

Bender, Patty

From: Sally Shafer [shafer@pa.uky.edu]
Sent: Friday, September 21, 2007 10:03 AM
To: 'Thomas H. Troland'; 'Mike Cavagnero'
Subject: gaskell web info

Tom and Mike

I decided to see what was available about Martin Gaskell on the web, in particular about his approach to blending of science and religion.

<http://physics.unl.edu/directory/gaskell/gaskell.html> which links to

'professor profile' at http://physics.unl.edu/directory/gaskell/professor_profile.html

and also to 'personal webpage' <http://incolor.inetnebr.com/gaskell/gaskell.html>
with links to multiple sites including 'Bible and Astronomy lecture notes'
<http://incolor.inetnebr.com/gaskell/genesis.html>

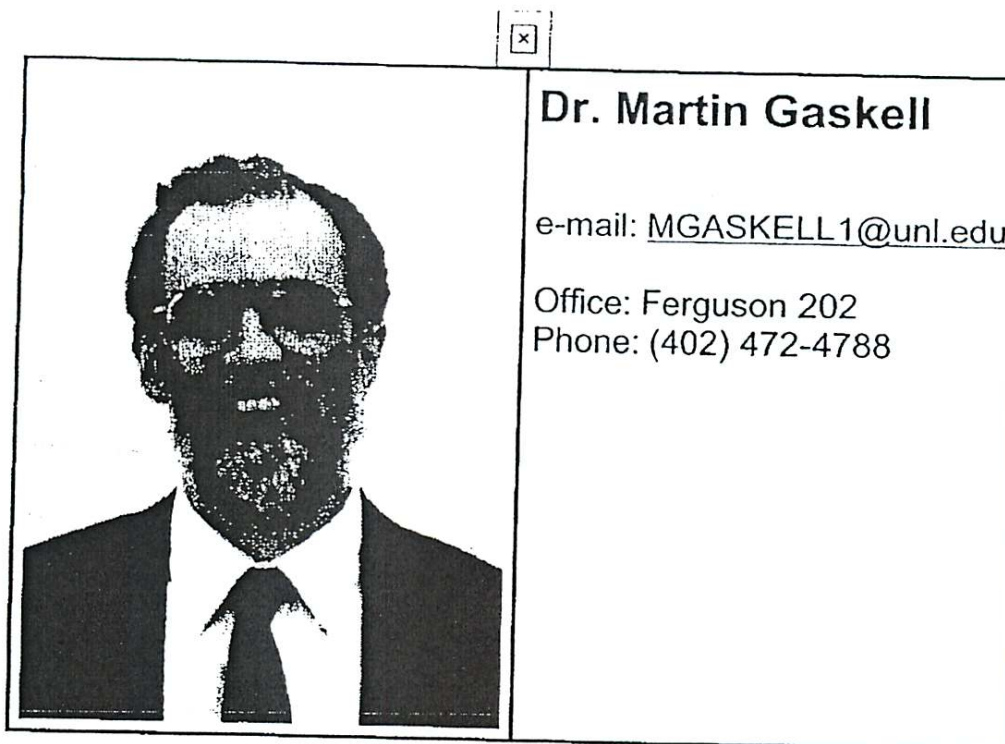
The last is of some length and I have not yet read it, but it promises to be thought provoking. Clearly this man is complex and likely fascinating to talk with – but potentially evangelical. If we hire him, we should expect similar content to be posted on or directly linked from the department website.

Please advise the committee of these links if you think the content relevant to our decision.

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Research Interests: Theory and Observations of Quasars, Active Galaxies, Supermassive Black Holes, and Supernovae

PERSONAL HOMEPAGE (musical compositions, pictures etc.) --- UNL Admissions Office PROFESSOR PROFILE --- Lincoln CONTRA DANCES

TEACHING - Fall 2003

ASTRONOMY 103, (with special contributions from my 7 year old daughter!)

Biographical Sketch

I received my bachelor's degree from the ancient University of Edinburgh in Scotland (founded 1582). The Astronomy Department (now called the Institute for Astronomy) was part of the Royal Observatory Edinburgh. I went to graduate school at the University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC) where I did my research at Lick Observatory. After I got my Ph.D. I was as a post-doctoral fellow in the Institute of Astronomy (IOA) at Cambridge



University (founded so long ago it's hard to define when it was founded!) in England. While at Cambridge I had time on the Anglo Australian Telescope and the UK Infra-Red Telescope (still the world's largest telescope dedicated solely to infra-red observing) at 14,000 ft. on Mauna Kea in Hawaii. I also went to the VILSPA tracking station in Spain to use the International Ultraviolet Explorer Satellite (IUE). The IUE has been my favorite satellite. My first Ph.D. student did her thesis work using IUE data.

