

# Mario Damiano

*Ph.D. in Astrophysics*  
*Data Science practitioner*

4800 Oak Grove Dr, M/S 169-237  
91109, Pasadena, CA  
United States  
+1 (818) 928 9338  
✉ [mario.damiano@jpl.nasa.gov](mailto:mario.damiano@jpl.nasa.gov)

## Professional Objectives

- Automation of data analysis through the use of Machine (ML) and Deep Learning (DL) algorithms;
- Development of pipelines for data analysis;
- Combining multiple data analysis techniques and methods for specific applications;
- Reverse information retrieval processes through Bayesian statistics.
- Technical and Scientific interpretation of data and model outcomes;

## Professional experience

**2018 - 2022 Postdoctoral Research Fellow**, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) – Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) – California Institute of Technology, CA, United States.

- Developed of a novel pipeline (EXOREL<sup>®</sup>) for scientific data interpretation. Deployed Bayesian statistics by using the Multi Nested sapling algorithm;
- Developed a Neural Network model to speed up the retrieval process of EXOREL<sup>®</sup>. Generated training, validation and test sets and evaluated model performance post training;
- Participated to the organization of a data challenge. Contributed to the simulation of the data and to the validation of participants results;
- Data analysis and result scientific interpretation of Hubble Space Telescope (HST) data;
- Development of a pipeline for James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) data analysis;
- Produced proposals for observation planning with HST and JWST.

## Education

2019

**Ph.D. in Astrophysics**, University College London (UCL), London, England, UK,  
Advisors: Prof. Giovanna Tinetti, Dr. Giuseppina Micela, and Dr. Ingo Waldmann.  
Thesis title: *Data analysis of space and ground observations of exoplanetary atmosphere using Machine Learning algorithms.*

2015

**MSc Physics (Astrophysics)**, University of Palermo (UNIPA), Palermo, Italy.,  
Advisors: Prof. Giovanni Peres and Dr. Giuseppina Micela.

Thesis title: *Exoplanetary atmosphere: high-resolution spectrum with instruments iLocater and HIRES.*

2013

**BSc Physics Science**, University of Palermo (UNIPA), Palermo, Italy.,

Advisors: Prof. Giovanni Peres and Dr. Giuseppina Micela.

Thesis title: *Exoplanets and stellar activity in the IR-band.*

## Awards, honors, grants, and fellowships

- Multiple awarded STScI grants for HST and JWST observations (see “Competitively awarded proposals and observing time” section), 2020-present;
- JPL Postdoctoral Fellowship, NASA/JPL, 2018;
- Ph.D. studentship, European Research Council (ERC) and National Institute for Astrophysics (INAF), 2015.

---

## IT Skills

- Extensive knowledge of the Python language (7 years of experience), including packages used for data analysis (i.e. NumPy, SciPy, PyAstronomy, Pandas, mcee, PyMultinest, dynesty), data visualization (i.e. Matplotlib), server parallelization through MPI (i.e. mpi4py) and ML and DL libraries (i.e. Scikit-learn, Tensorflow, Keras);
- Knowledge of the C language (simple scripting for physics calculations);
- Knowledge of the Matlab language (data visualization and statistics);
- Extensive knowledge of text editing tools (i.e. L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X, Microsoft Office, Apple Keynote, Overleaf);
- Daily usage of server resources (knowledge of bash scripting and PBS commands) for intensive computation.

---

## Invited colloquia and seminar talks

- 2022** 'EXOPLANETARY ATMOSPHERES REVEALED THROUGH MACHINE LEARNING APPROACHES', Jet Propulsion Laboratory, CA, US.
- 2022** 'ATMOSPHERIC CHARACTERIZATION OF TEMPERATE ROCKY PLANETS THROUGH REFLECTION SPECTROSCOPY', ExoSS workshop, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, CA, US.
- 2021** 'UNRAVEL THE NATURE OF EXOPLANETARY ATMOSPHERES THROUGH SPECTROSCOPIC CHARACTERIZATION', IPAC, California Institute of Technology, CA, US.
- 2020** 'EXOPLANETARY CHARACTERIZATION THROUGH REFLECTION SPECTROSCOPY', JPL Postdoc Seminar Series, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, CA, US.
- 2019** 'TWO LENSES FOR GLASSES: LOW- AND HIGH-RESOLUTION SPECTROSCOPIC OBSERVATIONS OF EXOPLANETARY ATMOSPHERES', Yuk luncheon seminar, California Institute of Technology, CA, US.
- 2019** 'TWO LENSES FOR GLASSES: LOW- AND HIGH-RESOLUTION SPECTROSCOPIC OBSERVATIONS OF EXOPLANETARY ATMOSPHERES', JPL luncheon seminar, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, CA, US.
- 2017** 'SPECTROSCOPIC OBSERVATIONS OF HOT-JUPITERS WITH THE HUBBLE WFC3 CAMERA', INAF-OAPa seminar series, INAF-Astronomical Observatory of Palermo (INAF-OAPa), Palermo, Italy.

