Amateur Astronomers Association of Princeton

January Club Meeting

January 13, 2026 at 7:30pm

How Our Sun Interacts with the Interstellar Medium

This past September 24th, a Falcon 9 rocket lifted off from Kennedy Space Center carrying, in carpool-like fashion with two other “ride along” missions, NASA’s IMAP spacecraft. The Princeton-led mission will examine how solar dynamics interact with the interstellar medium. Guest speaker, Jamie Rankin, Ph.D. is the instrument lead for SWAPI (Solar Wind and Pickup Ion), one of ten instruments carried by IMAP. In the coming months, IMAP will investigate how the solar wind interacts with the interstellar medium; how these particles mysteriously get accelerated from their origins to the farthest reaches of the solar system, and the outer-most boundary of the heliosphere. Dr. Rankin will discuss the objectives and observations of IMAP and her role as Project Manager for Voyager data as it passes the outer boundaries of our Sun’s influence.

featured speaker

Jamie Rankin, Ph.D.

Research Scholar and lecturer in Astrophysical Sciences, Princeton University

Dr. Rankin earned her bachelors’ degrees in music composition and physics from the University of Utah. She went to graduate school at Caltech where she helped build EPI-Hi, (a charged particle detector quantifying high energy particles) now flying through the Sun’s corona on the Parker Solar Probe. Her work on this instrument introduced her to Princeton astrophysicist David McComas, original instrument lead on SWAPI, who promoted her into his original role and invited her to join his research team at Princeton. She is an instrument lead on the NASA IMAP mission and supervises the instrument from a technical perspective and leads the team interpreting and analyzing the data it collects.

Peyton Hall, Princeton University and on Zoom

free to attend – all are welcome

AAAP Club Meetings are held monthly from September through June. For more details including the Zoom link and information about this month’s presentation, visit www.princetonastronomy.org