After a couple of happy years in Cambridge we moved back to the USA and I taught for a couple of years at the University of Texas (UT) Department of Astronomy in Austin. While at the University of Texas I would observe from the famous McDonald Observatory. I was an assistant professor at the University of Michigan Department of Astronomy. While at Michigan I would observe from the MDM Observatory on Kitt Peak in Arizona. I have also spent some very pleasant one year visits in the astronomy/astrophysics programs at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, the Ohio State University and the University of Oklahoma. This is now my twelfth year of teaching at the University of Nebraska.

I am currently involved in a variety of theoretical and observational research projects with graduate and undergraduate students at the University of Nebraska and many collaborators at other institutions. We use ground-based data and data from the Hubble Space Telescope and other satellites that observe types of radiation that don't make it down to the earth's surface (e.g., ultra-violet and X-rays). This research is funded by research grants from the National Science Foundation and NASA.

Ph.D. Students

Anuradha Koratkar went off to the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore, where she has served as project scientist for the Faint Object Spectrograph (FOS) on the Hubble Space Telescope (HST), and, most recently, as PRESTO project scientist.

Stephanie Snedden is now a staff astronomer at the Apache Point Observatory (APO) in New Mexico working on the new Sloan Digital Sky Survey (SDSS - a collaborative project of Princeton, Johns Hopkins, the University of Chicago, and Fermi Lab.).

Other Past and Present Graduate Student Researchers

Gary Bower (Kitt Peak National Observatory), Elizabeth Bozayan (Dept. Physics, Univ. Rhode Island), Mark Freeling, Rene Goosmann (Observatoire de Paris, Meudon) Cyrus Hall (Astronomy Dept, Univ. Hawaii), Elizabeth Klimek (Univ. Nebraska), Julia Kostogorova (Univ. Nebraska), Victoria Mariupolskaya (Univ. Texas), Bruce McCollum (NASA Goddard Space Flight Center), Mark Schmitz, Adam Wysota

Past and Present Undergraduate Research Students

[If you're on this list and have a web page I can link to, send me the link and I'll include it.]

Michael Anderson (optical and ultraviolet continuum variability of quasar 3C 273), Chad Bender (multi-wavelength observations of rapid variability in NGC 5548), A. J. Benker (observations of color-dependent continuum changes in NGC 3516 and NGC 7469) Daniel Bergman (multi-wavelength observations of rapid variability in NGC 5548), Thomas Bills (multi-wavelength observations of rapid variability in NGC 5548), Jordan Burkey (determination of chemical abundances in quasars through photoionization modeling), Jeff Campbell (photometry of AGNs), Joe Centenni (software development for analysis of line and continuum variability of quasar 3C 273), Jon Dokter (HST/IUE and ground-based study of NGC 5548), Conrad Engel (software development to permit imaging observations at Behlen Observatory), Oceana Francis (statistics of supernovae searches; photometry of 3C 390.3), Thomas George (multi-wavelength variability of quasars), Rebecca Grove (analysis of rapid optical variability in NGC 5548; observations of Akn 564), Denise Gutzmer (multi-wavelength observations of rapid variability in NGC 5548), Rebecca Harbison (photometric data reduction and analysis, multi-wavelength study of NGC 5548), Cece Hedrick (photometry of AGNs), Mary Hiller (photometry of 3C 390.3; multi-wavelength observations of rapid variability in NGC 5548), Elizabeth Klimek (multi-wavelength observations of rapid variability in NGC 5548), Christina Lund (multi-wavelength observations of rapid variability in NGC 5548), Shawn Pebley (multi-wavelength observations of rapid variability in NGC 5548), Brad Peterson (multi-wavelength variability of quasars), Matthew Poulsen (multi-wavelength observations of rapid variability in NGC 5548; variability studies of Narrow-Line Seyfert 1 galaxies), James Scott (variability of quasars as a function of luminosity and redshift), Neal Yasami (analysis of short-period variability of NGC 5548; observations of Akn 564),

ASTRONOMY OPPORTUNITIES AT UNL AND THE LINCOLN AREA

ON CAMPUS:

UNL STUDENT OBSERVATORY - on top of the parking garage across from Memorial Stadium.

