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Co-nonsolvency-Triggered Contraction of Poly(sulfobetaine)-based Diblock Copolymer Thin Films in Water/Acetone Atmosphere

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Co-nonsolvency occurs if a mixture of two good solvents causes the collapse or demixing of polymers into a polymer-rich and solvent-rich phase in a certain range of compositions of these two solvents. The nonionic thermo-responsive polymer, poly(N-isopropylmethacrylamide) (PNIPMAM), which features a lower critical solution temperature (LCST) in aqueous solution, has been widely used to investigate its collapse transition behavior in a mixture of two competing good solvents. However, co-nonsolvency response of its block copolymer containing the zwitterionic poly(sulfobetaine)s, especially poly(4-((3-methacrylamidopropyl)dimethylammonio)butane-1-sulfonate)) (PSBP), which exhibits an lower upper critical solution temperature (UCST) and shows a strong swelling transition in aqueous media, is newly studied. We focus on the co-nonsolvency behavior of PSBP-b-PNIPMAM thin films in water/acetone mixtures by in situ time-of-flight neutron reflectometry (TOF-NR) and spectral reflectance (SR). Furthermore, Fourier transform infrared (FT-IR) spectroscopy is applied to investigate the interactions between the polymer thin film and water/co-solvent, which is closely related to their deuteration level.

Primary author: WANG, Peixi (Workgroup Polymer Interfaces, TUM Department of Physics, Technical University of Munich)

Co-authors: GEIGER, Christina (Technical University of Munich, Chair of Functional Materials); PAPADAKIS, Christine M. (Soft Matter Physics Group, Physics Department, Technical University of Munich, Garching, Germany); REITENBACH, Julija; Dr KREUZER, Lucas (MLZ (FRM II, TUM)); MÜLLER-BUSCHBAUM, Peter (Technische Universität München, Fakultät für Physik, Lehrstuhl für Funktionelle Materialien); LIANG, Suzhe (Physical Department, TUM)

Presenter: WANG, Peixi (Workgroup Polymer Interfaces, TUM Department of Physics, Technical University of Munich)

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