---

## Conference Presentations

- 2022** 'ATMOSPHERIC CHARACTERIZATION OF TEMPERATE ROCKY PLANETS THROUGH REFLECTION SPECTROSCOPY', Astrobiology Science Conference (AbSciCon), Atlanta, GA, United States.
- 2020** 'EXOPLANETARY CHARACTERIZATION THROUGH REFLECTION SPECTROSCOPY', 2<sup>nd</sup> Starshade Science Industry Partnership (SIP) forum, Boulder, CO, United States.
- 2020** 'EXOPLANETARY CHARACTERIZATION THROUGH REFLECTION SPECTROSCOPY', 235<sup>th</sup> American Astronomical Society (AAS) meeting, Honolulu, HI, United States.
- 2019** 'EXOPLANET REFLECTED LIGHT RETRIEVAL: WHAT CAN WE LEARN?', Division Planetary Science (DPS) 51 / European Planetary Science Congress (EPSC) 14, Geneva, Switzerland.
- 2018** 'PLANETARY SIGNAL EXTRACTION VIA HIGH-RESOLUTION SPECTROSCOPY', Centre for Planetary Science (CPS) meeting, Mullard Space Science Laboratory (MSSL), England, UK.
- 2018** 'PLANETARY SIGNAL EXTRACTION VIA HIGH-RESOLUTION SPECTROSCOPY', Workshop for collaboration with Indian science community, University College London, London, England, UK.

- 2017** 'NEAR-IR TRANSMISSION SPECTRUM OF HAT-P-32B USING WFC3 CAMERA ON BOARD HST', European Planetary Science Congress (EPSC) 12, Riga, Latvia.
- 2017** 'PLANETARY SIGNAL EXTRACTION VIA HIGH-RESOLUTION SPECTROSCOPY: WORK IN PROGRESS', 10<sup>th</sup> GAPS2.0 meeting, Palermo, Italy.
- 2016** 'SPECTROSCOPIC OBSERVATIONS OF HOT-JUPITERS WITH THE HUBBLE WFC3 CAMERA', Division for Planetary Sciences (DPS) 48 / European Planetary Science Congress (EPSC) 11, Pasadena, CA, US.

## Competitively awarded proposals and observing time

- 2021** 14.4 primary JWST hours awarded in Cycle 1. PI of GO-02334: *"Exploring the nature of a temperate exoplanet in the Fulton gap"*
- 2021** 67.9 primary JWST hours awarded in Cycle 1. Co-I of GO-02372: *"Deep Characterization of the Atmosphere of a Temperate Sub-Neptune"*
- 2021** 15.4 primary JWST hours awarded in Cycle 1. Co-I of GO-01952: *"Determining the Atmospheric Composition of the Super-Earth 55 Cancri e"*
- 2020** 8 primary HST orbits awarded in Cycle 28. Co-I of GO-16448: *"Confirming a tentative detection of an atmosphere around a potentially rocky planet"*

## Academic service

- 2021-present** Referee activity for Nature Astronomy (NatAstron), Astronomy and Astrophysics (A&A).

## Student advising

- 2022** Co-tutoring two graduate students within the SURF@JPL program. Pasadena, CA, US.
  - 1— Use of Bayesian statistics to perform spectral interpretation in preparation of upcoming JWST observations;
  - 2— development of ML/DL algorithms to analyze the NASA exoplanet archive in order to classify the planets and identify population distributions.
- 2017** Co-advised UNIPA master student for an internship on data analysis of high-resolution spectroscopic observations. Palermo, Italy.

