

# Alex Lupsasca

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Assistant Professor  
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Department of Physics & Astronomy  
and Department of Mathematics  
Vanderbilt University  
Nashville, Tennessee

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

Black hole imaging, electromagnetic observations, and (very-long-baseline) radio interferometry  
General relativity, gravitational lensing, photon rings, and black hole ringdown  
Plasma magnetospheres, force-free electrodynamics, and electromagnetic spin-energy extraction  
Relativistic astrophysics of compact objects: black holes, neutron stars, and pulsars  
Extremal black holes: theoretical properties, emergent symmetries, and observational signatures

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Project Scientist for the **Black Hole Explorer (BHEX)** space mission (2024–)  
Assistant Professor of Physics & Mathematics, Vanderbilt University (2022–)  
Associate Research Scholar, Princeton Gravity Initiative (2020–2022)  
Junior Fellow, Harvard Society of Fellows (2017–2020)

## EDUCATION

Ph.D., Physics, Harvard University [advisor: Andrew Strominger] (2017)  
Thesis: **The Maximally Rotating Black Hole as a Critical Point in Astronomy**  
A.M., Physics, Harvard University (2012)  
A.B., Physics & Mathematics, Harvard College (2011)

## GOVERNMENT FUNDING

National Science Foundation (**NSF**), Division of Physics (PHY)  
**CAREER** award of \$414,762 (**grant number 2340457**) in Gravity Theory (2023–2028)  
Currently supporting Vanderbilt University postdoctoral researcher **Roman Berens**  
  
National Science Foundation (**NSF**), Division of Astronomical Sciences (AST)  
Award of \$287,554 (**grant number 2307888**) in Stellar Astronomy & Astrophysics (2023–2026)  
Currently supporting Vanderbilt University graduate student **Trevor Gravely**

## PRIVATE FUNDING

Initial funding for development of BHEX from Fred Ehram  
Raised \$350,000 in seed funding for BHEX at Vanderbilt University (2024)  
  
Research funding from Will and Kacie Snellings  
Raised \$300,000 in private funding to hire a postdoctoral researcher at Princeton University in 2021  
Used to support **Alejandro Cárdenas-Avendaño** (about to start as faculty at Wake Forest University)  
  
Research funding from the Jacob Goldfield Foundation  
Raised \$300,000 in private funding to hire a postdoctoral researcher at Harvard University in 2018  
Used to support **Shahar Hadar** (now faculty at the University of Haifa, Israel)

## PRIZES & FELLOWSHIPS

**Young Scientist Prize in General Relativity and Gravitation** from the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics and **International Society on General Relativity and Gravitation**, 2024  
**New Horizons in Physics Prize** from the **Breakthrough Prize Foundation**, 2024  
**Junior Fellowship** from the **Harvard Society of Fellows**, 2017–2020  
Joshua S. Friedman Graduate Student Dissertation Fellowship (Harvard University), 2015–2016  
Donald and Cathleen Pfister Prize (Harvard College), 2011  
Awarded to a graduating senior for excellent achievement in the natural sciences

# TEACHING & ADVISING

Courses taught as faculty at Vanderbilt University:

- Physics 1020 (undergraduate): Physics For Future Leaders, Fall 2024
- Physics 8021 (graduate): Advanced Electrodynamics, Fall 2023
- Physics 8160 (graduate): General Theory of Relativity, Spring 2023 & Spring 2024
- Physics 3600 (undergraduate): Seminar in Presenting Physics Research, Fall 2022

Resident Tutor in Kirkland House (Harvard University), 2012-2018

Academic advisor for 5-7 sophomores every year

Star Family Prize Nominee for Excellence in Advising, 2013 & 2015

Derek Bok Center Certificate of Distinction in Teaching, Fall 2012 & Fall 2013

# MENTORSHIP & SUPERVISION

## Postdoctoral researchers

**Roman Berens**, Vanderbilt University (2023–)

**Alejandro Cárdenas-Avendaño**, Princeton University (2021–2023)

About to join the faculty at Wake Forest University

**Shahar Hadar**, Harvard University (2018–2020)

Now faculty at the University of Haifa, Israel

## Graduate students

**Trevor Gravely**, Vanderbilt University (2022–)

Co-supervised at the University of California, Santa Barbara: **Joseph Farah** (2024–)

