

Public Lecture

# Lawren Smithline

from the Center for Communications Research, Princeton

## A cryptic letter to Thomas Jefferson

On Christmas Day, 1801, Thomas Jefferson received a letter from University of Pennsylvania professor Robert Patterson. The last page of the letter was written using the cipher described in the earlier pages, and Patterson withheld the key, writing, "I may safely defy the united ingenuity of the whole human race to decypher [such writing] to the end of time." The first successful cryptanalysis was done by the speaker in 2007. This talk will describe Patterson's cipher, its place in history, and its solution.

*This talk is co-sponsored by the Hightower Fund and by the Emory University Department of Mathematics and Computer Science.*

## 7pm, Tuesday, March 2nd

in MSC E208 at Emory University

