Big Bangs and Little Green Men: Thinking Critically about the Universe and Its Origins

John VanLeer and David Shapiro
Sec LCH MW 11:00am-3:20pm
10 credits

H, NS – This 10.0 credit learning community, combining ASTR& 101 with PHIL& 115, is a course in how to think about weird (and not-so-weird) things; it uses the study of astronomy and related topics as a way to explore what counts as a good reason for believing something to be true. It is a course in critical thinking as applied to claims and phenomena that many people find hard to either justify or refute. A central theme of the course is the scientific method: how does science proceed in the production of knowledge and how does that method differ from other methods of producing and justifying beliefs? We will look into both scientific and theological claims about the origin of the universe; in doing so, we will compare the epistemological differences between creationist and evolutionary theory. Students can expect to come out of this class with a deeper understanding of astronomy, of what counts as a good reason for believing something to be true, and an improved ability to evaluate arguments, both in science and in their day-to-day lives. (LAB)

Prerequisite(s):
Completion of ENGL 090 with a grade of 2.0 or higher or placement by testing into ENGL 096; AND completion of MATH 085 with a grade of 2.0 or higher or placement by testing into MATH 095.

Students are required to register for both items below for a total of 10.0 credits:
Item 1250 - ASTR& 101 Introduction to Astronomy
Item 3520 - PHIL& 115 Critical Thinking