MUELLER PLANETARIUM - located on campus in Morrill Hall.

MINNICH OBSERVATORY - great views of the sun! - on the second floor of Ferguson Lab.

ELSEWHERE IN LINCOLN:

HYDE OBSERVATORY - in Holmes Park - open to the public every Saturday - free! - astronomical fun and education for all ages!

PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB - meets at Hyde Observatory on the last Tuesday of each month - meetings open to public - no prior knowledge of astronomy needed.

WITHIN AN HOUR'S DRIVE OF LINCOLN:

MAHONEY STAR PARTIES - monthly (late spring through early fall) - in Mahoney State Park.

BEHLEN OBSERVATORY - on UNL agricultural station - only open to the public twice per year.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ASTRONOMY IN NEBRASKA
VISIT

NEB-STAR (ARiN)

RESEARCH BIBLIOGRAPHY

(sorry, this is only to 1999 and hence out of date. I haven't had time to put the journal references to recent papers here, but you can find links to our recent preprints below.)

RECENT PREPRINTS

[Names of student co-authors are followed by an asterisk]

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Elizabeth S. Klimek, C. Martin Gaskell, & Cecelia H. Hedrick "Optical Variability Of Narrow-Line Seyfert 1 Galaxies", *Astrophysical Journal in press*.

[\[Abstract\]](#)

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Gaskell, C. M., Goosmann, R. W., Antonucci, R. R. J. & Whyson, D "The Nuclear Reddening Curve for Active Galactic Nuclei and the Shape of the Infra-Red to X-Ray Spectral Energy Distribution", submitted to *Astrophysical Journal*. (revised version July 2003)

[=astro-ph/0309595]

[\[Abstract\]](#)

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Snedden, S. A. & Gaskell, C. M. "The Case for Optically Thick High Velocity Broad Line Region Gas in Active Galactic Nuclei", submitted to *Astrophysical Journal*. (revised February 2004)

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Gaskell, C. M. "Lognormal X-ray Flux Variations in an Extreme Narrow-Line Seyfert 1 Galaxy", submitted to *Astrophysical Journal Letters*.

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Fu, H., Li, Z. Y., Leung, K. C., Zhang, Z. S., Li, Z. L., & Gaskell, C. M. "A Photometry Campaign for IR Geminorum in Quiescence", *Chinese Journal of Astronomy and Astrophysics*, 4, 88.

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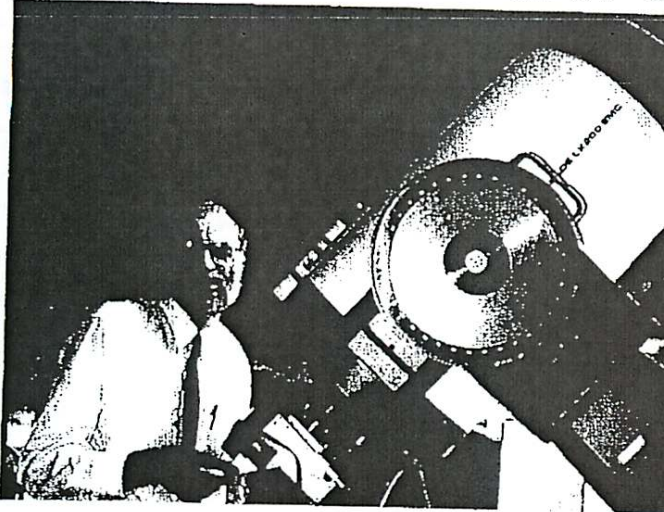
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Dr. Martin Gaskell

Astronomy Professor



Home State: It's now Nebraska
Hobbies: Composing and playing music (classical and Renaissance); folk dancing; telescope making
Favorite Movie: "The Sound of Music"
Favorite Food: Chinese
Email Address: MGASKELL1@unl.edu
Web Page: [Click here for Dr. Gaskell's homepage.](#)

Favorite Quote: "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."—James 4:8

Undergraduate Classes:

- Astronomy 103 - Descriptive Astronomy
- Astronomy 113 - Selected Topics in Astronomy
- Astronomy 204 - Introductory Astronomy & Astrophysics
- Astronomy 406 - Astronomical Instrumentation & Techniques
- Astronomy 407 - Physics of the Interstellar Medium
- Physics 141 - Elementary General Physics I
- Physics 142 - Elementary General Physics II
- Physics 391 - Undergraduate Astronomy Research



What is your favorite class to teach?

