

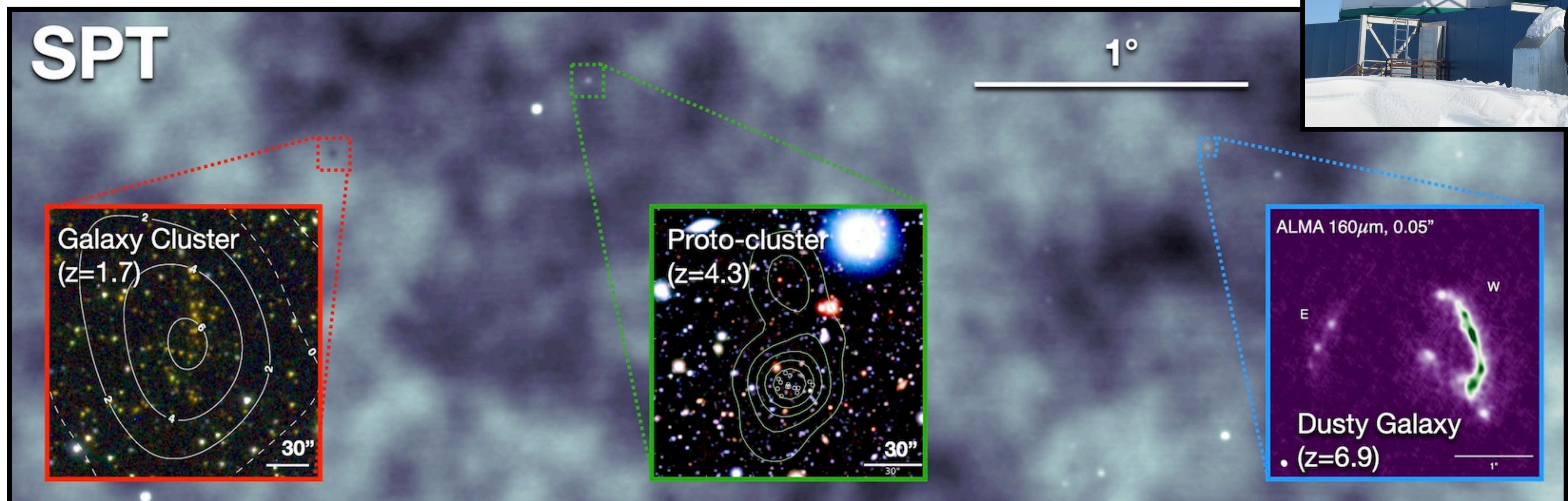
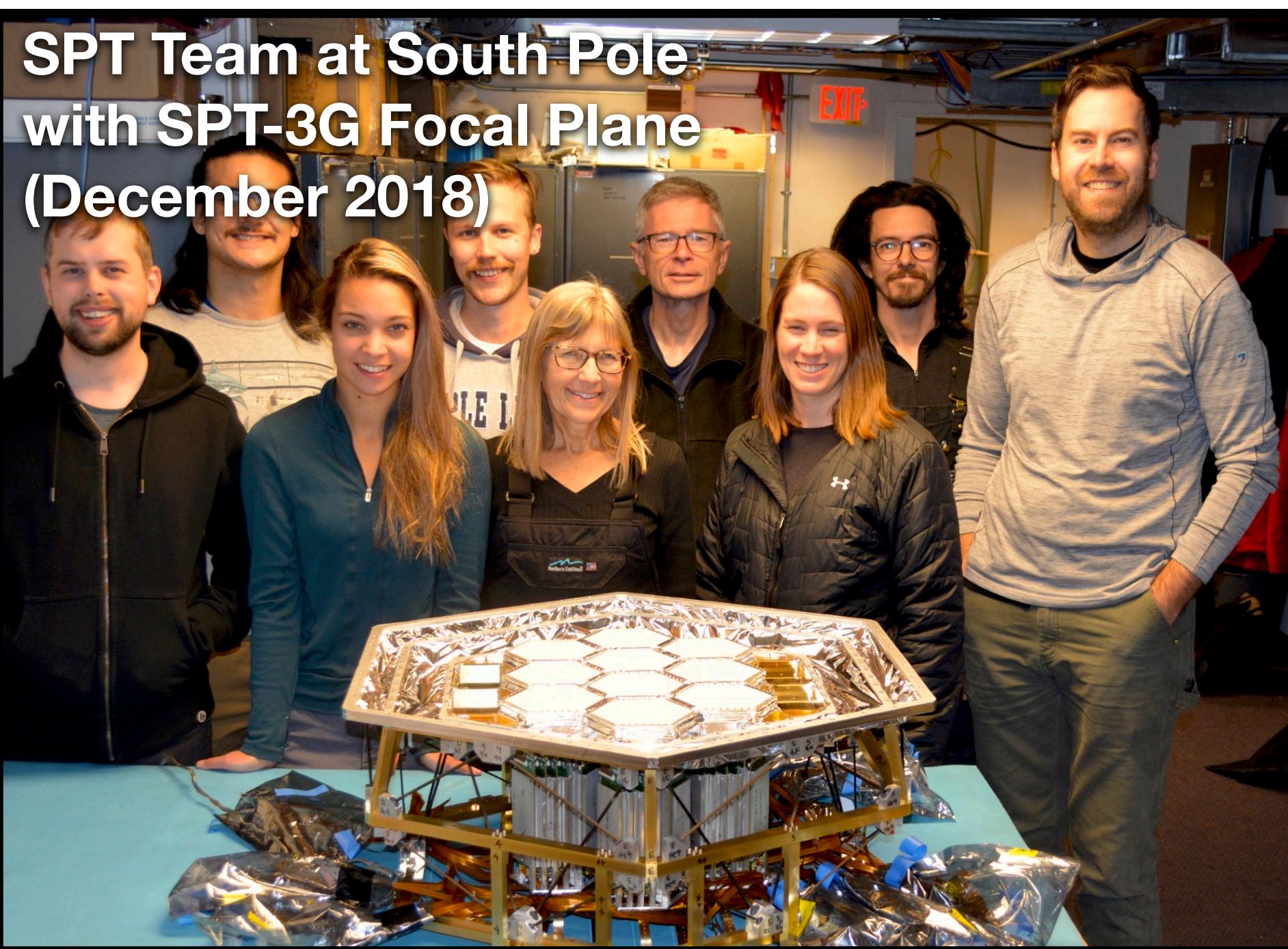
# **ASTR21200**

**Observational Techniques in Astrophysics**  
**Spring 2024**

**Bradford Benson**

# Hello!

- I'm an experimental cosmologist who builds instrumentation to study the cosmic microwave background (CMB), working primarily on the South Pole Telescope (SPT)



# Course TAs and Other Instructors:

Teaching Assistants (TAs/LAs):

- **Emory Murff** (emorymurff 'at' uchicago.edu)
- **Logan Hansler** (lhansler 'at' uchicago.edu)

Knowledgeable People for Stone Edge Observatory (SEO) and this class:

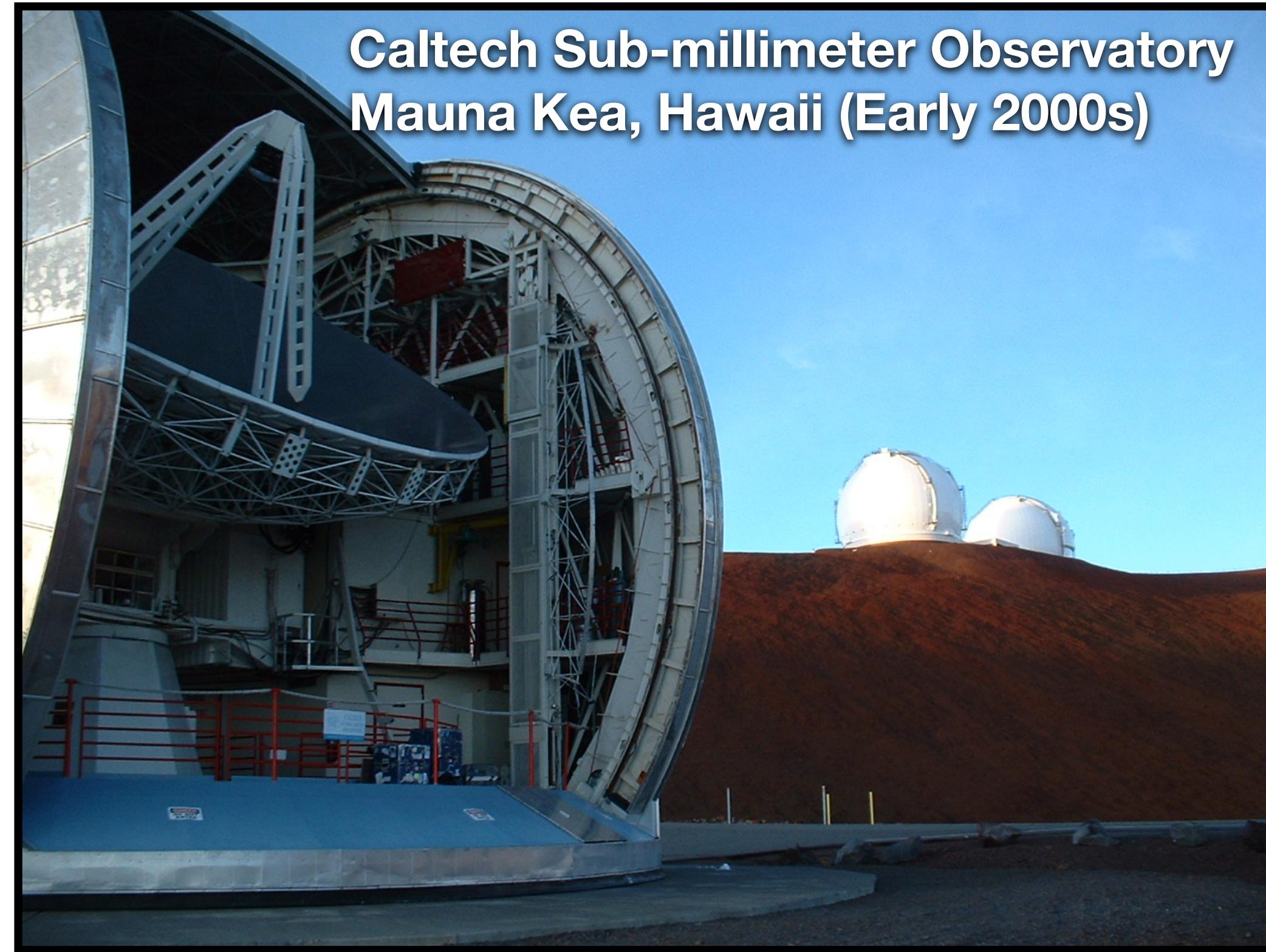
- **Dr. Marc Berthoud** (berthoud 'at' astro.uchicago.edu) - Research Engineer for SEO

See more details on the class wiki at:

[https://github.com/bradfordbenson/ASTR21200\\_2025/wiki](https://github.com/bradfordbenson/ASTR21200_2025/wiki)

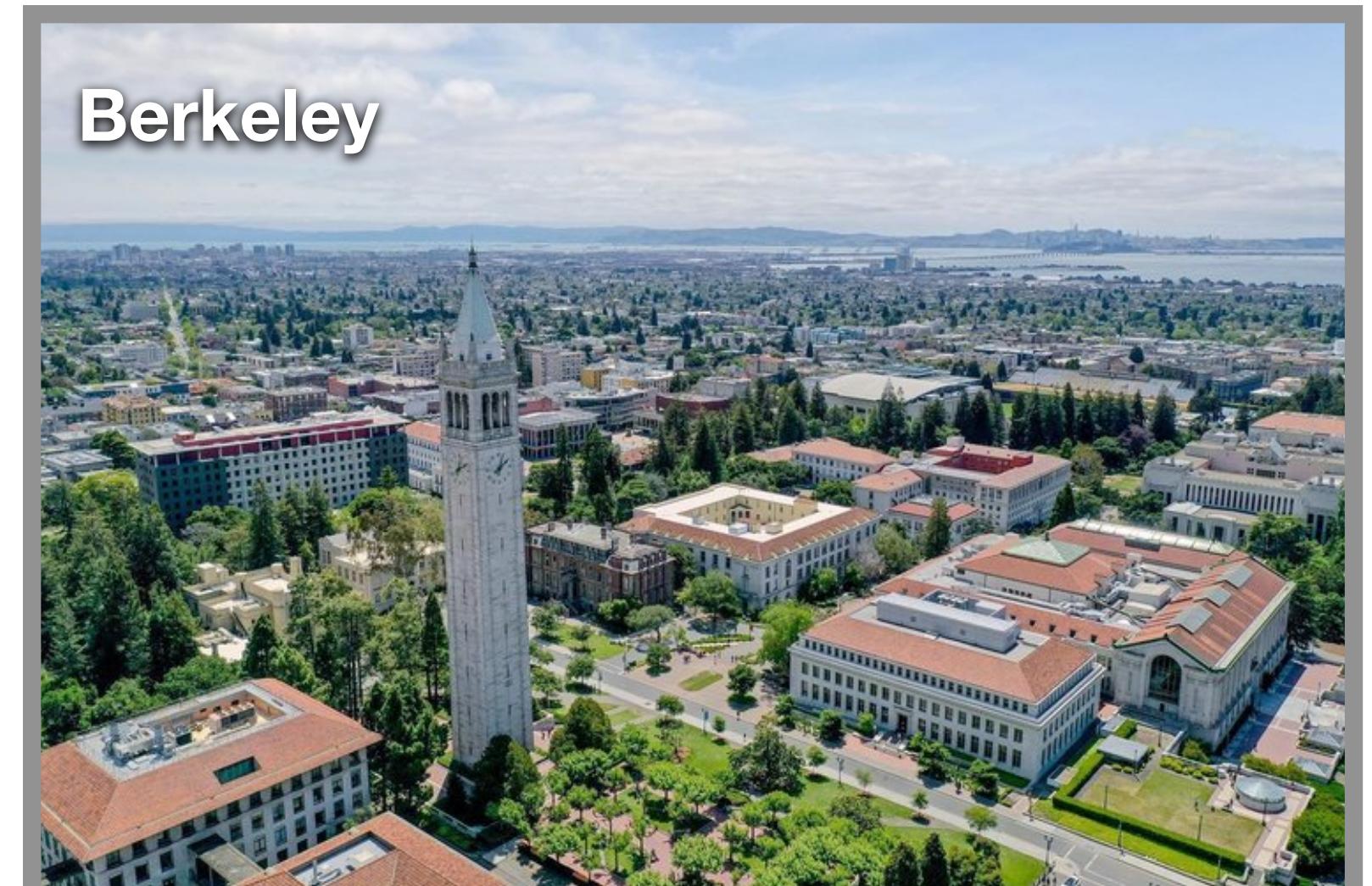
# What do I do?

