



Contribution ID: 49

Type: **Talk**

Co-nonsolvency behavior of responsive polymers in thin film/vapor systems

Tuesday 7 December 2021 16:40 (25 minutes)

After exposure to mixed water/cosolvent vapor, hydrated thin films of stimuli-responsive block copolymers with PNIPAM or PNIPMAM blocks exhibit a co-nonsolvency behavior. In a rapid film contraction, in either system, both water and cosolvent are expelled. Film swelling and contraction kinetics from saturated vapor are investigated in time-of-flight neutron reflectometry (ToF-NR) with simultaneous spectral reflectance (SR). Molecular interactions of the solvent with the respective polymer chains are analyzed with Fourier-transform infrared (FTIR) spectroscopy. The response kinetics are found to be dependent on the solvation potential of specific functional groups.

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Session Classification: Soft Matter

Track Classification: Soft Matter