

Björklunden Seminars

“Vacation with a purpose”

AUGUST 4-9, 2024 AT BJÖRKLUNDEN



A Sky Full of Planets: Exploring the Night Sky and Our Solar System

Course Description

On a clear night, far from the light and the rush of the city, you can see thousands of stars. They tell our stories, guide our way, and quietly mark time. From a twinkle of light, the stars reveal something much more: the history of our celestial home, the Universe. From the formation of our planet to the life of our Sun, the swirling maelstrom of our galaxy, and the unimaginable deep of Infinity, the lights of the night sky reveal the vast sweep of the cosmos.

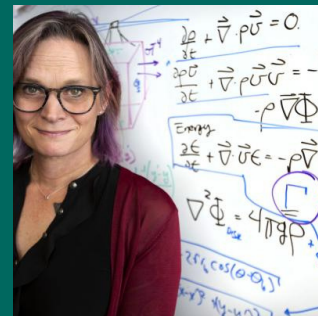
In this course we will explore the history of our exploration of the night, particularly our home in the cosmos: our own solar system. You'll learn about the discoveries of the latest missions, our plans for the future, and the nature of the more than 10,000 other solar systems now known to exist. Weather permitting, you'll learn practical astronomy with naked eye and telescopic night observations, during a week chosen to avoid a bright moon.

No prior background in astronomy or physics is required.

Please join me in what Wordsworth would call the “poetry of the heavens.”

Suggested readings: *Cosmos* by Carl Sagan, with updates by Druyan and deGrasse Tyson, and *The Stars: A New Way to See Them* by H. A. Rey.

Instructor



Megan Pickett

Pickett is an associate professor of physics at Lawrence University.

She earned a B.A. in physics at Cornell University in 1988, and a Ph.D. in Theoretical Astrophysics from Indiana University in 1995. She was a research fellow at NASA's Ames Research Center until 1999, after which she taught at Valparaiso University and Purdue University, before joining Lawrence in 2006.

She is currently writing a biography of Elda Anderson, a Manhattan Project Scientist and the first woman to chair the physics department at Milwaukee-Downer College.

Her scholarly interests include the origins of solar systems, neutron star and black hole formation, and inclusive physics education.

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