- I've been observing in Hawaii, Chile, Antarctica
  - Spent nearly 2-years at South Pole over 12 trips
- Written proposals for Hubble, Chandra, XMM space telescopes
- Spanning radio, microwaves, X-ray, optical, infrared wavelengths



# My Bio

- **Undergrad:** U. Wisconsin-Madison
- **PhD:** Stanford University
- **Post-docs:** U. California-Berkeley, U. Chicago
- **Since 2013:** Professor at U. Chicago, Scientist at Fermilab



# Course Purpose and Objectives

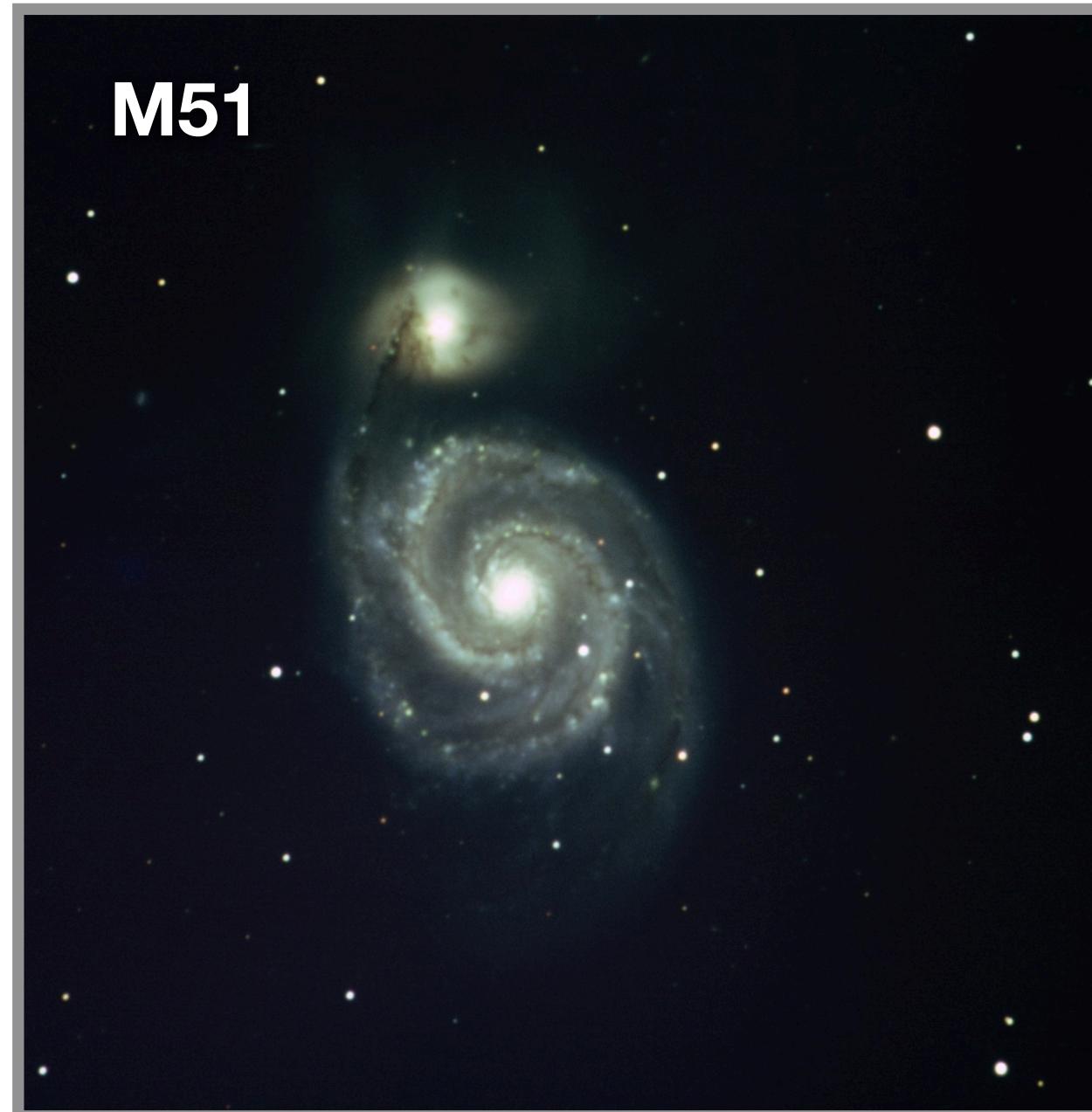
- Purpose: Teach you the basics of how to be an observational astronomer
  - Introduction to observational astronomy
  - Design, take, analyze and interpret astronomical observations
  - Report your work in lab reports and a scientific paper

# Stone Edge Observatory (SEO)

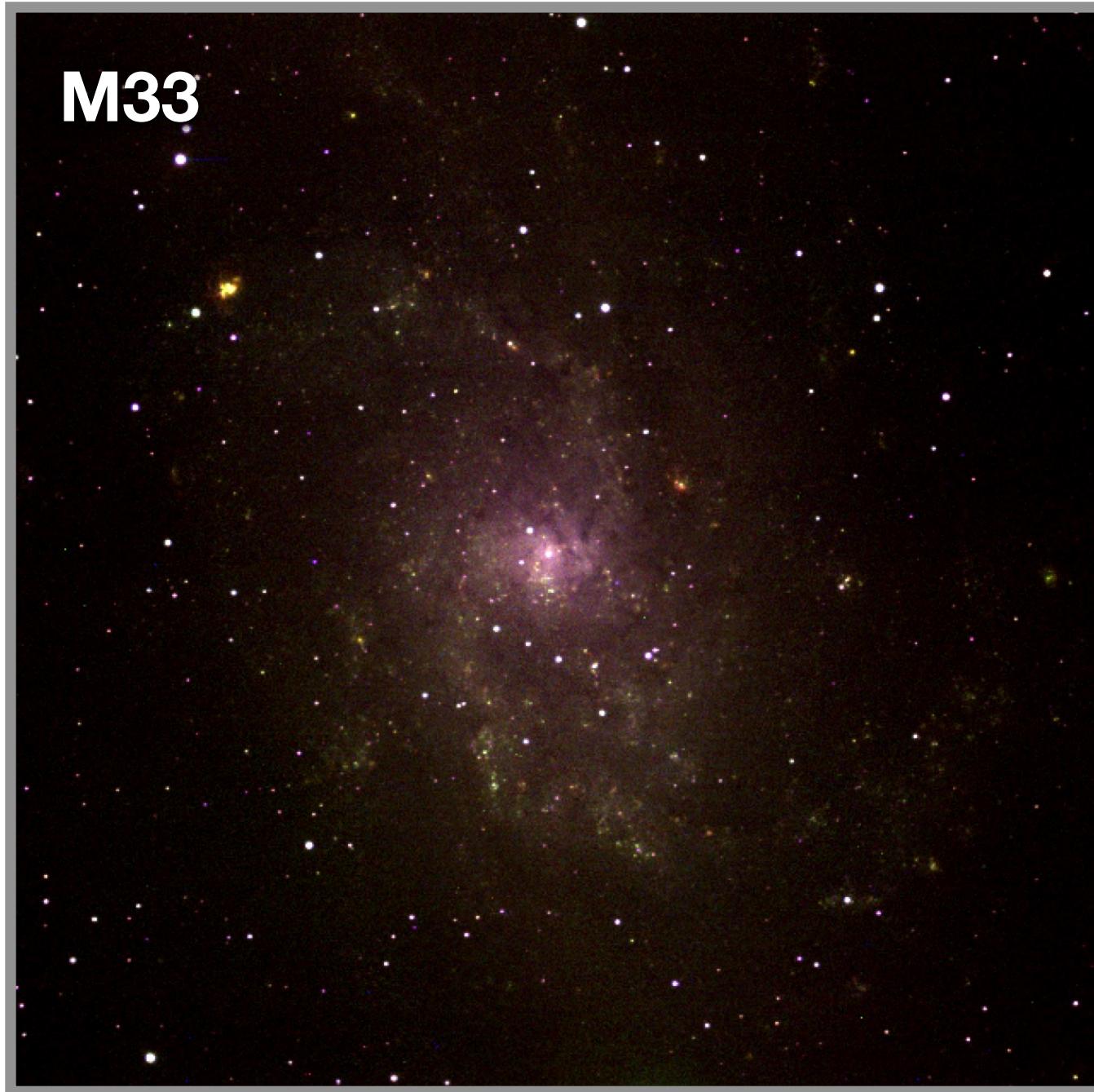
- Located in Sonoma, CA, but operated by U. Chicago
- 0.5-m diameter aperture with a 26' x 26' field of view (FOV)
- Outfitted with a CCD with a set of standard broadband filters (g, r, i, z, ...)
- More info at:
  - <https://stars.uchicago.edu/>
  - <https://voices.uchicago.edu/stoneedgeobservatory/>
  - On the class wiki!
    - [https://github.com/bradfordbenson/ASTR21200\\_2025/wiki](https://github.com/bradfordbenson/ASTR21200_2025/wiki)