## Publications

### First author peer-reviewed manuscripts

6. *Reflected spectroscopy of small exoplanets II: characterization of terrestrial exoplanets*  
**Damiano, M.** & Hu, R.,  
 AJ, 163, 299, May 2022 - DOI: 10.3847/1538-3881/ac6b97
5. *Reflected light of small exoplanets I: determining the atmospheric composition of sub-Neptune planets*  
**Damiano, M.** & Hu, R.,  
 AJ, 162, 200, Oct 2021 - DOI: 10.3847/1538-3881/ac224d
4. *Multi-orbital-phase and multi-band characterization of exoplanetary atmospheres with reflected light spectra*  
**Damiano, M.**, Hu, R., Hildebrandt, S. R.,  
 AJ, 160, 206, Nov 2020 - DOI: 10.3847/1538-3881/abb76a
3. *ExoReL<sup>℔</sup>: A Bayesian Inverse Retrieval Framework For Exoplanetary Reflected Light Spectra*  
**Damiano, M.** & Hu, R.,  
 AJ, 159, 175, Mar 2020 - DOI: 10.3847/1538-3881/ab79a5

2. *A Principal Component Analysis-based Method to Analyze High-resolution Spectroscopic Data on Exoplanets*  
**Damiano, M.**, Micela, G., Tinetti, G.,  
 ApJ, 878, 153, June 2019 - DOI: 10.3847/1538-4357/ab22b2
1. *Near-IR transmission spectrum of HAT-P-32 b using HST/WFC3.*  
**Damiano, M.**, Morello, G., Tsiaras, A., Zingales, T., Tinetti, G.,  
 AJ, 154, 39, Jul 2017 - DOI: 10.3847/1538-3881/aa738b

### **Co-Author**

7. *Unveiling shrouded oceans on temperate sub-Neptunes via transit signatures of solubility equilibria vs. gas thermochemistry,*  
 Hu, R., **Damiano, M.**, Scheucher, M., Kite, E., Seager, S., Rauer, H.,  
 ApJL, 921, L8, Oct 2021 - DOI: 10.3847/2041-8213/ac1f92
6. *Starshade Exoplanet Data Challenge,*  
 Hu, R., Hildebrandt, S. R., **Damiano, M.**, Shaklan, S., Martin, S., Lisman, D.,  
 JATIS, 7(2), 021216, Mar 2021 - DOI: 10.1117/1.JATIS.7.2.021216
5. *The Transiting Exoplanet Community Early Release Science Program for JWST,*  
 Bean, J.L., plus 96 co-authors,  
 PASP 130k4402, Nov 2018 - DOI: 10.1088/1538-3873/aadbf3
4. *A chemical survey of exoplanets with ARIEL,*  
 Tinetti, G., plus 242 co-authors,  
 Exp Astron 46, 135, Sep 2018 - DOI: 10.1007/s10686-018-9598-x
3. *A Population Study of Gaseous Exoplanets,*  
 Tsiaras, A., Waldmann, I.P., Zingales, T., Rocchetto, M., Morello, G., **Damiano, M.**, Karpouzas, K.,  
 Tinetti, G., McKemmish, L.K., Tennyson, J., and Yurchenko, S.N.,  
 AJ, 155, 156, Mar 2018 - DOI: 10.3847/1538-3881/aaaf75
2. *A New Approach to Analyzing HST Spatial Scans: The Transmission Spectrum of HD 209458 b,*  
 Tsiaras, A., Waldmann, I.P., Rocchetto, M., Varley, R., Morello, G., **Damiano, M.**, Tinetti, G.,  
 ApJ, 832, 202, Dec 2016 - DOI: 10.3847/0004-637X/832/2/202
1. *Detection of an Atmosphere Around the Super-Earth 55 Cancri e,*  
 Tsiaras, A., Rocchetto, M., Waldmann, I.P., Venot, O., Varley, R., Morello, G., **Damiano, M.**, Tinetti, G.,  
 Barton, E.J., Yurchenko, S.N., Tennyson, J.,  
 ApJ, 820, 99, Apr 2016 - DOI: 10.3847/0004-637X/820/2/99