

The recent experimental realization of synthetic magnetic fields and spin-orbit couplings for ultracold (neutral) atoms [1–4] opens the attractive possibility to engineer a wide family of topological quantum phases. In such arrangements, one indeed expects to create quantum Hall liquids [5, 6] and topological insulating phases [7–9], in a highly controllable and clean environment. However, measuring unambiguous signatures of these quantum phases, such as non-trivial topological order or the presence of current-carrying edge states, remains a fundamental issue for the cold-atom community. In this talk, I will review the topological phases that could be realized in cold atomic gases. I will discuss the possibility to measure topological properties in these systems through available observables [10]. In particular, I will present efficient methods allowing for the detection of topological edge states in optical lattices [11, 12].

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