Stone Edge Observatory



M51



M33



M42

# How to be become an observational astronomer

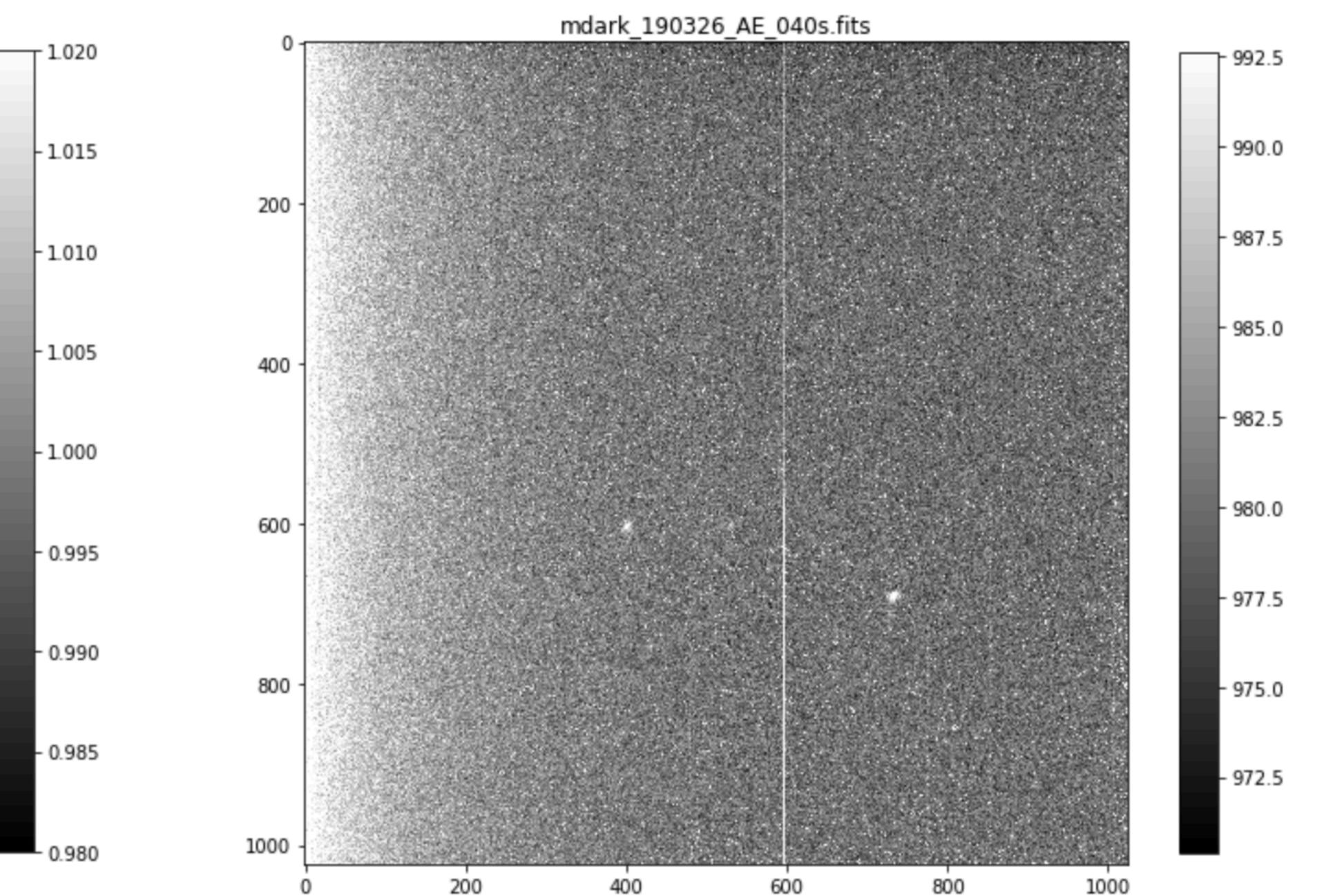
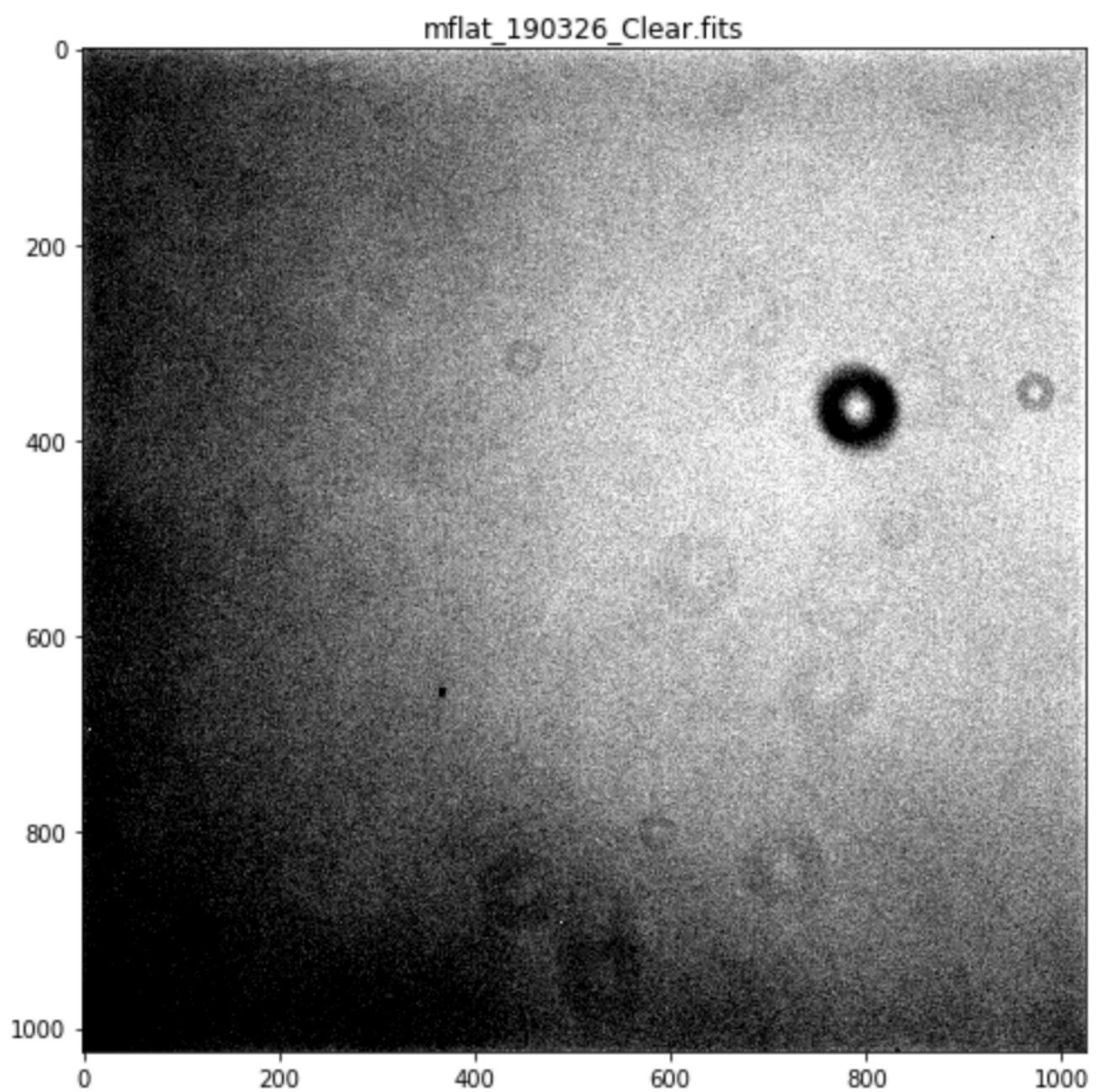
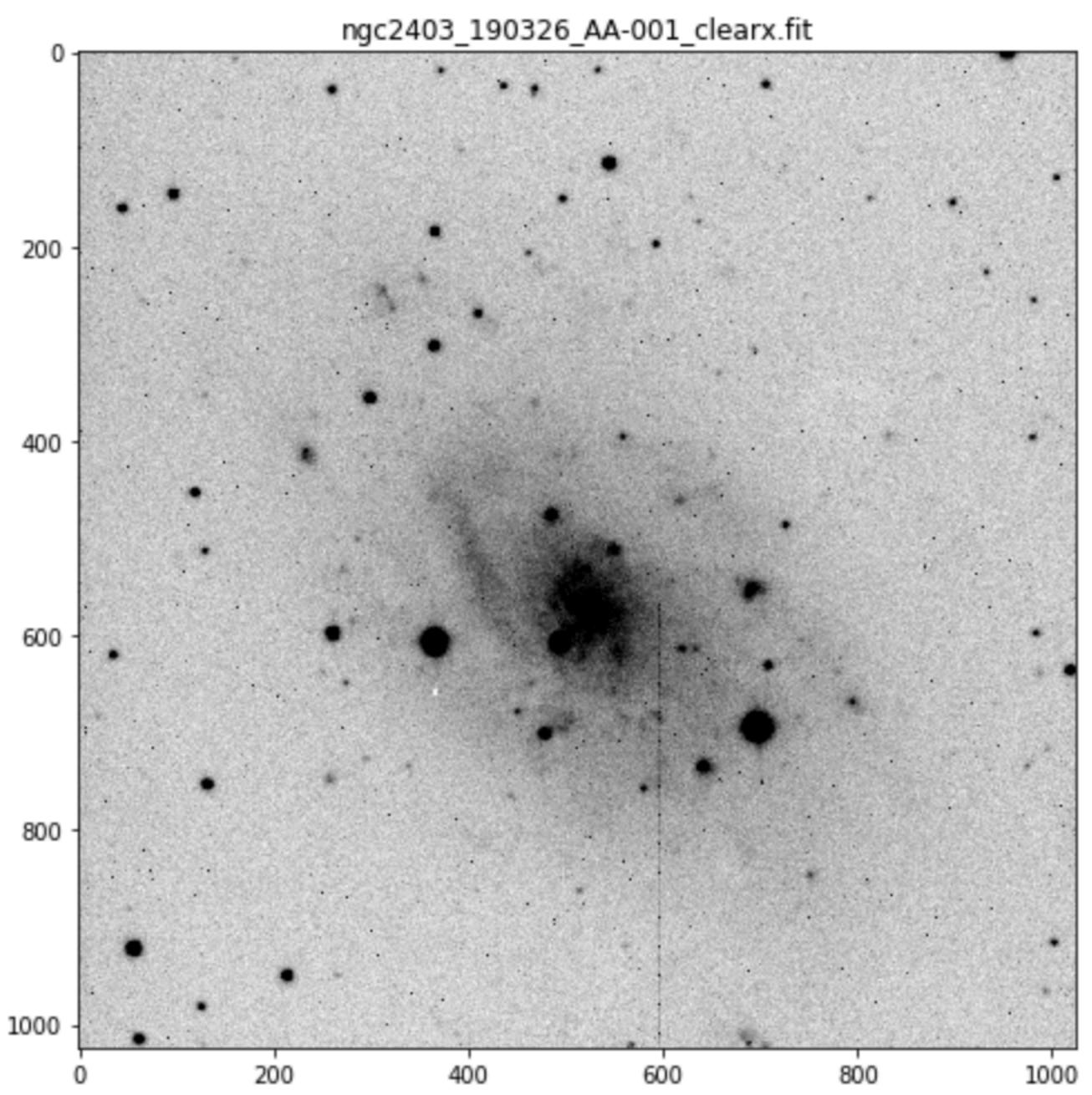
1. Come up with an interesting idea / hypothesis
2. Search for and analyze archival observations
3. Write a **telescope proposal**
4. Plan and execute your **observations**
5. **Analyze data**
6. Write a paper
7. **Present your work** at conferences
- .

# For this course, we'll deviate a bit

1. Come up with an interesting idea / hypothesis
  2. Conduct and analyze **observations**
  3. Journal paper -> **Lab report**
  4. **Present your work** in class
- .

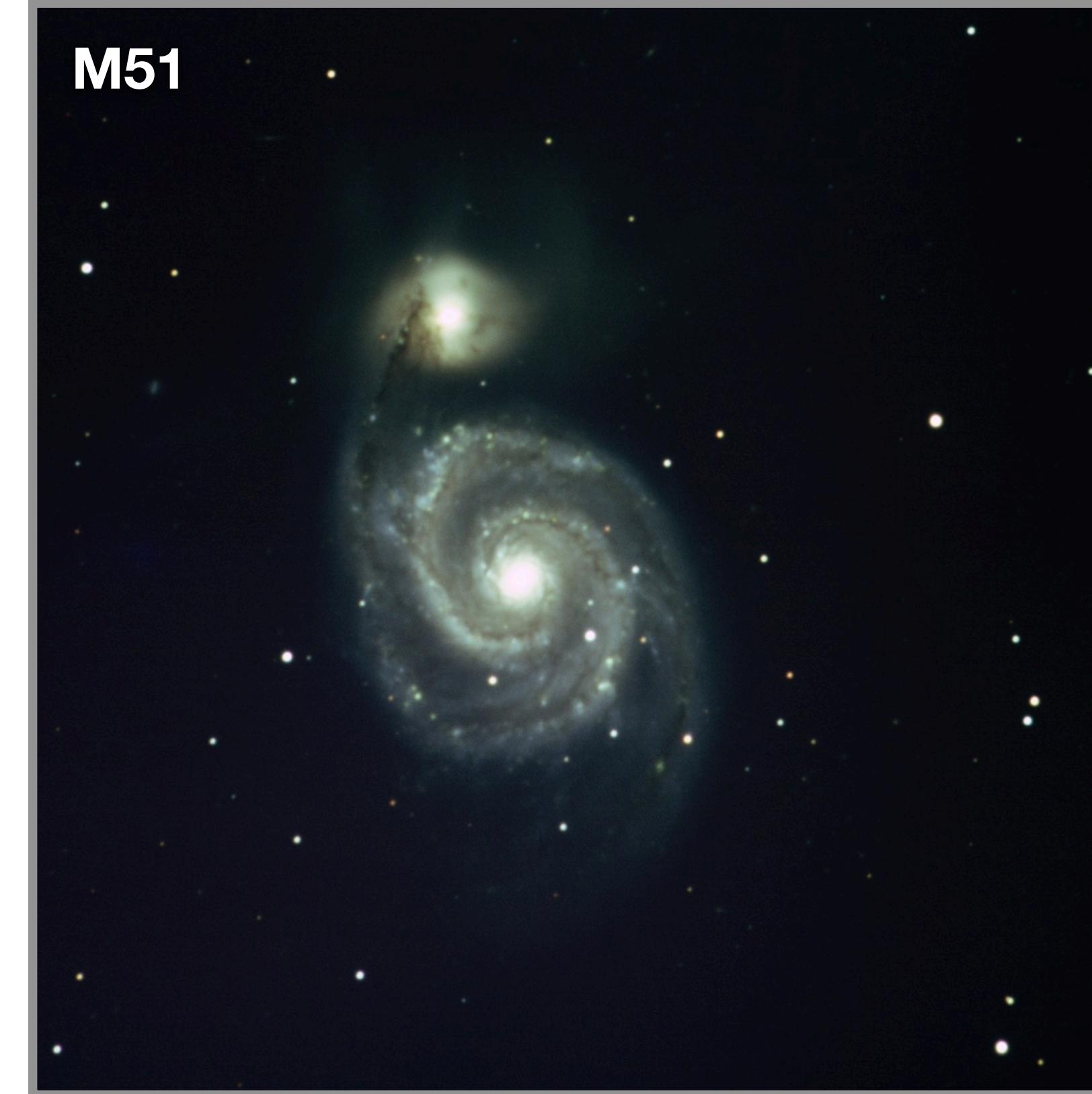
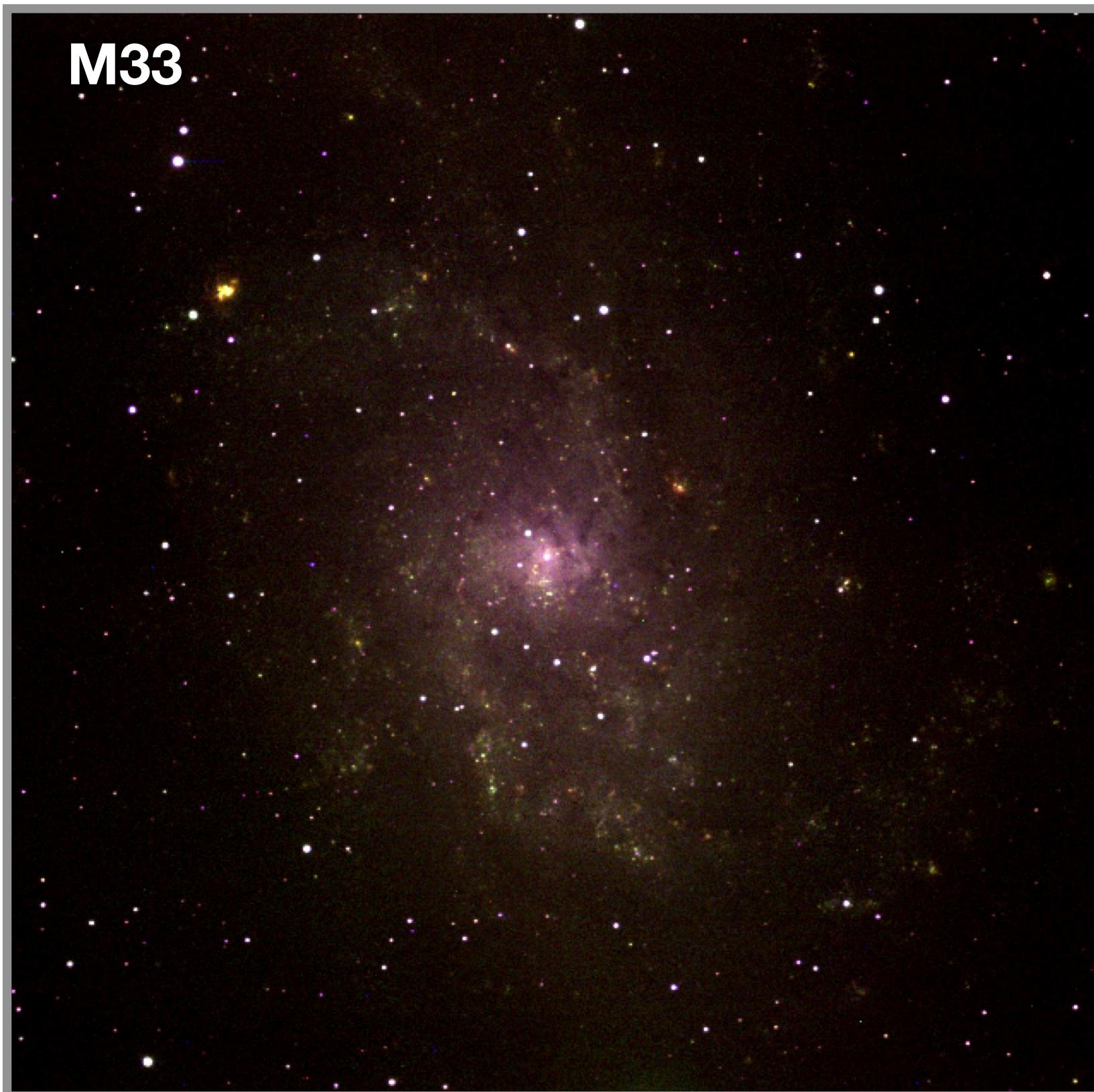
# Lab1 - CCDs

