

9-8-2009

## UNH International Year Of Astronomy Lecture Series Resumes Sept. 19

David Sims

*UNH Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans and Space*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.unh.edu/news>

---

### Recommended Citation

Sims, David, "UNH International Year Of Astronomy Lecture Series Resumes Sept. 19" (2009). *UNH Today*. 184.  
<https://scholars.unh.edu/news/184>

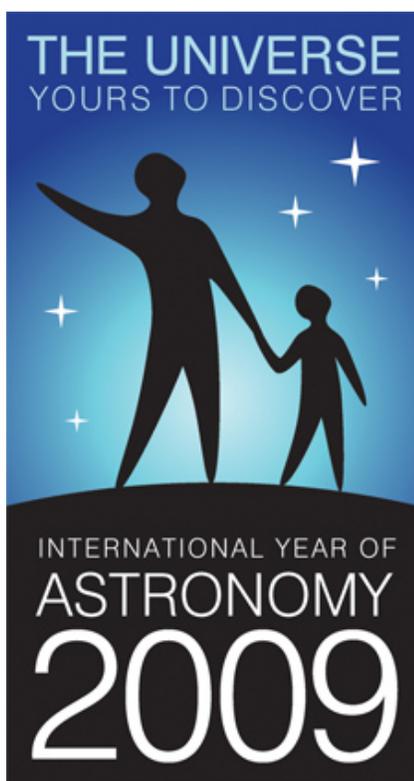
This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Administrative Offices at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Media Relations by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact [nicole.hentz@unh.edu](mailto:nicole.hentz@unh.edu).



## UNH International Year Of Astronomy Lecture Series Resumes Sept. 19

Media Contact: [David Sims](#)  
 603-862-5369  
 Science Writer  
 Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space

September 8, 2009



DURHAM, N.H. – Beginning Saturday, Sept. 19, 2009, the University of New Hampshire physics department will resume a series of weekend lectures given by UNH faculty, staff, and students to promote interest in the field of astronomy and celebrate 2009 as the International Year of Astronomy.

All talks will be held on Saturdays from 3 to 4 p.m. in DeMeritt Hall, room 112, on the UNH campus in Durham. The lectures are free and open to the public and each date will correspond with free public viewings at the UNH Observatory later that evening, weather permitting.

For this semester's first lecture, UNH associate professor James Connell of the Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space and the Department of Physics will present "The Evolving Universe: Origins of the Elements."

People tend to think of evolution in biological terms when, in fact, the whole expanding universe is evolving and has been since the Big Bang. One aspect of this evolution has been the creation of the elements, starting with the "primordial soup" in the Big Bang and continuing to this day. The heavy elements on Earth, including those in everyday objects and in our bodies, were created billions of years ago in stars. As noted astronomer

Carl Sagan was fond of saying, "we are made of star stuff." Connell's lecture will take a look at where and how this star stuff came to be.

In the second lecture, occur Oct. 3, 2009, physics graduate student Richard Woolf of the UNH Space Science Center and UNH physics instructor John Gianforte will present "Is the Sky Really Falling? Sorting Out End of the World Scenarios."

Popular media outlets bombard people every day with doomsday prophecies. Gianforte, who is also known as "The Sky Guy" (see [www.theskyguy.org](http://www.theskyguy.org)) works to expose these fallacies and debunk the bad science that circulates via television, radio, tabloids, and websites.

There are, of course, a few things that we Earthlings should keep our eyes on. For example, a comet impact or a gamma-ray burst from a nearby stellar explosion would have dire consequences. Woolf will discuss the hostile universe we live in, what can (and cannot) be done to prevent disasters from above, and how concerned our civilization should be about these events occurring.

Two more lectures are scheduled for Saturday, November 7 and December 5.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) declared 2009 to be the IYA in recognition of Galileo's observation of the heavens 400 years ago, which ushered in the age of modern observational astronomy.

For more information on the UNH lecture series visit [http://physics.unh.edu/observatory/IYA\\_lectures.html](http://physics.unh.edu/observatory/IYA_lectures.html) and for more on the IYA visit <http://astronomy2009.nasa.gov>.

-30-

International Year of Astronomy logo is available to download:  
[http://www.unh.edu/news/cj\\_nr/2009/sept/iya\\_logo\\_lg.jpg](http://www.unh.edu/news/cj_nr/2009/sept/iya_logo_lg.jpg)