Co-supervised at Princeton University: **He Jia** (2023–), Hengrui Zhu (2021–2022)

Co-supervised at the Observatoire de Paris: Hadrien Pagnat (2021–2022, now at UCLA)

Co-supervised at Harvard University: **Delilah Gates** (2018–2021, now at Harvard BHI),

**Mina Himwich** (2019–2020, now at Princeton PCTS) and **Yichen Shi** (2017–2019)

## Undergraduate students

**Lennox Keeble**, Princeton University (2024–)

# SERVICE

Referee for:

*Classical and Quantum Gravity* (CQG), *Journal of Cosmology and Astroparticle Physics* (JCAP), *Journal of High Energy Physics* (JHEP), *Physics Letters B* (PLB), *Physical Review D* (PRD), *Physical Review Letters* (PRL), *Physical Review X* (PRX), *The Astrophysical Journal* (ApJ), *European Physical Journal C* (EPJC), *General Relativity and Gravitation* (GRG)

Organizer for the **Photon Ring Science Workshop** at Vanderbilt University, February 2024

# SELECTED SOFTWARE

**BlackHoleVision** (led by T. Gravely): an interactive iOS app that simulates black hole lensing

**Metric-Reconstruction** (led by R. Berens): linearized metric perturbations of a Kerr black hole

**AART** (led by A. Cárdenas-Avendaño): an Adaptive Analytical Ray Tracing code for accretion disks

# INVITED TALKS

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, *Astrophysics, Relativity, & Cosmology Seminar*, October 2024

Troy University, *Troy University Center for Relativity and Cosmology Seminar*, September 2024

Vanderbilt University, **Mathematics Department Colloquium**, August 2024

Joint Israeli Seminar Series on Gravitational Physics, July 2024

National Astronomical Observatory of Japan, *Black Hole Explorer Japan Workshop*, June 2024

Simons Collaboration on Extreme Electrodynamics of Compact Sources, *BH seminar*, March 2024

Southern Denmark University, *CP3-Origins Seminar*, March 2024

Johns Hopkins University, **Physics Department Colloquium**, January 2024

American Physical Society, Southeastern Section, *Invited Talk*, November 2023

NASA Goddard, *Infrared Science and Technology Integration Group Webinar*, November 2023

Astronomy on Tap, Nashville, October 2023  
 University of California, Santa Cruz, *Astronomy Group Talk*, October 2023  
 University of California, Santa Cruz, **Physics Department Colloquium**, October 2023  
 Institut de Physique Théorique, CEA Saclay, *Conference on Black-Hole Microstructure V*, June 2023  
 Harvard Black Hole Initiative, *Instrument Design Lab for Space VLBI*, May 2023  
 Institute for Advanced Study, *IAS Astrophysics Coffee Talk*, May 2023  
 CERN, *Theory Seminar*, March 2023  
 Dartmouth College, **Physics Department Colloquium**, February 2023  
 Carnegie Mellon University, **Physics Department Colloquium**, November 2022  
 Stanford Institute for Theoretical Physics, *It from Qubit Seminar*, October 2022  
 Stanford University, **Physics Department Colloquium**, October 2022  
 Harvard Black Hole Initiative & CMSA, *Conference on Flat Holography*, June 2022  
 McGill University, *High-Energy Theory Group Meeting*, May 2022  
 Harvard Black Hole Initiative, *2022 Annual Conference*, May 2022  
 Harvard University, *High-Energy Physics Seminar*, March 2022  
 University of Amsterdam, *String Theory Seminar*, March 2022  
 University of Cambridge, *DAMTP GR Seminar*, March 2022  
 University of Mississippi, **Physics Department Colloquium**, November 2021  
 Aveiro University, *Gravity and Gravitational Dynamics Seminar*, October 2021  
 Albert Einstein Institute (MPI Potsdam), *Astrophysics and Relativity Seminar*, October 2021  
 Harvard Black Hole Initiative, *Monday Foundations Seminar*, September 2021  
 Harvard CMSA, *General Relativity Seminar*, September 2021  
 Sixteenth Marcel Grossman Meeting, ‘Radio Astronomy in Space’ Session, July 2021  
 University of Arizona, **Physics Department Colloquium**, April 2021  
 Latin American Webinar on Physics, April 2021  
 Vanderbilt University, *Gravity, Waves and Fluids Initiative Seminar*, April 2021  
 Princeton University, *High-Energy Theory Seminar*, February 2021  
 Next-Generation Event Horizon Telescope, *ngEHT Inaugural Science Meeting*, February 2021  
 Harvard Black Hole Initiative, *2020 Annual Conference*, December 2020  
 University of Bremen, *Space Science @ Drop Tower Seminar*, October 2020  
 Harvard Black Hole Initiative, *Colloquium*, September 2020  
 Princeton University, *Gravity Initiative Seminar*, September 2020  
 University of California, Davis, *Fields, Strings, Gravity Seminar*, February 2020  
 Harvard CMSA, *General Relativity Seminar*, February 2020  
 Institute for Advanced Study, *IAS Astrophysics Seminar*, October 2019  
 Brown University, *High-Energy Theory Seminar*, September 2018  
 Harvard Black Hole Initiative, *2018 Annual Conference*, May 2018  
 McGill University, *High-Energy Theory Seminar*, January 2018  
 Harvard CMSA, *Mathematical Relativity Workshop*, May 2016  
 Université Libre de Bruxelles, *Theoretical Physics Seminar*, May 2016  
 Université Pierre et Marie Curie, Paris VI, *LPTHE Seminar*, January 2016  
 McGill University, *High-Energy Theory Seminar*, November 2015  
 Perimeter Institute, *Strong Gravity Seminar*, October 2015