- Measure properties of CCD cameras
- Understand the role of calibration data
- Familiarize yourself with the equipment



# Lab2 - Optical Imaging

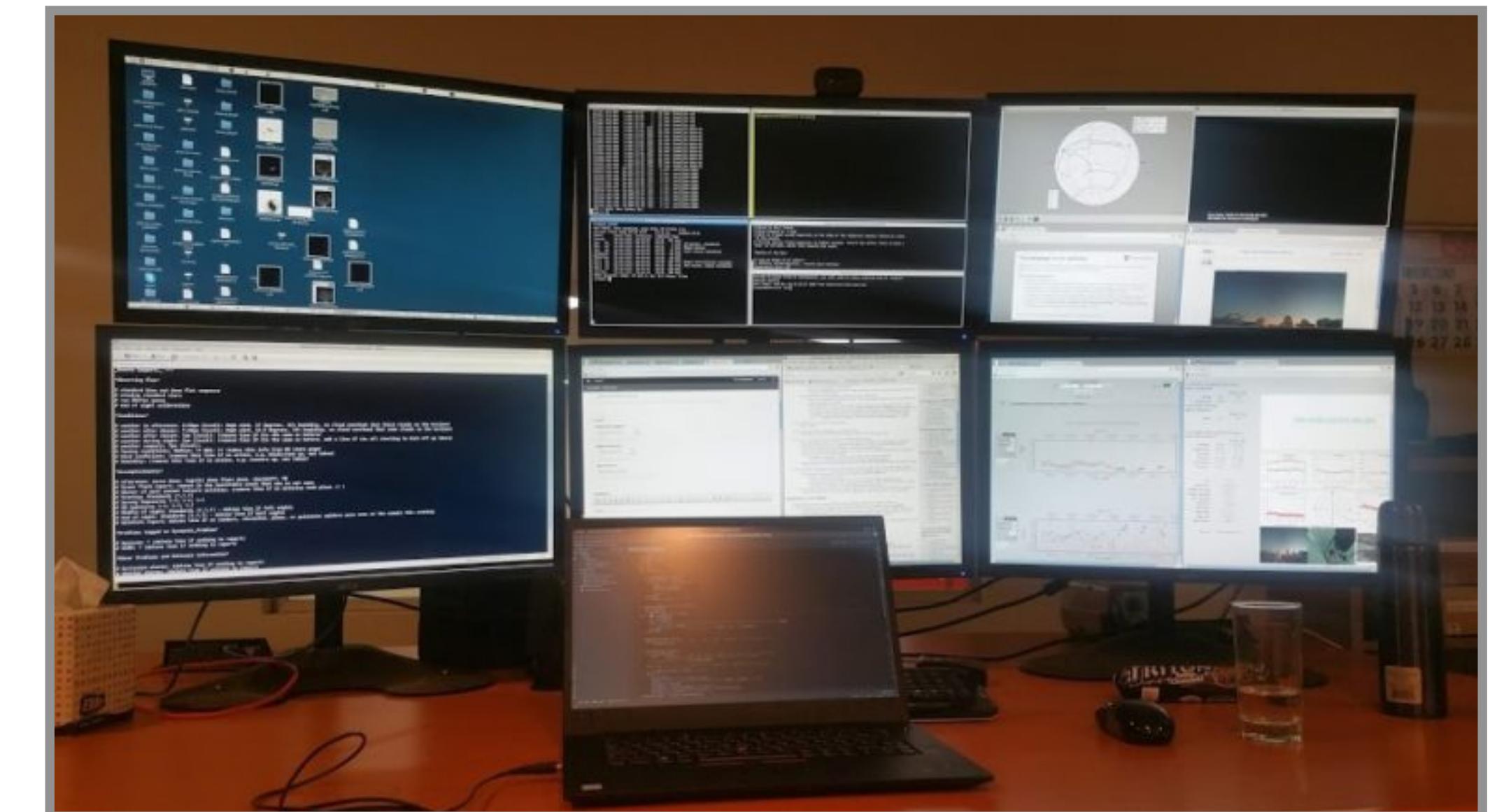
- Make RGB color images of nearby galaxies, to measure their size, and infer the expansion of the Universe (i.e., the Hubble constant)



# Lab 3 - Your own project idea

- Come up with your own project idea!
- Make observations
- Do analysis
- Do a class presentation

# Observing



- [https://astrobites.org/2016/02/04/  
living-the-magellan-life-observing-at-  
a-chilean-masterpiece/](https://astrobites.org/2016/02/04/living-the-magellan-life-observing-at-a-chilean-masterpiece/)

# Data Analysis

- CCD cameras and digital image processing were revolutionary for astronomy
  - ~1980: First CCD cameras used on telescopes
- The Sloan Digital Sky Survey (SDSS), designed in the 90s, was one of the first “Big Data” projects, followed by the Dark Energy Survey (DES)
  - U. Chicago had leading roles on both projects!
- Today, we are preparing for the Vera Rubin Observatory’s Legacy Survey of Space and Time (VRO/LSST), ~20 TB per night, every night for 10 years
- Research in astronomy requires programming, and statistical analysis of large datasets

# Data Analysis

- Most astronomy research is done on Unix/Linux
  - “bash” is a Unix shell that provides an integrated scripting language
- *Python* is becoming ubiquitous in astronomy as a higher-level programming language, with [astropy](#) a widely used package with astronomy functions.
  - Other languages (e.g., *IDL*, *C*, *R*, *Fortran*) are sometimes used, depending on user-preference or the use case
- We will use several common astronomy software packages:
  - *Ds9*, *source extractor*, *astrometry.net*, etc.
  - See some common [Astronomy-software tools](#) on class wiki
- However, this is not a class on programming. We will provide basic instructions and help, but you will have to find many things out on your own (e.g., via google, online tutorials, other experts in your lab group, etc.)

# Computing Resources

- SEO raw and reduced data will be on public webpage
- Run analysis on your laptop or using Google Collab
  - See [more options](#) on class wiki
- Back up your data, scripts, analyses, etc! (e.g., Google drive, Box, GitHub, etc.)

# Class Structure

## Class Times

- Tues & Thurs 5:00-6:20pm
  - 9 lectures in total over 9-week quarter
  - 9 “analysis help/hack” sessions to work on Labs with your group

## Labs

- 3x Labs over the course of the quarter, starting in Week-3
- Will discuss more details as we get closer to Labs, but brief summary:
  - Work in groups of 3-5 students. Each student will need to submit their own report, either a Jupyter notebook or written report.
  - Schedule observing times with Stone Edge Observatory (SEO). Depending on weather, might need to schedule multiple nights.

# Course Webpage

[https://github.com/bradfordbenson/ASTR21200\\_2025](https://github.com/bradfordbenson/ASTR21200_2025)  
[https://github.com/bradfordbenson/ASTR21200\\_2025/wiki](https://github.com/bradfordbenson/ASTR21200_2025/wiki)

The screenshot shows the GitHub Wiki page for the course ASTR21200\_2025. The 'Wiki' tab is highlighted with a red circle. The page content includes sections for Welcome, Class time and place, Instructor, TAs, Office hours, Knowledgeable People, Suggested textbooks, and a sidebar with General Information, Labs and Observing, Computing Resources, and a clone link.

**Welcome to the ASTR21200 wiki!**

**Class time and place:**

- Tuesday and Thursday, 5:00 - 6:20pm
- Kersten KPTC 101

**Instructor:**

- [Bradford Benson](#)
- Email: bbenson 'at' astro.uchicago.edu
- Office: Eckhardt Research Center (ERC) 589

**TAs:**

- Emory Murff (emorymurff 'at' uchicago.edu)
- Logan Hanssler (lhanssler 'at' uchicago.edu)

**Office hours:**

- Brad: Tues 11:00 - 12:00pm (ERC 589)
- Emory: TBD
- Logan: TBD

**Knowledgeable People for SEO and this class:**

- [Dr. Marc Berthoud](#) (berthoud 'at' astro.uchicago.edu) - Research Engineer for SEO
- [Dr. Amanda Pagul](#) (apagul 'at' uchicago.edu) - Support Astronomer for SEO

**Suggested textbooks:**

- Observational Astronomy, D. Scott Birney (Cambridge University Press; 2nd edition, July 24, 2006)
- Measuring the Universe: A Multiwavelength Perspective, G. Rieke (Cambridge University Press, 2012)
- Data Reduction and Error Analysis for the Physical Sciences, P.R. Bevington & D. K. Robinson (McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2003)
- Practical Statistics for Astronomers, J.V. Wall & C.R. Jenkins (Cambridge University Press, 2008)

**General Information**

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- [Awk and Sed](#)

**Clone this wiki locally**

<https://github.com/bradfordbenso>

# Course Syllabus

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- Email: bbenson 'at' astro.uchicago.edu
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ASTR 21200: Observational Techniques in Astrophysics

Spring 2025, University of Chicago  
Class Hours: T/Th 5:00-6:20pm  
Class Room: KPTC 101

Instructor: Bradford Benson  
E-mail: bbenson@astro.uchicago.edu  
Office: Eckhardt Research Center (ERC) 589  
Course Website: [https://github.com/bradfordbenson/ASTR21200\\_2025](https://github.com/bradfordbenson/ASTR21200_2025)  
Course Wiki: [https://github.com/bradfordbenson/ASTR21200\\_2025/wiki](https://github.com/bradfordbenson/ASTR21200_2025/wiki)

**Course Description**

Astronomers explore the universe by detecting and analyzing light from all over the electromagnetic spectrum. This is an observational lab course, focused on obtaining and analyzing astronomical data with optical telescopes, namely the Stone Edge Observatory.

Students will work in groups of 3-5 students to conduct observational experiments via labs. For all the labs, the students will be responsible for scheduling the observations, analyzing the resultant data, and reporting their work in lab reports.

1. Lab 1: Students will measure properties of astronomical CCD cameras and develop a calibration scheme for optical imaging.
2. Lab 2: Students will acquire color images of galaxies, measure their angular size and radial profile, and infer the expansion rate of Universe (i.e., the Hubble constant)
3. Lab 3: Students will propose their own project and undertake observations.

The course will include a lecture component, that is intimately intertwined with the experimental aspects of the course. The students will learn the basics of practical observational astronomy, such as determining the observability of selected targets, telescope and detector technology, the use of photometric and spectroscopic techniques, and methods of error, statistical, and time-series analysis. A limited number of homework sets will be assigned to facilitate comprehension of the lecture material. Data analysis will be performed using standard astronomy software packages, as well as one general-purpose programming language such as python. In addition, students will need to familiarize themselves with standard Linux tools. Tutorials will be provided during class-time and/or as homework. Towards the end of the course, the students will prepare a final oral presentation on their final Lab Project.

