In-Situ Spectroscopic Ellipsometry of Lithium Ion Intercalation in GLAD Three-Dimensional Nanostructure Films

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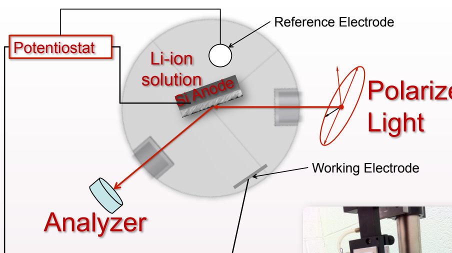
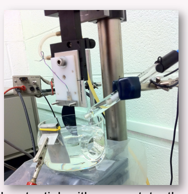
Our message

- **Rechargeable lithium ion batteries are the backbone of the today's portable electronics industry.**
- **Improved electrode materials with higher capacity and longer life cycles are still needed.**
- **Thin structured films of silicon (Si) are employed to increase surface area, and reduce stress caused by the intercalation of lithium into the films.**
- **The charge capacity of the films can be observed as a change of index of refraction using ellipsometry.**

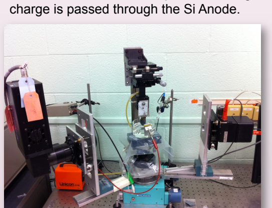
In-Situ Electrochemistry - Experimental Setup





Cyclic Voltammetry experiments are used to investigate the half cell reactivity of an analyte (Li solution) with the Si Anode. The experiments control the potential of an anode in contact with the analyte while measuring the resulting current (amperes).

The working electrode must apply the desired potential with respect to the reference electrode, which has a known reduction potential. In this setup a Saturated calomel electrode (SCE) is used that has a built in potential of +0.2415V. No current is passed through the SCE. All current and therefore charge is passed through the Si Anode.



During the Cyclic Voltammetry in-situ Mueller Matrix ellipsometry is preformed, to optically monitor the change during the redox reactions occurring on the Silicon Anode.

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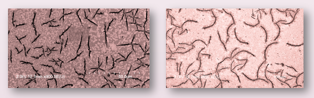
Motivation:

- To increase the specific energy of lithium-ion batteries, alternative anode materials with higher charge capacity are needed.
- Si stands out because of its high capacity to accommodate Li-ions into its lattice structure.

a-Si

- Uptake of $Li_{4.4}Si$, corresponds to 4200 mAh/g of Si.
- This volume change presents great lattice strain which leads to cracking.

a-Si after intercalation



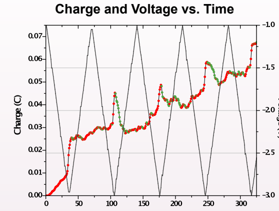
The 200nm Amorphous Silicon (a-Si) film after lithium intercalation shows cracks from the cyclic charging .

a-Si STF

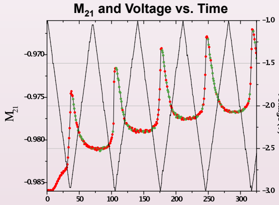
- It has been shown, that micron scale Si anodes show greater resilience to the alloying/de-alloying process.
- The alloying process can increase the Si volume greater than 2 times the original.
- Nano sized Silicon structures can relieve this stress. Making higher capacity longer lasting batteries!

Amorphous vs. STF Silicon

Amorphous Silicon

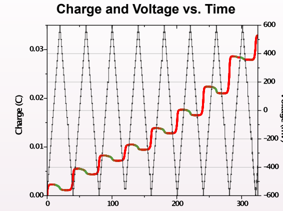


A 200nm thick film of a-Si intercalated with Li-ions. Red/green circles correspond to positive/negative current respectively

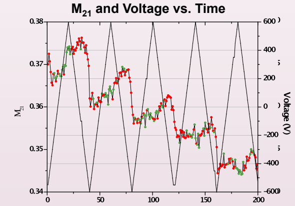


M_{21} follows the changes in the film during the Li-ion insertion and removal. Red/green circles correspond to positive/negative current respectively

Amorphous-STF Silicon



A 120nm thick film of a-Si nano rods intercalated with Li-ions. Red/green circles correspond to positive/negative current respectively

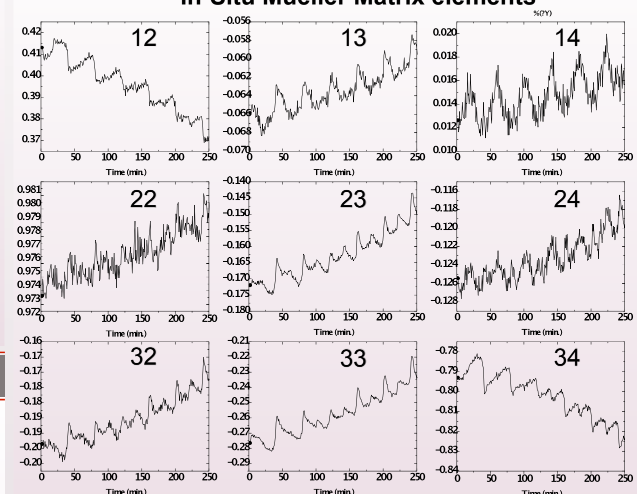


Mueller matrix element 21 also follows the changes in the film during the Li-ion insertion and removal. Red/green circles correspond to positive/negative current respectively

Silicon Nano-Rods

Optical Characterization of Li-ion Intercalation in Si-Nano Rods

In-Situ Mueller Matrix elements

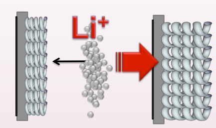


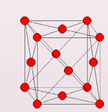
Mueller Matrix data at 600 nm, at a angle of incidence of 70 deg.

We see that the off diagonal matrix elements show mode coupling that are changing over time, and follow the cell current flow and the Li-ion 's into and out of the Si-Nano Rods.

Future work

- Relate the Mueller Matrix data directly to the amount of Li-ion's being intercalated by the Si, giving an optical technique to characterize and understand the physical changes that occur to the STF during the Li-ion insertion process.
- Find a suitable separator to allow full discharge of the samples.
  - Electronic insulator
  - Minimal electrolyte (ionic) resistance
  - Mechanical and dimensional stability
  - Sufficient physical strength to allow easy handling
  - Chemical resistance to degradation by electrolyte, impurities, and electrode reactants and products





- Measure while under galvenostat (constant current) mode to track exact charge movement.
- Optically characterize other structured thin films under intercalation, e.g. chiral structures