"If I had to pick a favorite I think I'd say Astronomy 103 (Descriptive Astronomy). For me the joy of teaching courses like that stems from my being a Christian and getting to explain something about God's universe. I like exposing people to what the universe they live in is like, and explaining things about it they probably didn't know or realize before. They get to learn to identify what's up in the sky, look through telescopes and they learn the answers to questions like "do black holes really exist?" I also like teaching Astronomy 103 because of the diverse mix of people in the class. Many of them have backgrounds very different from my own, and that helps make the class more interesting and fun for me. "

Awards:

- Five-time finalist for the annual ASUN Outstanding Educator Award
- Mortar Board Professor of the Month
- Kappa Delta Educator of the Month
- Seven-time recipient UNL Parents Association Recognition for Contributions to Students

In your opinion, why were you selected for these awards?

"I'm concerned about communicating the material effectively and explaining concepts. I try to make the harder ideas easier to learn and understand. I have an enormous interest in the subject material of my courses myself and students pick up on that. I'm also very interested in the teaching/learning process and I really enjoy teaching my students. My wife and I are homeschooling our three children so teaching and learning are a big part of our family life too.

"I'm the sort of person who is concerned far more for the person than the grade he or she receives in my class. I believe that from God's point of view people are important regardless of their socio-economic background, ethnicity, or grade-point average."

What do you like best about your job?

"I like both the research and teaching aspects of my job equally. The thing I like most about my research is when we learn something new, something that nobody has realized before. For me the best part of the teaching is the relationships and interactions with the students. Teaching would be no fun without the students! My wife and I have kept in touch with some students for years after the course. It's always rewarding to see people learn and apply what they've learned. I should also add that I don't see a sharp line between teaching and research. Many UNL students have been involved in my research.

What is your greatest achievement professionally?

"My main area of research is on quasars. These are tremendous outpourings of energy from around supermassive black holes in the very centers of galaxies. This is what I've had most of my research funding for studying. The parts of my published research astronomers around the world refer to most often is my work on the gas near the black holes. My collaborators and I have made a number of discoveries about this gas and how quasars work."

What is your greatest achievement personally?

...(long pause) "It's something I don't really think about. I'm a parent, professor, researcher...can I just say that? I don't normally think about that kind of thing."

What do you enjoy most about life?

"I enjoy my family, my wife and kids, teaching, research, and my hobbies. Music is a large part of my life. I've been fairly serious about composing romantic and classical music. I also play various renaissance instruments."

What issues are there that you are particularly passionate about and you are working to change?

"I'm very concerned about the fetal tissue research at UNMC. I don't believe any university system should be associated with the killing of unborn babies."

What reason should students choose to come to the University of Nebraska at Lincoln?

"UNL is a good value for your money. All universities offer about the same education. We don't have the prestige of an Ivy League school, but we use the same textbooks and offer just as good an education at a fraction of the cost. We are a major research university, and there's not a lot separating us from other major research universities. Most of our courses are taught by Ph.D. faculty, many of whom are on the cutting edge of research into their subject matter. This means that undergraduates have a chance to also get involved in that research.

"I believe UNL is a great place to learn. I've taught at a number of other universities, some of which certainly regard themselves as more prestigious than UNL, but my wife and I plan on sending our kids here rather than to one of those other universities."

Do you have an interesting/funny story that happened to you in one of your classes?

"I always warn my students to wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts for my Astronomy 103 class field trips. One of my field trips once was to go see a new comet visible soon after sunset. It had been a warm day so despite my warnings the students almost all showed up in shorts and T-shirts. We drove to a farmer's field far away in the countryside. When we arrived I left everybody setting up a telescope and I went to the farm house to let the farmer know we'd arrived. When I got back to the cars I found every single student back in the cars! Their bare arms and legs were being eaten by mosquitoes. Now I tell the story of that trip to inspire people to dress properly for our trips!"

