Picturing the Cosmos

Course category: (R) Physical Science & Math

Instructor: **Jim O'Leary**

We begin with an overview sampling of the beautiful images from the Hubble and James Webb Space Telescopes as examples of the ability of these instruments to see details of our universe not previously possible. Then we survey some of the earliest depictions of the cosmos, including those from prehistoric civilizations, some recently unearthed, to the early Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. We follow with the work of the Islamic world of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, where art, science and religion intersected at many levels and will feature nature-related art from Giotto, Vermeer, Turner and van Gogh.

One class will feature our evolving understanding of the Solar System and the images obtained by ever more sophisticated telescopes and spacecraft. Another will include the wide array of images of planet Earth from space, most resembling abstract art.

We conclude with the best images from the multitude of space telescopes observing the distant universe, showing intricate nebulas where stars and born and others produced by stars at the ends of their lives. Other images reveal thousands of galaxies of complex shapes and sizes, providing a sense of the immensity of the universe. We also feature the work of the current generation of astronomical artists, who depict places and journeys throughout the universe to places we have never been and, in some cases, can never venture.

Classes are straightforward lecture format. Questions pertinent to the topic being discussed are welcome at the time, while others will be answered at the conclusion of each class. Class members may contact me at jimoleary@comast.net.