# Course Schedule

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Schedule Spring 2025

bradfordbenson edited this page now · [14 revisions](#)

Week	Date	Topic	Lecture	Homework / Lab	Tutorial
1	Mar-25	Intro to Astro Observing	[Lect-1]	[HW-1, Due Apr-1]	<a href="#">Python-1: Visibility</a>
	Mar-27	Practical Observing	[Lect-2]		
2	Apr-1	CCDs and Astronomical Images	[Lect-3]	[HW-2, Due Apr-8]	<a href="#">Python-2: CCD Images</a>
	Apr-3	Intro to Stone Edge	[Lect-4]		<a href="#">Python-3: Astropy Fits</a>
3	Apr-8	Intro to Labs and Lab1	[Lect-5]	[Lab-1, Due Apr-22]	<a href="#">Python-4: RGB Images</a>
	Apr-10	(Analysis and Help/Hack Session)			
4	Apr-15	Statistics	[Lect-6]	[HW-3, Due Apr-29]	
	Apr-17	(Analysis and Help/Hack Session)			
5	Apr-22	Intro to Lab2		[Lab-2, Due May-6]	<a href="#">SEO Cheat Sheet</a>
	Apr-24	(Analysis and Help/Hack Session)	[Lect-7]		
6	Apr-29	(Analysis and Help/Hack Session)			<a href="#">Python-5: Gaussian Fits</a>
	May-1	(Analysis and Help/Hack Session)			
7	May-6	Intro to Lab 3, Project Ideas	[Lect-8]	Lab-3, Due May-22	
	May-8	(Analysis and Help/Hack Session)			

Pages 17

General Information

- [Schedule](#) (highlighted with a red circle)
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Clone this wiki locally

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Lecture notes  
Homework  
Labs  
Tutorials

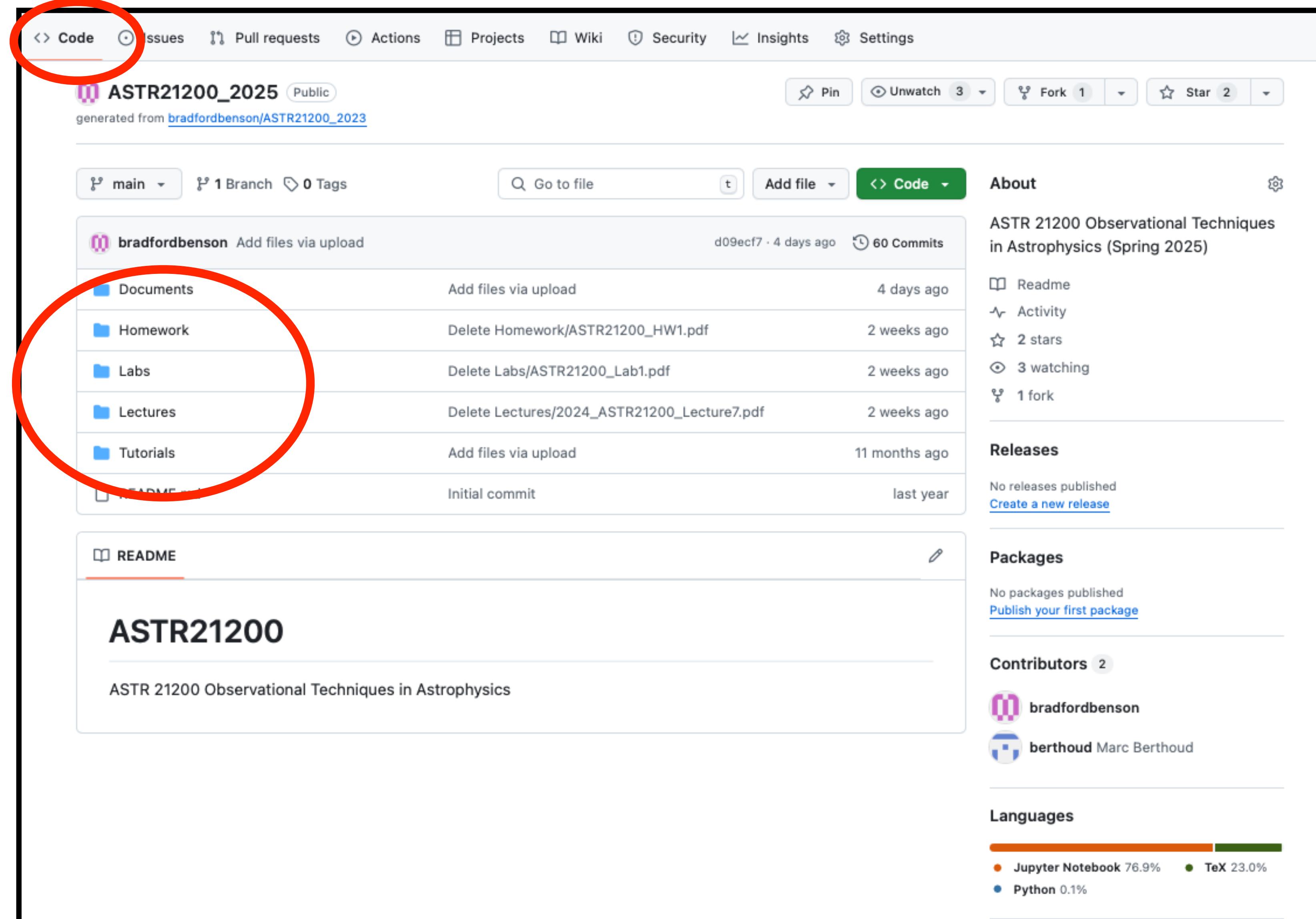
Will be linked to  
“Schedule”

# Course Materials

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[https://github.com/bradfordbenson/ASTR21200\\_2025/wiki](https://github.com/bradfordbenson/ASTR21200_2025/wiki)

Lecture notes  
Homework  
Labs  
Tutorials

Also linked to the  
GitHub code repo  
for the class



The screenshot shows the GitHub repository page for 'ASTR21200\_2025'. The 'Code' tab is highlighted with a red circle. The repository was generated from 'bradfordbenson/ASTR21200\_2023'. It contains 1 branch and 0 tags. The commit history shows several uploads of files related to 'Homework', 'Labs', 'Lectures', and 'Tutorials'. The 'About' section describes the repository as 'ASTR 21200 Observational Techniques in Astrophysics (Spring 2025)'. The 'Releases' section indicates no releases have been published. The 'Contributors' section lists 'bradfordbenson' and 'berthoud Marc Berthoud'. The 'Languages' section shows Jupyter Notebook as the primary language at 76.9%, followed by TeX at 23.0% and Python at 0.1%.

**ASTR21200\_2025** Public  
generated from [bradfordbenson/ASTR21200\\_2023](https://github.com/bradfordbenson/ASTR21200_2023)

main · 1 Branch · 0 Tags

Go to file Add file <> Code

**bradfordbenson** Add files via upload d09ecf7 · 4 days ago 60 Commits

Documents Add files via upload 4 days ago

Homework Delete Homework/ASTR21200\_HW1.pdf 2 weeks ago

Labs Delete Labs/ASTR21200\_Lab1.pdf 2 weeks ago

Lectures Delete Lectures/2024\_ASTR21200\_Lecture7.pdf 2 weeks ago

Tutorials Add files via upload 11 months ago

Initial commit last year

**README**

**ASTR21200**

ASTR 21200 Observational Techniques in Astrophysics

**About**

ASTR 21200 Observational Techniques in Astrophysics (Spring 2025)

Readme

Activity

2 stars

3 watching

1 fork

**Releases**

No releases published

[Create a new release](#)

**Packages**

No packages published

[Publish your first package](#)

**Contributors** 2

bradfordbenson

berthoud Marc Berthoud

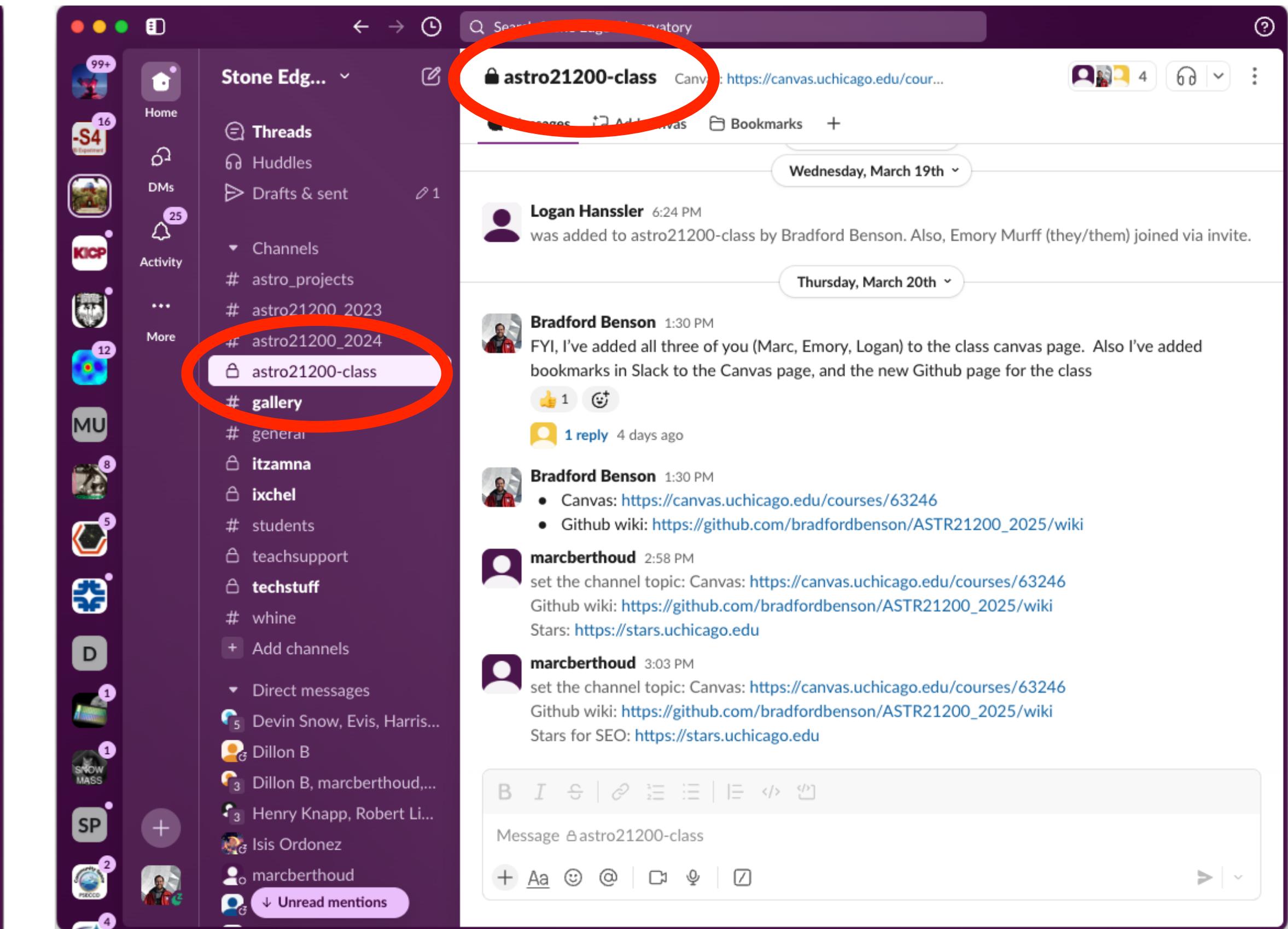
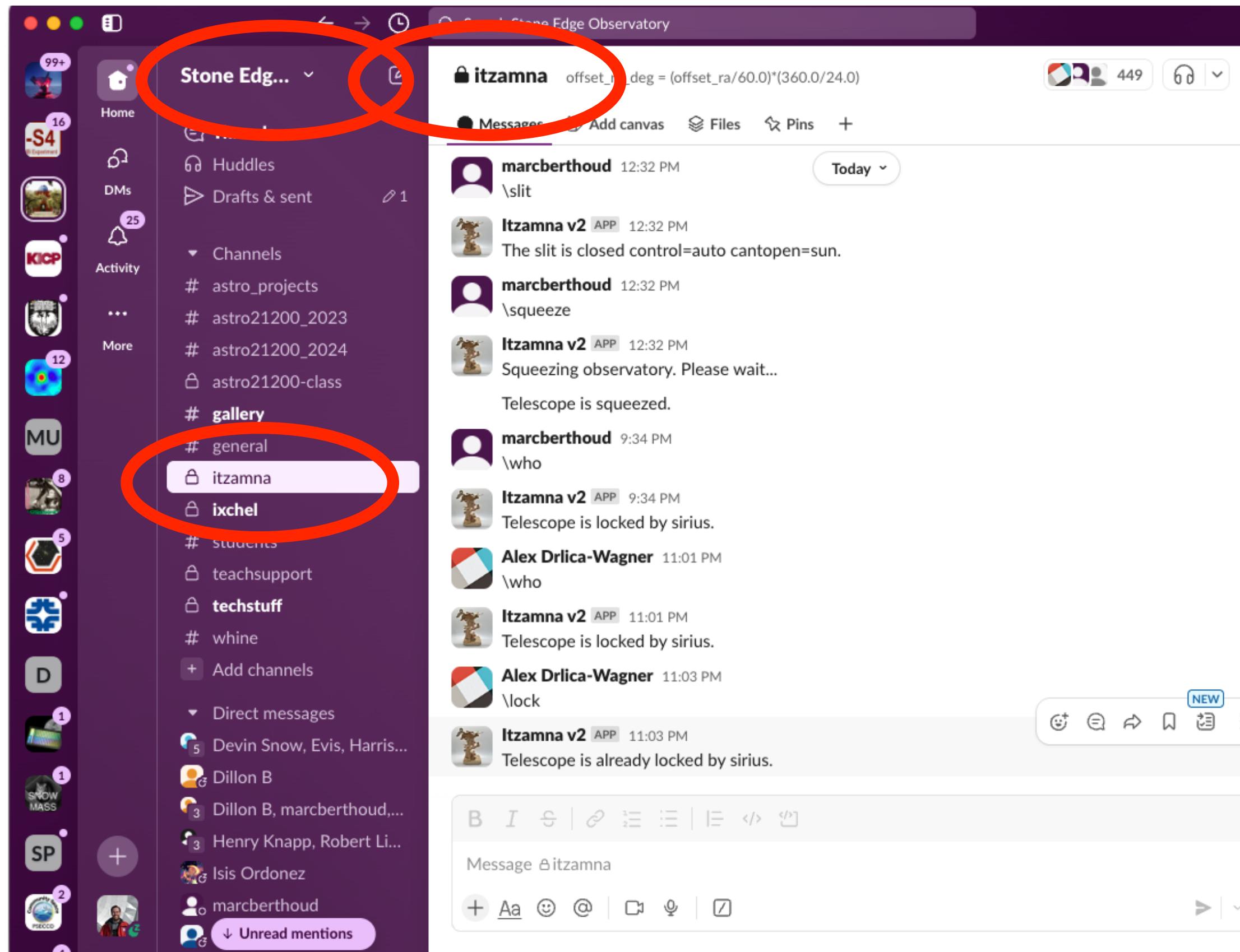
**Languages**

Jupyter Notebook 76.9% TeX 23.0%

Python 0.1%

# Course Slack

- Install the Slack App on your computer (or use web interface)
  - After Homework-1, look for email invitation to “[stoneedgeobservatory.slack.com](https://stoneedgeobservatory.slack.com)” channel
- Observing through SEO will be done through “**itzamna**” channel
- General questions about lectures, computing, etc., can take place in the “**astro21200-class**” channel
- Private messages to lab-mates, instructor, TAs, can happen through “Direct Messages”



# Grading

- Homeworks (30%)
  - 3x Homeworks (10% each)
  - First one is on canvas + wiki, and due next week Apr-1!
  - Submit HW and Lab reports via course webpage on **Canvas**:
    - <https://canvas.uchicago.edu/courses/63246>
- Labs (60%)
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- Final Presentation (10%)

See Homework and Lab Schedule on the wiki!