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Gary J. Ferland

From: Mike Cavagnero [mike@pa.uky.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, October 03, 2007 11:57 AM
To: Gary J. Ferland; Keith B. MacAdam; Nancy Levenson; Tom Troland; Sally Shafer; Steve Ellis
Subject: something to think about

Please treat this email, as in all personnel matters, as strictly confidential. In particular, do not forward or copy it to anyone.

One of our faculty members who is not on the committee has expressed some concern about Martin Gaskell's websites discussing science and religion. That individual suggested that their are people in KY who might use his appointment as an opportunity to push a particular religious agenda, in particular, creationism. He suggested, in particular, that we might one day wake up to a Herald-Leader headline citing "UK hires creationist as Observatory Director." Such a headline would probably not be a fair representation of Martin's personal views, which are not simple, but the headline could appear nonetheless.

I was concerned about this issue, and so sent an email to the Dean and Provost, asking for their advice. I suggested that they have a look at his website <http://incolor.inetnebr.com/gaskell/genesis.html>
There response is appended below, and you should all read it carefully. It indicates the standard to which we will be held should Martin be appointed.

Of paramount importance, at least in my mind, is Martin's rights of free speech and religious freedom. However, it seems reasonable to anticipate that, as a permanent member of our staff, as a teacher, and as an outreach director, his views would eventually become widely known.

Mike Cavagnero

From: Swampy

I completely agree with Steve. The paper uses his Nebraska byline, and the paper imputes the authority of his status as a scientist.

-----Original Message-----

From: Hoch, Steven
Sent: Monday, October 01, 2007 11:51 AM
To: 'Mike Cavagnero'
Cc: Subbaswamy, Kumble
Subject: RE: some advice

Mike,

Here are my thoughts.

The URL you give below, in my view, is should be considered a scholarly paper. Gaskell identifies himself with the University of Nebraska and states that these notes have formed the basis for public talks he has given at a number of universities. Therefore, I suggest that the committee needs to determine whether this paper and others he might have written are good science.

As Director of the Observatory, he is being hired for his scientific knowledge. For example, is the "young earth creationist position" he advocates supportable on the basis of the standards of science?



Similarly, when he asks "when was the beginning?" (p. 7), and uses astronomy to answer that question, does he do so using standards that accord with good science? Does the literature he cites reflect the current state of the discipline or is he privileging certain materials because of their theological provenance and prominence?

Given the nature of the position, I think assessing the value of his scholarly work is central to making an appointment.

Steve

Steven L. Hoch
Dean
College of Arts and Sciences

Gary J. Ferland

From: Nancy A. Levenson [levenson@pa.uky.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, October 03, 2007 3:05 PM
To: Mike Cavagnero
Cc: Gary J. Ferland; Keith B. MacAdam; Nancy Levenson; Tom Troland; Sally Shafer; Steve Ellis
Subject: Re: something to think about

I have absolutely no concerns about Gaskell's astronomical scholarship that appears in the refereed literature, and I am extremely sensitive to legal and ethical prohibitions against religious discrimination.

The difficulty I see, without yet reaching a firm conclusion, is what (if anything) to make of his independent creationist work. It does not present the obvious conflict of Mike's example; it is not on a university website and does not directly challenge any current astronomical knowledge or conclusions. However, as Swamy and Steve argued, with an academic byline, is this now a valid subject of scholarly criticism?

The closest direct argument about astronomy in this work is that Genesis is more than "just theological," meaning it does relate to physical events, but Gaskell does not expand on this point to explain how the Bible should be used to inform or influence scientific investigations. He acknowledges that biology is not the focus of this work and allows for evolution, but I view the claim that "science has no satisfactory explanation of the origins of life yet" as naive.

(Young earth creationists would equally assert that "science has no satisfactory explanation of the evolution of life yet".)

The scholarship of the philosophical and theological arguments is weaker, mostly avoiding reference to academic publications. Atheism is dismissed with the assertion that there are no arguments in its favor. I find the subsequent references to what "a number of people have noted" or what "has been said" an attempt to deflect personal criticism while promoting these ("others'") conclusions.

I do fully expect the predicted public relations disaster if Gaskell were hired, but I am not certain that the related arguments against hiring him can avoid being discriminatory.

I still have some valid concerns about this candidate, such as how he would fit into a role that requires responding to a number of different constituencies, including faculty, teachers, and the community, in a position as a very public representative of the department and university. I have not yet determined who is the best candidate for the job, and I hope to use the interviews to answer this question.

--Nancy