TOP 3  
 HIGHEST-IMPACT  
 PUBLICATIONS

### 1) Universal Interferometric Signatures of a Black Hole’s Photon Ring

M. D. Johnson, A. Lupsasca (co-first authors) *et al.* [**273 citations**]  
*Science Advances* 6, no. 12, eaaz1310 (2020). [arXiv:1907.04329 \[astro-ph.IM\]](#)

### 2) Lensing by Kerr Black Holes

S. E. Gralla and A. Lupsasca (alphabetized author list) [**183 citations**]  
*Physical Review D* 101, no. 4, 044031 (2020). [arXiv:1910.12873 \[gr-qc\]](#)

### 3) The Shape of the Black Hole Photon Ring: A Precise Test of Strong-Field Gravity

S. E. Gralla, A. Lupsasca, and D. P. Marrone (alphabetized author list) [**176 citations**]  
*Physical Review D* 102, no. 12, 124004 (2020). [arXiv:2008.03879 \[gr-qc\]](#)

PUBLICATIONS  
(FIRST-AUTHOR  
SYSTEM)

**The Black Hole Explorer: using the photon ring to visualize black hole spacetime**

P. Galison, M. D. Johnson, A. Lupsasca, T. Gravely, and R. Berens

*Proceedings of SPIE* 13902, 130926R (2024). [arXiv:2406.11671 \[gr-qc\]](#)

**The Black Hole Explorer: photon ring science, detection, and shape measurement**

A. Lupsasca (first author) *et al.*

*Proceedings of SPIE* 13902, 130926Q (2024). [arXiv:2406.09498 \[gr-qc\]](#)

**The Black Hole Explorer: motivation and vision**

M. D. Johnson *et al.*

*Proceedings of SPIE* 13902, 130922D (2024). [arXiv:2406.12917 \[astro-ph.IM\]](#)

**Photon Ring Interferometric Signatures Beyond The Universal Regime**

H. Jia, E. Quataert, A. Lupsasca, and G. N. Wong

Accepted for publication in *Physical Review D*. [arXiv:2405.08804 \[astro-ph.HE\]](#)

**Black Hole Polarimetry I: A Signature of Electromagnetic Energy Extraction**

A. Chael, A. Lupsasca, G. N. Wong, and E. Quataert

*The Astrophysical Journal* 958, no. 1, 65 (2023). [arXiv:2307.06372 \[astro-ph.HE\]](#)

**Images and photon ring signatures of thick disks around black holes**

F. H. Vincent, S. E. Gralla, A. Lupsasca, and M. Wielgus

*Astronomy & Astrophysics* 667, A170 (2022). [arXiv:2206.12066 \[astro-ph.HE\]](#)

**Photon ring test of the Kerr hypothesis**

H. Pagnat, A. Lupsasca, F. H. Vincent, and M. Wielgus

*Astronomy & Astrophysics* 669, A11 (2022). [arXiv:2206.02781 \[astro-ph.HE\]](#)

