



Silicon Valley Astronomy Lecture Series

Wednesday, April 22, 2009 @ 7:00 pm

Protecting the Earth and Other Planets

As part of the 10th annual Silicon Valley Astronomy Lecture Series, Dr. Margaret Race, one of the leading experts on contamination danger and the protection of planets, will discuss *Planetary Protection & Hitchhikers in the Solar System: The Danger of Mingling Microbes*, an illustrated, non-technical lecture, Wednesday, April 22, at 7 p.m. in the Smithwick Theatre at Foothill College in Los Altos Hills. This talk is part of the local events celebrating the International Year of Astronomy in 2009. Admission is free and the public is invited. Seating is on a first-come, first-served basis. Arrive early to locate parking.

Scientists searching for life elsewhere have to worry about avoiding harmful cross contamination during the exploration of planets and their moons. We don't want to take Earth microbes to Mars or bring back alien microbes to Earth. In this timely talk, Dr. Race will give a behind-the-scenes view of environmental management planning for solar system missions, and explain the role of the Outer Space Treaty and other related national and international policies. She will also discuss the varied societal issues likely to arise from discoveries about life beyond the Earth-issues about the meaning of life, its future evolutionary trajectory, and environmental sustainability in the universe.

Dr. Race is an ecologist at the SETI Institute who works with NASA and the international space community to develop, refine and apply planetary protection policies to missions to the planets. She has organized and edited proceedings for a number of conferences in this field, and served on panels evaluating contamination danger for the National Research Council. She has a strong interest in communicating science to the public, having worked at both the Environmental Protection Agency and KQED Television.

The free lecture series is sponsored by the Foothill College Astronomy Program, NASA Ames Research Center, SETI Institute and Astronomical Society of the Pacific. Past lectures from the series are available online in MP3-format.

Foothill College is located on El Monte Road in Los Altos Hills off Interstate 280. Visitors must purchase a campus parking permit for \$2. Parking lots 1, 7 and 8 provide stair and no-stair access to the theatre. For more information, access www.foothill.edu or call (650) 949-7888.

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Meet at San Antonio and El Camino at 5:45 for dinner at the Pasta Market or 6:30 for carpooling, Wed. Mar 4. The lecture is at 7:00. For more information visit <http://paloaltocatholic.org/aofa.html>, or contact Carrie, ckamos@yahoo.com, or Randy, 408.739.2881, age-of-aquinas@paloaltocatholic.org.