The screenshot shows a GitHub wiki page titled "Schedule Spring 2025". The page has a header with navigation links: Code, Issues, Pull requests, Actions, Projects, Wiki (which is underlined), Security, Insights, and Settings. Below the header is a table with columns: Week, Date, Topic, Lecture, Homework / Lab, and Tutorial. The table lists the following schedule:

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On the right side of the table, there is a sidebar with sections: General Information, Labs and Observing, Computing Resources, and Clone this wiki locally.

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See Homework and Lab Schedule on the wiki!

Also on the wiki, you will find tutorials and readings that will help you with the homework and labs!

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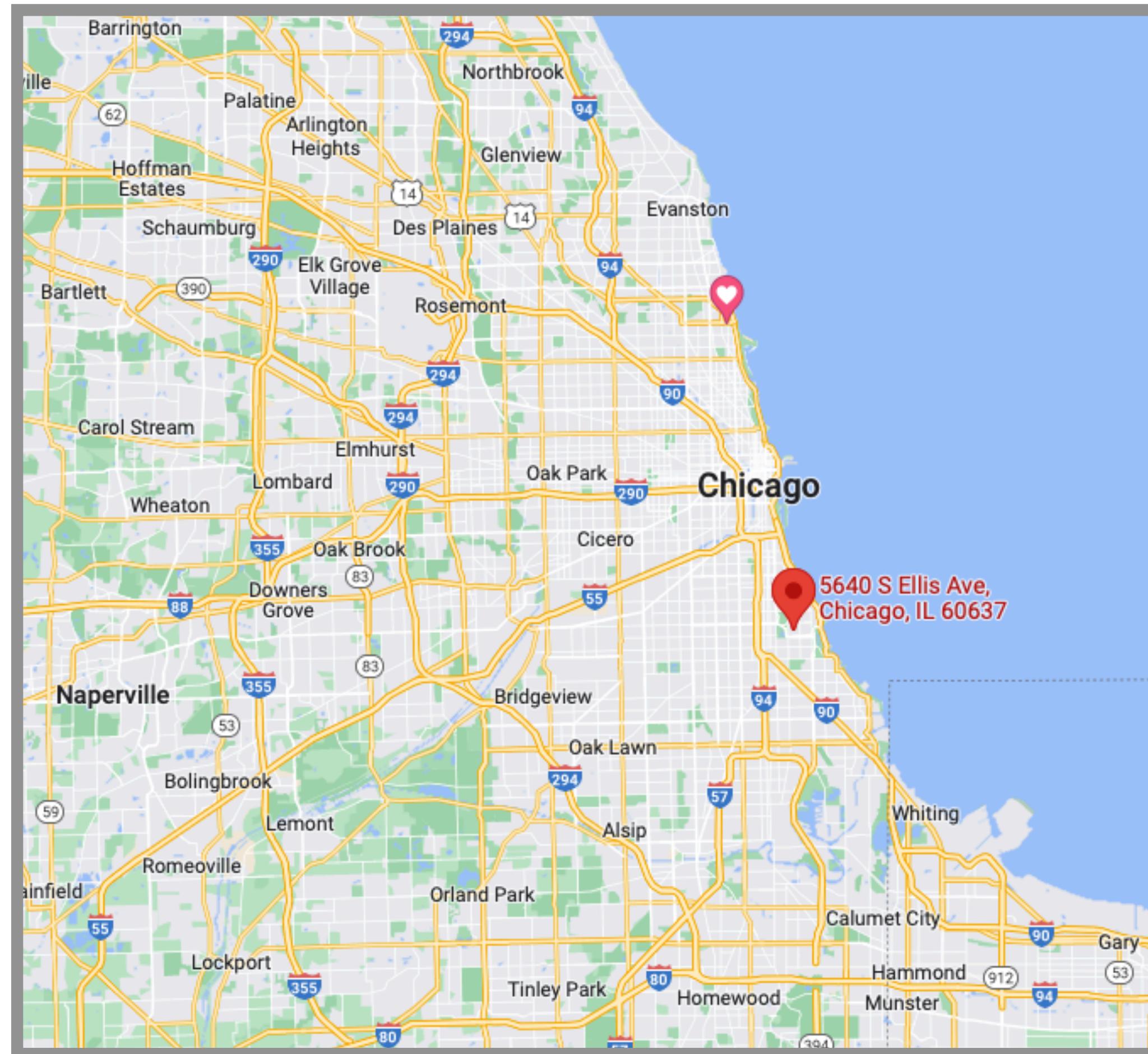
# Any questions?

# Astronomical Coordinate Systems

How do you find things on the sky?

# Astronomical Coordinate Systems

How do you find things on the Earth? Maps!



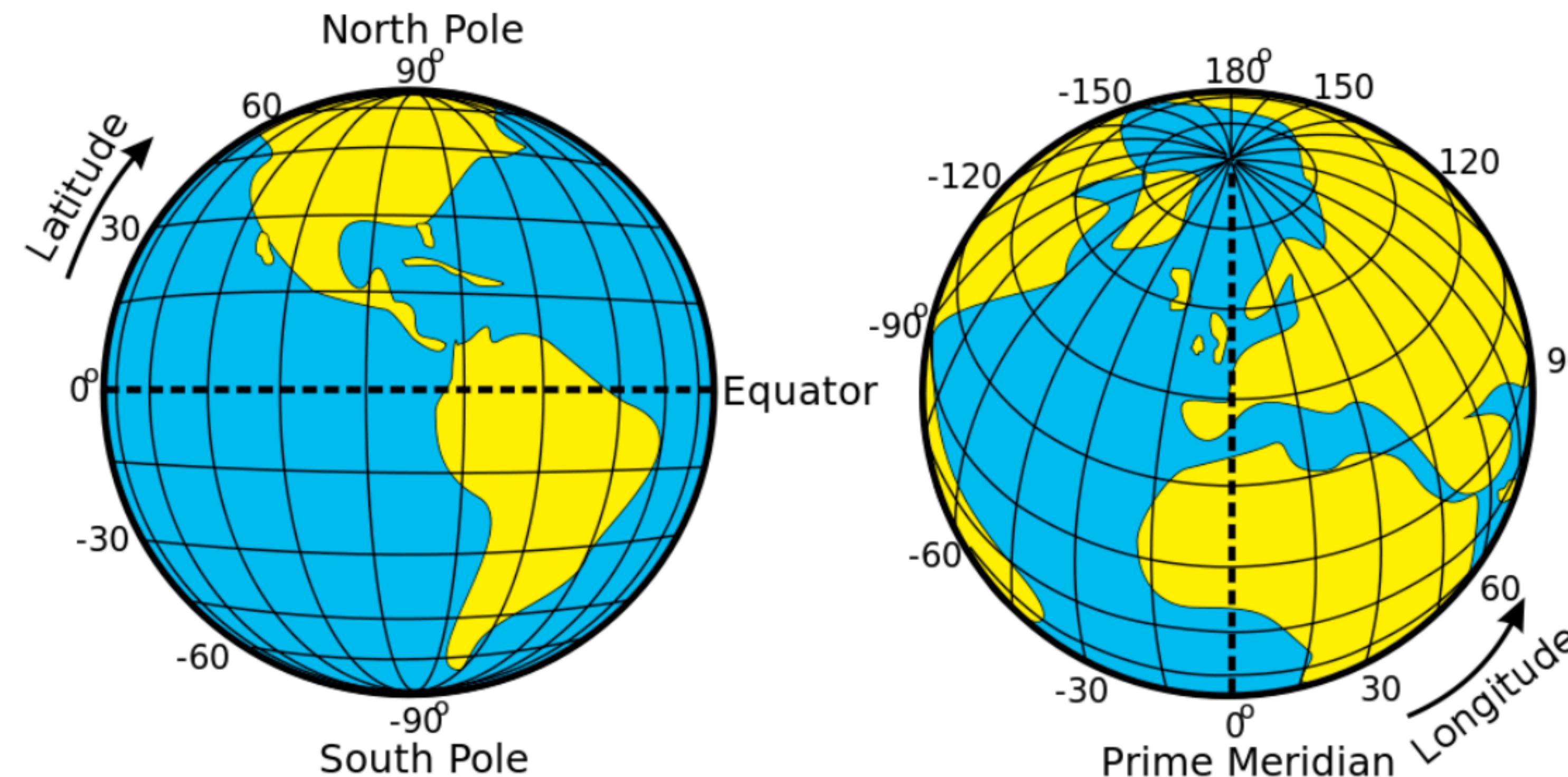
We look for patterns:

- U. Chicago is 7-miles South from downtown
- Eckhardt Research Center (ERC) is 1-block west of Reynolds Club

# Astronomical Coordinate Systems

How do you find things on the Earth? Maps!

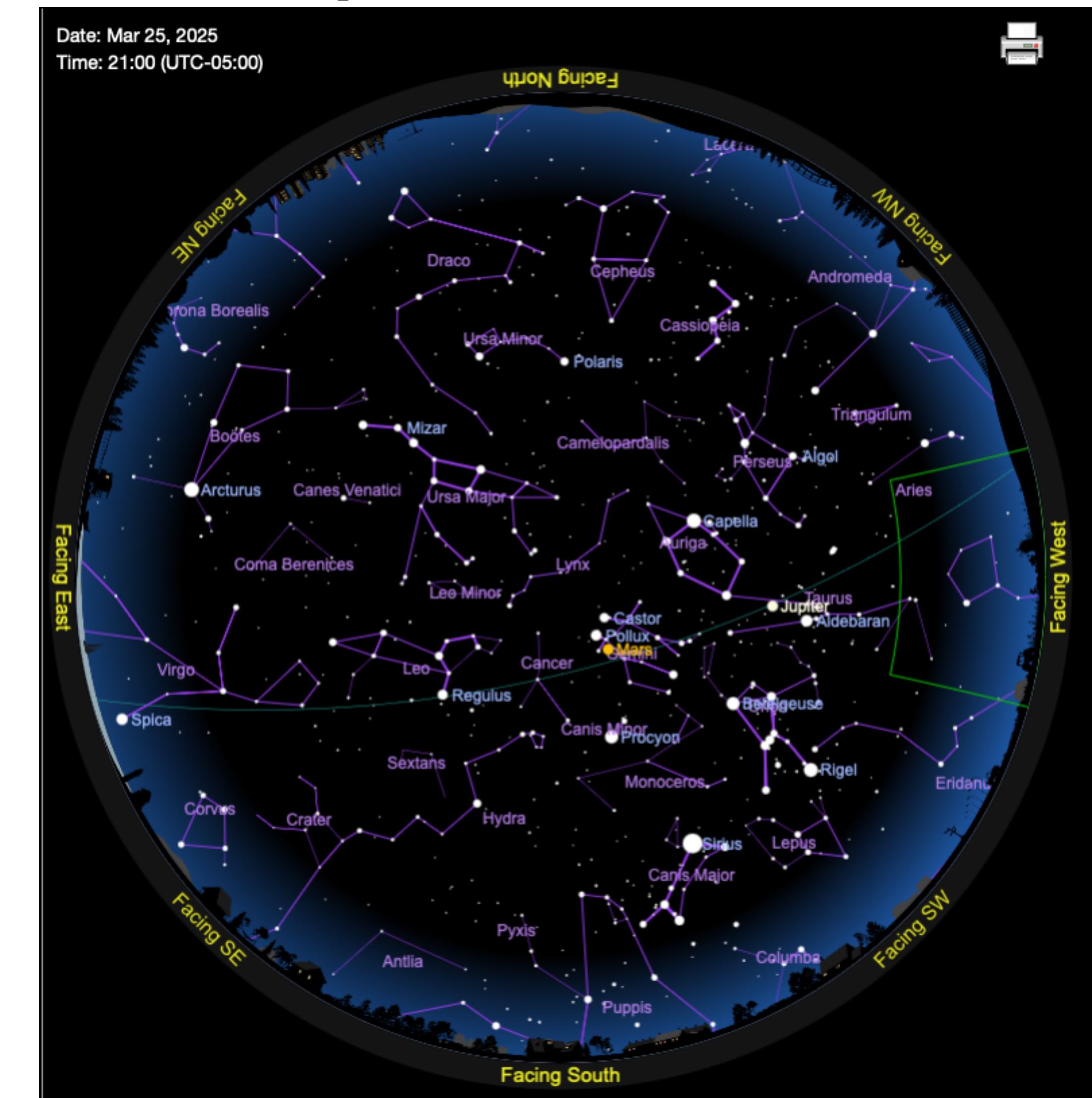
- Latitude and Longitude are angular coordinates related to Earth's rotation
  - Longitude goes from 0 to 360 deg, with Greenwich, England at 0 deg
  - Latitude goes from -90 to 90 deg, with Equator at 0 deg



