

Leon Cooper was born in 1930 in New York where he attended Columbia University (AB 1951: AM 1953: PhD 1954). He became a member of the Institute for Advanced Study (1954–55) after which he was a research associate at the University of Illinois (1955–57) and later an assistant professor at the Ohio State University (1957-58). He joined Brown University in 1958 where he became Henry Ledyard Goddard University Professor (1966–74) and where he is presently the Thomas J W Watson, Sr. Professor of Science (1974–) and Director of the Institute for Brain and Neural Systems.

In 1972 he received the Nobel Prize in Physics (with J Bardeen and J R Schrieffer) for his work on the theory of superconductivity which was completed while still in his 20s. In 1968, he was awarded the Comstock Prize (with J R Schrieffer) of the National Academy of Sciences. The Award of Excellence, Graduate Faculties Alumni of Columbia University and Descartes Medal, Academie de Paris, Universite Rene Descartes were conferred on Professor Cooper in the mid 1970s. In 1985 Professor Cooper received the John Jay Award of Columbia College and in 1990 the Columbia University award for Distinguished Achievement.