★ **Universal Interferometric Signatures of a Black Hole’s Photon Ring**

M. D. Johnson, A. Lupsasca (co-first authors) *et al.*

*Science Advances* 6, no. 12, eaaz1310 (2020). [arXiv:1907.04329 \[astro-ph.IM\]](#)

PUBLICATIONS  
(ALPHABETIZED  
AUTHOR LIST)

**Explanation for the absence of secondary peaks in black hole light curve autocorrelations**

A. Cárdenas-Avendaño, C. Gammie, and A. Lupsasca

*Physical Review Letters* 133, no. 13, 131402 (2024). [arXiv:2406.04176 \[astro-ph.HE\]](#)

**Assessing the impact of instrument noise and astrophysical fluctuations on measurements of the first black hole photon ring**

A. Cárdenas-Avendaño, L. Keeble, and A. Lupsasca

*Physical Review D* 109, no. 12, 124052 (2024). [arXiv:2404.01083 \[gr-qc\]](#)

**Gravitational Waves on Kerr Black Holes I: Reconstruction of Linearized Metric Perturbations**

R. Berens, T. Gravely, and A. Lupsasca

*Classical and Quantum Gravity* 41, no. 19, 195004 (2024). [arXiv:2403.20311 \[gr-qc\]](#)

**A Beginner’s Guide to Black Hole Imaging and Associated Tests of General Relativity**

A. Lupsasca, D. R. Mayerson, B. Ripperda, and S. Staelens

Chapter in *Recent Progress on Gravity Tests*, Springer, Singapore (2024). [arXiv:2402.01290 \[gr-qc\]](#)

**Black hole bulk-cone singularities**

M. Dodelson, C. Iossa, R. Karlsson, A. Lupsasca, and A. Zhiboedov

*Journal of High Energy Physics* 2024, 46 (2024). [arXiv:2310.15236 \[hep-th\]](#)

**Prediction for the interferometric shape of the first black hole photon ring**

A. Cárdenas-Avendaño and A. Lupsasca

*Physical Review D* 108, no. 4, 064043 (2023). [arXiv:2305.12956 \[gr-qc\]](#)

**Adaptive Analytical Ray Tracing of Black Hole Photon Rings**

A. Cárdenas-Avendaño, A. Lupsasca, and H. Zhu

*Physical Review D* 107, no. 4, 043030 (2023). [arXiv:2211.07469 \[gr-qc\]](#)

**Photon Rings Around Warped Black Holes**

D. Kapec, A. Lupsasca, and A. Strominger

*Classical and Quantum Gravity* 40, no. 9, 095006 (2023). [arXiv:2211.01674 \[gr-qc\]](#)

**Holography of the Photon Ring**

S. Hadar, D. Kapec, A. Lupsasca, and A. Strominger

*Classical and Quantum Gravity* 39, no. 21, 215001 (2022). [arXiv:2205.05064 \[gr-qc\]](#)

**Observing the Inner Shadow of a Black Hole: A Direct View of the Event Horizon**

A. Chael, M. D. Johnson, and A. Lupsasca

*The Astrophysical Journal* 918, no. 1, 6 (2021). [arXiv:2106.00683 \[astro-ph.HE\]](#)

**Extreme Black Hole Anabasis**

S. Hadar, A. Lupsasca, and A. Porfyriadis

*Journal of High Energy Physics* 2021, 223 (2021). [arXiv:2012.06562 \[hep-th\]](#)

**Photon Emission from Circular Equatorial Kerr Orbiters**

D. E. A. Gates, S. Hadar, and A. Lupsasca

*Physical Review D* 103, no. 4, 044050 (2021). [arXiv:2010.07330 \[gr-qc\]](#)

**Photon Ring Autocorrelations**

S. Hadar, M. D. Johnson, A. Lupsasca, and G. N. Wong

*Physical Review D* 103, no. 10, 104038 (2021). [arXiv:2010.03683 \[gr-qc\]](#)

**Maximum Observable Blueshift from Circular Equatorial Kerr Orbiters**

D. E. A. Gates, S. Hadar, and A. Lupsasca

*Physical Review D* 102, no. 10, 104041 (2020). [arXiv:2009.03310 \[gr-qc\]](#)

★ **The Shape of the Black Hole Photon Ring: A Precise Test of Strong-Field Gravity**