# Astronomical Coordinate Systems

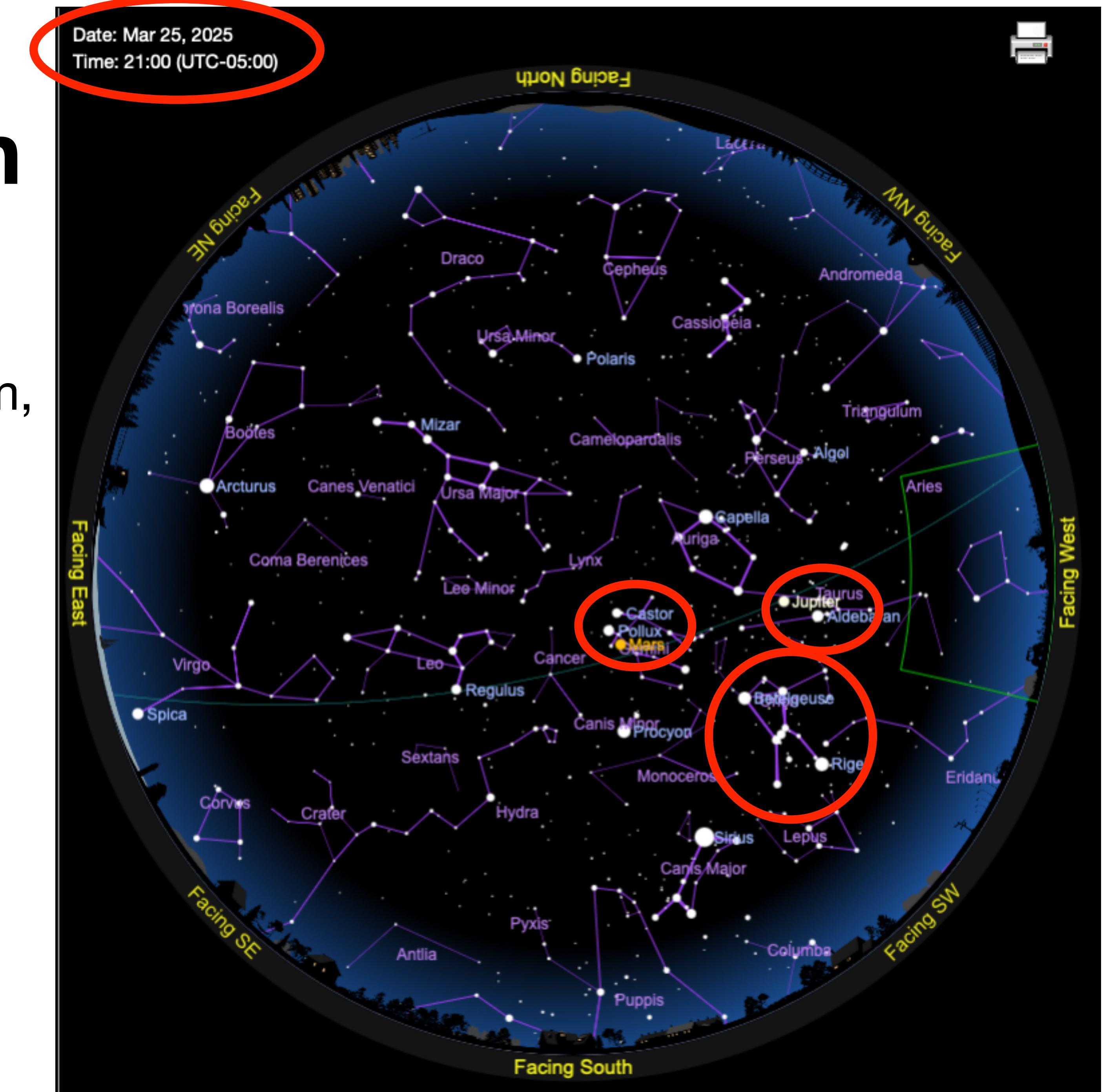
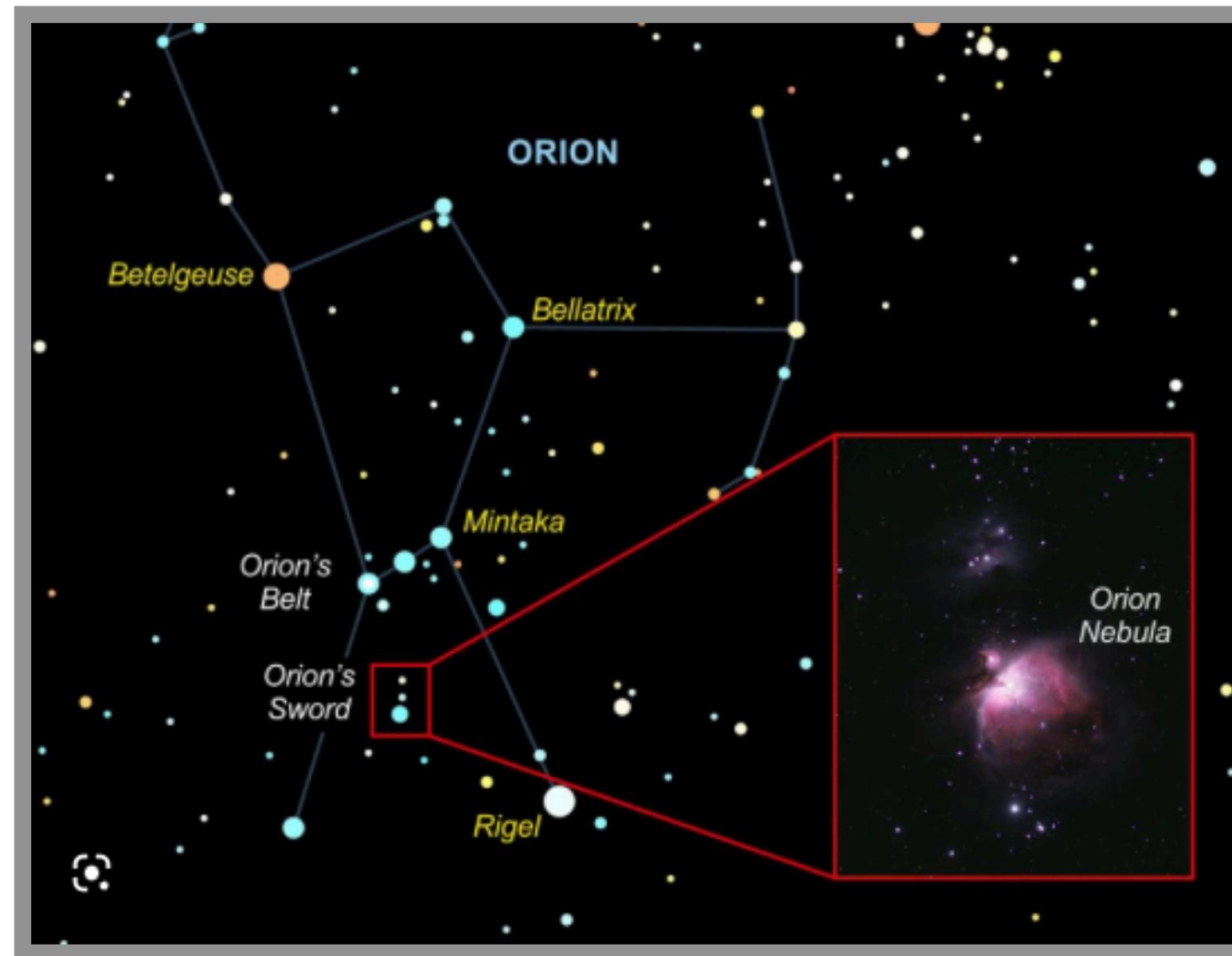
## How do you find things on the Sky? Also Maps and Coordinates!

- Instead of looking “down” to the Earth, you are looking up at the Sky, so some things are flipped
  - Because of this “East” is “flipped” to the left because you are looking “up”
  - <https://skyandtelescope.org/interactive-sky-chart/>
- Also can use “pattern matching” to determine stars / objects relative to one another



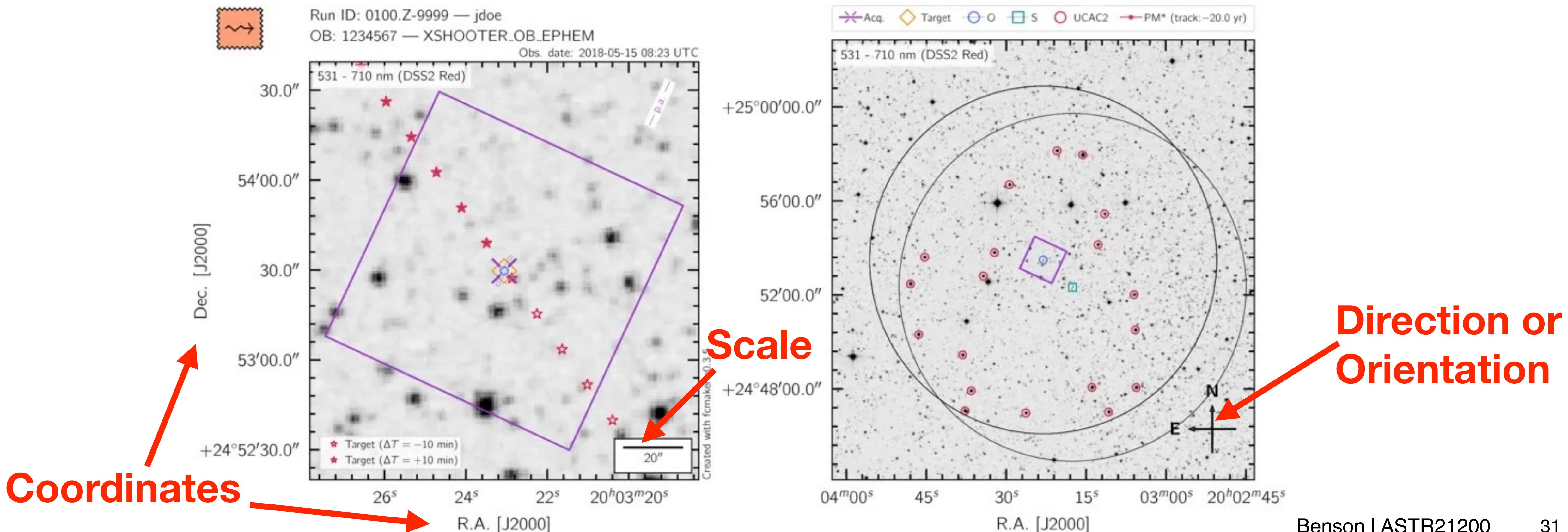
# How to find the Orion Constellation

- Sunset about 7pm right now
- Moonrise at 6am
- Jupiter is setting around 1230am, Mars setting at around 330am.
- Just after Sunset, see if you can find Mars, Jupiter, and Orion



# Finding charts in professional astronomy

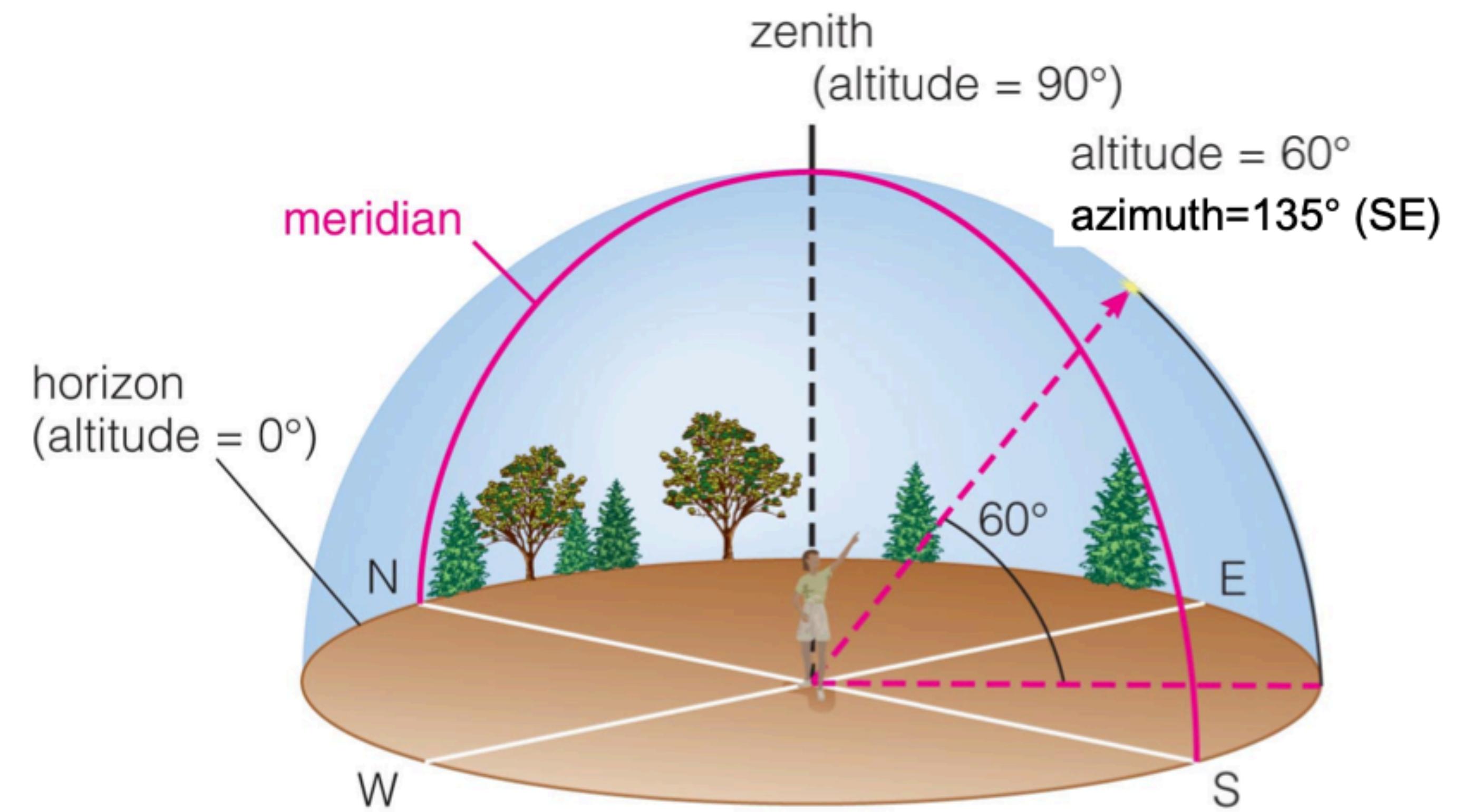
- Most “big telescopes” have relatively small (<0.5-deg) field of view (FOV)
  - e.g., Hubble “Wide Field Camera” only has a 2.7 x 2.7 arcmin FOV
- So need to make sure you are looking at the right object!



