

# Galactic Cannibalism

3rd Annual F. K. Edmondson Astronomy Public Lecture

Professor Kathryn V. Johnston

Columbia University



Wednesday, December 2, 2015, 7:30pm  
Swain West 119

**Abstract:** Galaxies! Images of these objects are awe-inspiring - spirals of billions of stars, along with the gas and dust from which stars form, spinning slowly in the sky. Yet these majestic objects are thought to have formed quite violently through the agglomeration of smaller objects. Even our own home - the Milky Way galaxy - seems to be in the process of devouring several smaller galaxies! This talk examines why we think galaxies are cannibals in general, and what this means about the past and future evolution of the Milky Way in particular.

# Professor Kathryn V. Johnston

## Columbia University



Kathryn V. Johnston is an astronomer who studies how galaxies form and evolve, what they contain and how they are structured. She describes some of these interests in a recent article in the December 2014 issue of Scientific American.

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/destroyed-dwarf-galaxies-reveal-milky-way-s-history/>

She is now the Chair of the Department of Astronomy at Columbia University, where she teaches undergraduate courses and mentors graduate students in research projects. She completed an undergraduate degree in mathematics at Cambridge University, a PhD in Astronomy and Astrophysics at the University of California at Santa Cruz, postdoctoral work at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and her first faculty position at Wesleyan University. Her lifelong interest in astronomy has been fueled since childhood by a love for science fiction - reaching for the stars with the imagination in and outside of work. She grew up in Yorkshire in the north of England and now lives in suburban New Jersey with her husband, their two kids and the family dog.

*Previous Edmondson Lecturers:*

2014 Martha Haynes

2013 David Morrison

*The annual F. K. Edmondson Astronomy Public Lectures were established to honor the memory of Professor Frank Kelly Edmondson, a faculty member of the Department of Astronomy at Indiana University from 1937 until his retirement in 1983, and as Chair of the Department from 1944 until 1978. Professor Edmondson is remembered not only for his contributions to the study of asteroids through the Indiana Asteroid Program, but also for his dedication and service to Indiana University and to the astronomical community. The Edmondson Lectures are endowed in honor of Professor Edmondson by his family and friends.*