S. E. Gralla, A. Lupsasca, and D. P. Marrone

*Physical Review D* 102, no. 12, 124004 (2020). [arXiv:2008.03879 \[gr-qc\]](#)

**On the Observable Shape of Black Hole Photon Rings**

S. E. Gralla and A. Lupsasca

*Physical Review D* 102, no. 12, 124003 (2020). [arXiv:2007.10336 \[gr-qc\]](#)

**Universal Polarimetric Signatures of the Black Hole Photon Ring**

E. Himwich, M. D. Johnson, A. Lupsasca, and A. Strominger

*Physical Review D* 101, no. 8, 084020 (2020). [arXiv:2001.08750 \[gr-qc\]](#)

**Null Geodesics of the Kerr Exterior**

S. E. Gralla and A. Lupsasca

*Physical Review D* 101, no. 4, 044032 (2020). [arXiv:1910.12881 \[gr-qc\]](#)

★ **Lensing by Kerr Black Holes**

S. E. Gralla and A. Lupsasca

*Physical Review D* 101, no. 4, 044031 (2020). [arXiv:1910.12873 \[gr-qc\]](#)

### Particle Motion Near High-Spin Black Holes

D. Kapec and A. Lupsasca

*Classical and Quantum Gravity* 37, no. 1, 015006 (2019). arXiv:1905.11406 [hep-th]

### Polarization Whorls from M87\* at the Event Horizon Telescope

D. E. Gates, D. Kapec, A. Lupsasca, Y. Shi, and A. Strominger

*Proceedings of the Royal Society A* 476, no. 2237, 20190618 (2020). arXiv:1809.09092 [hep-th]

### Critical Emission from a High-Spin Black Hole

A. Lupsasca, A. P. Porfyriadis, and Y. Shi

*Physical Review D* 97, no. 6, 064017 (2018). arXiv:1712.10182 [gr-qc]

### Observational Signature of High Spin at the Event Horizon Telescope

S. E. Gralla, A. Lupsasca, and A. Strominger

*MNRAS* 475, no. 3, 3829–3853 (2018). arXiv:1710.11112 [astro-ph.HE]

### Inclined Pulsar Magnetospheres in General Relativity: Polar Caps for the Dipole, Quadrupole and Beyond

S. E. Gralla, A. Lupsasca, and A. Philippov

*The Astrophysical Journal* 851, no. 2, 137 (2017). arXiv:1704.05062 [astro-ph.HE]

### Force-Free Foliations

G. Compère, S. E. Gralla, and A. Lupsasca

*Physical Review D* 94, no. 12, 124012 (2016). arXiv:1606.06727 [math-ph]

### Pulsar Magnetospheres: Beyond the Flat Spacetime Dipole

S. E. Gralla, A. Lupsasca, and A. Philippov

*The Astrophysical Journal* 833, no. 2, 258 (2016). arXiv:1604.04625 [astro-ph.HE]

### Near-horizon Kerr Magnetosphere

S. E. Gralla, A. Lupsasca, and A. Strominger

*Physical Review D* 93, no. 10, 104041 (2016). arXiv:1602.01833 [hep-th]

### Electromagnetic Jets from Stars and Black Holes

S. E. Gralla, A. Lupsasca, and M. J. Rodriguez

*Physical Review D* 93, no. 4, 044038 (2016). arXiv:1504.02113 [gr-qc]

### Note on Bunching of Field Lines in Black Hole Magnetospheres

S. E. Gralla, A. Lupsasca, and M. J. Rodriguez

*Physical Review D* 92, no. 4, 044053 (2015). arXiv:1504.02112 [gr-qc]

### Exact Solutions for Extreme Black Hole Magnetospheres

A. Lupsasca and M. J. Rodriguez

*Journal of High Energy Physics* 2015, 90 (2015). arXiv:1412.4124 [hep-th]

### Force-Free Electrodynamics around Extreme Kerr Black Holes

A. Lupsasca, M. J. Rodriguez, and A. Strominger

*Journal of High Energy Physics* 2014, 185 (2014). arXiv:1406.4133 [hep-th]

### Quasinormal Quantization in de Sitter spacetime

D. L. Jafferis, A. Lupsasca, V. Lysov, G. S. Ng, and A. Strominger

*Journal of High Energy Physics* 2015, 4 (2015). arXiv:1305.5523 [hep-th]