completed a basic science course knows what the periodic table of the elements is, but Dr. Eric R. Scerri, a lecturer in chemistry at the University of California-Los Angeles, has become an expert on the periodic table, which has been called "nature's rosetta stone." He will share his thoughts about the significance of the periodic table during the ninth annual Samuel R. Scholes Jr. Lecture, scheduled for 8 p.m. Tuesday, April 17, in Nevins Theatre, Powell Campus Center on the Alfred University campus. Dimitri Mendeleev (1834-1907) developed the periodic table of the elements and it is considered his most important scientific contribution. "The periodic table in all of its various manifestations is chemistry's most important organizational tool," said J. Robert Pipal, professor of chemistry and organizer of the annual chemistry lecture. Scerri has written a book with the same title as his lecture, "The Periodic Table: Its Story and Its Significance," which was published in September 2006 by Oxford Press, USA, to critical acclaim. Author and physician Dr. Oliver Sacks described the book as "an absolutely gorgeous book. I put it on my bedside table and then stayed up half the night reading it - it is immensely readable." Originally from Malta, Scerri grew up in England and attended the Universities of London, Cambridge and Southampton where he obtained qualifications in chemistry, followed by a Ph.D. in the history and philosophy of science from King's College, University of London. He completed a post-doctoral fellowship at California Institute of Technology (CalTech). He is considered a pioneer in the sub-discipline of the history and philosophy of chemistry. Ten years ago, he started the journal, Foundations of Chemistry, that he still edits. He has authored more than 100 articles on chemical education and history and philosophy of science. Scerri teaches general chemistry to about 350 students each year, and also teaches classes on the history and philosophy of science. His hobbies include playing the electric guitar and piano in Chicago Blues style. Dr. Joshua Fierer, a 1959 graduate of Alfred University, created the Samuel R. Scholes Jr. Lecture in honor of his long-time mentor and friend. Scholes came to Alfred in 1932 when his father joined the faculty of the College of Ceramics at Alfred University. A 1937 graduate of Alfred University, the younger Scholes earned a Ph.D. degree from Yale University. He returned to Alfred in 1946 as a member of the faculty in the chemistry department, where he taught until his retirement in 1980.