# Alt/Az Coordinate System

The sky above a specific location at a specific time is a half sphere which can be described by 2 angular coordinates (Alt & Az)

- **Altitude (Alt):** angular distance to the horizon (sometimes called “elevation”)
- **Azimuth (Az):** angular distance from North
- **Zenith:** Point overhead
- **Meridian:** North-South line



Pearson Education

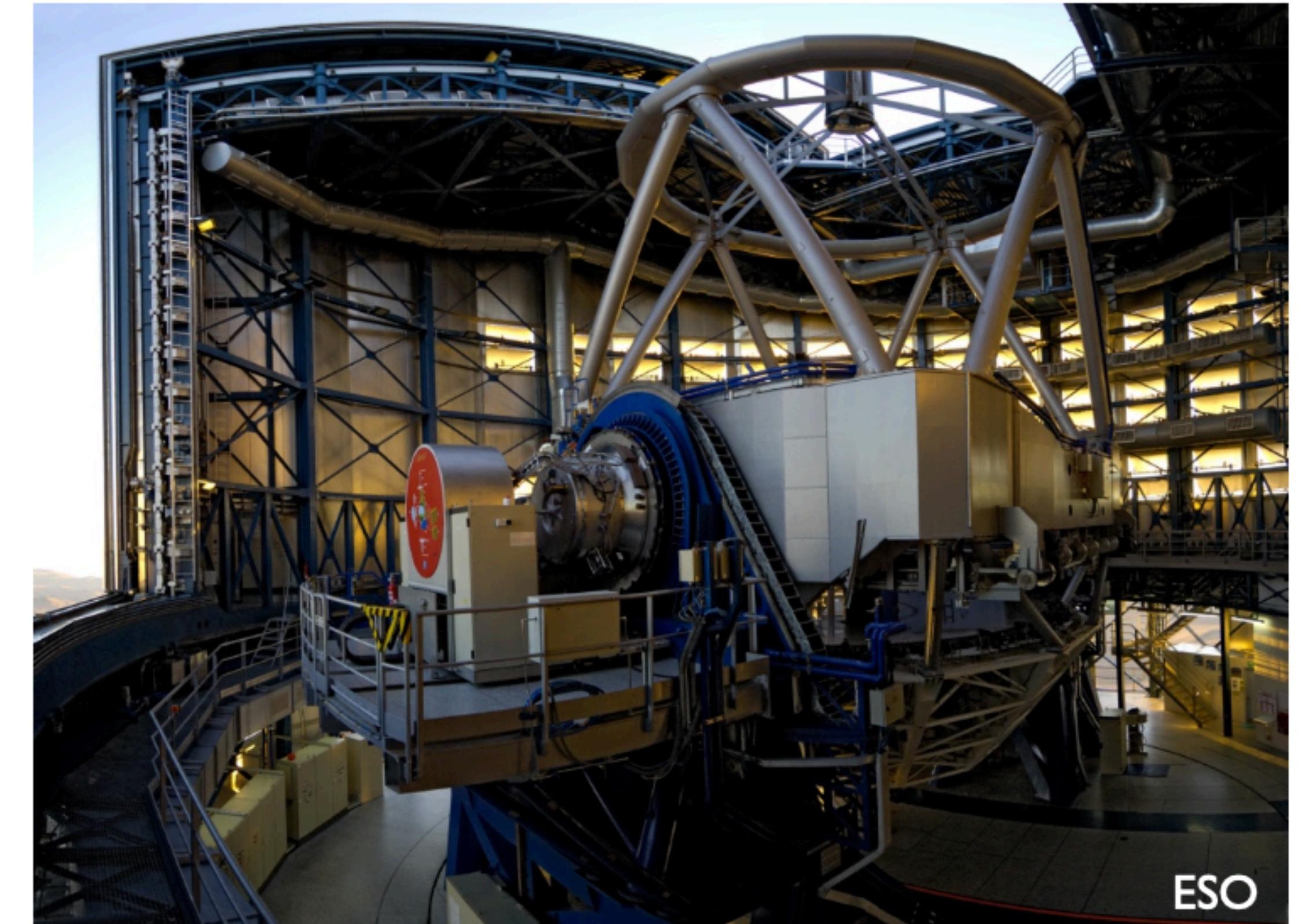
# Alt/Az Coordinate System

The sky above a specific location at a specific time is a half sphere which can be described by 2 angular coordinates (Alt & Az)

Alt-Az telescope mounts are very simple and stable



8-inch Dobsonian  
Telescope



Very Large Telescope  
(8-meters)

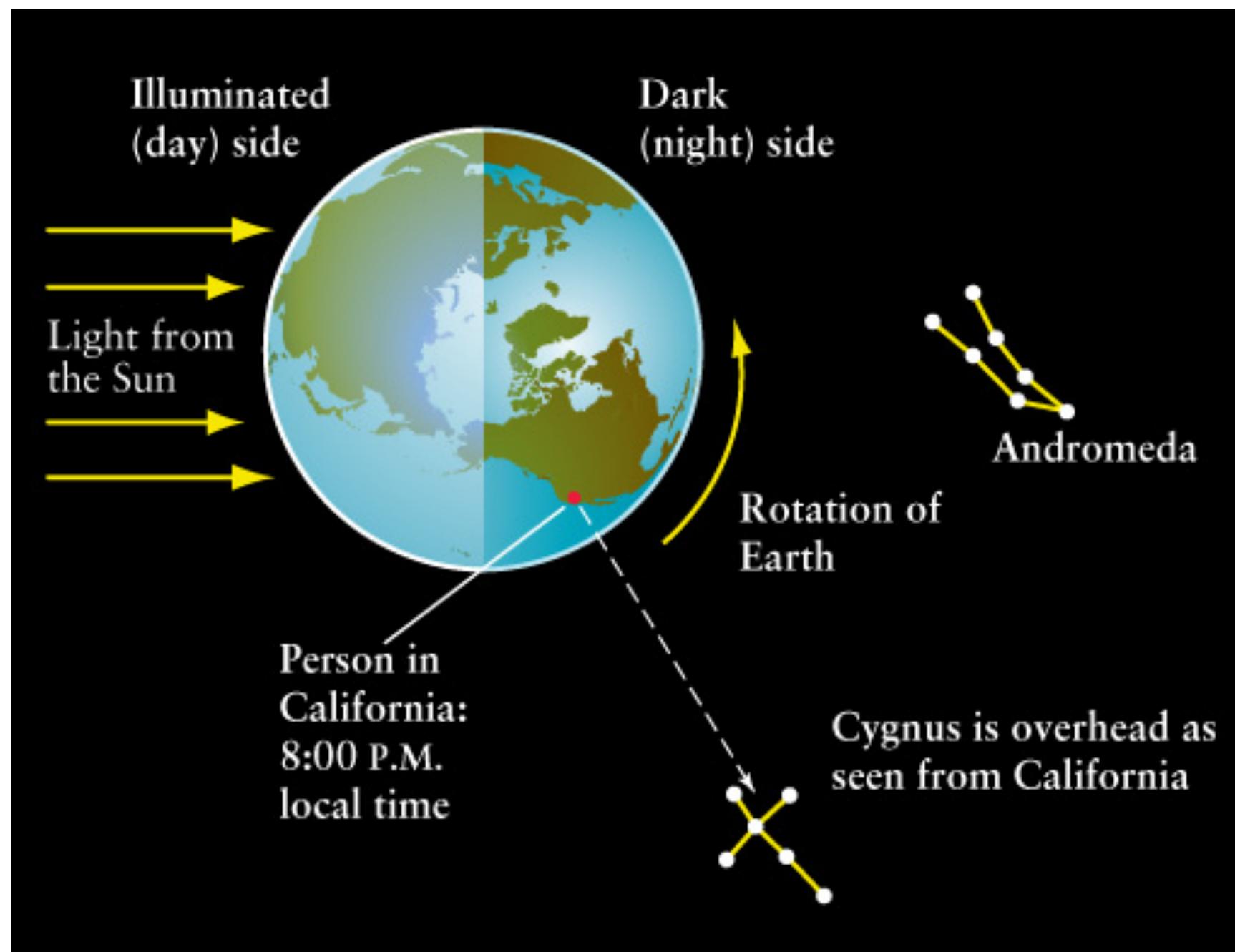


# Alt/Az Coordinate System

- Altitude and Azimuth of an object vary with time
  - -> because of the rotation of the Earth!
- In practice, we use “sky” coordinates to locate objects
- Still you will need to approximately know the Alt and Az of your target to plan your observing for the night, e.g.,
  - Is my target “up”? (i.e., Altitude > 0-degrees)
  - Is my target “observable”? (i.e., Altitude > ~40-degrees)

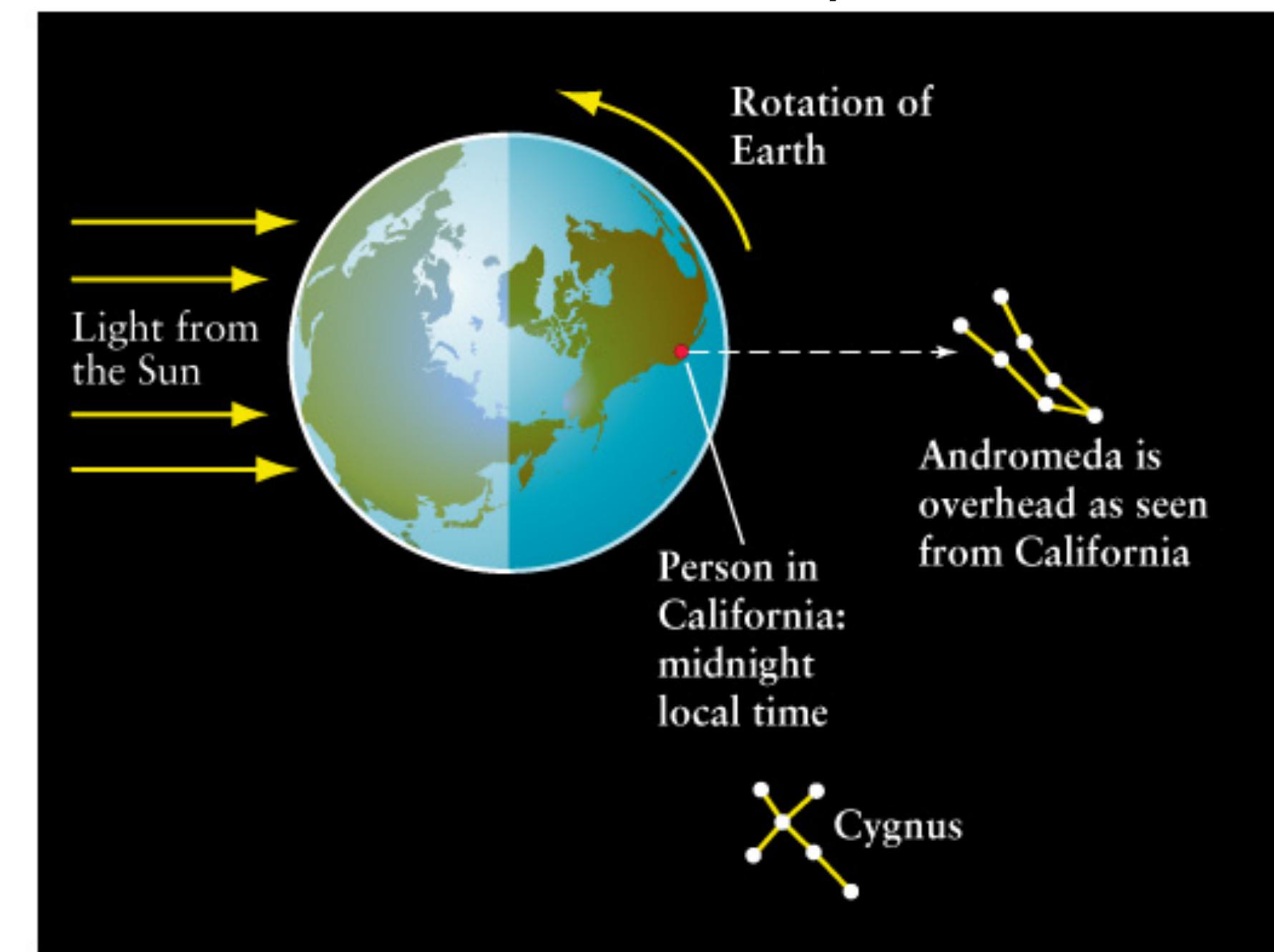
# Rotation of the Earth

- Looking down on the North Pole, Earth rotates counter clockwise
- The Sky rotates from East to West
- Objects rise in the East, and set in the West
  - And “culminate” in the South when they cross the meridian



(a) Earth as seen from above the north pole

Andromeda is to the East; Cygnus is overhead

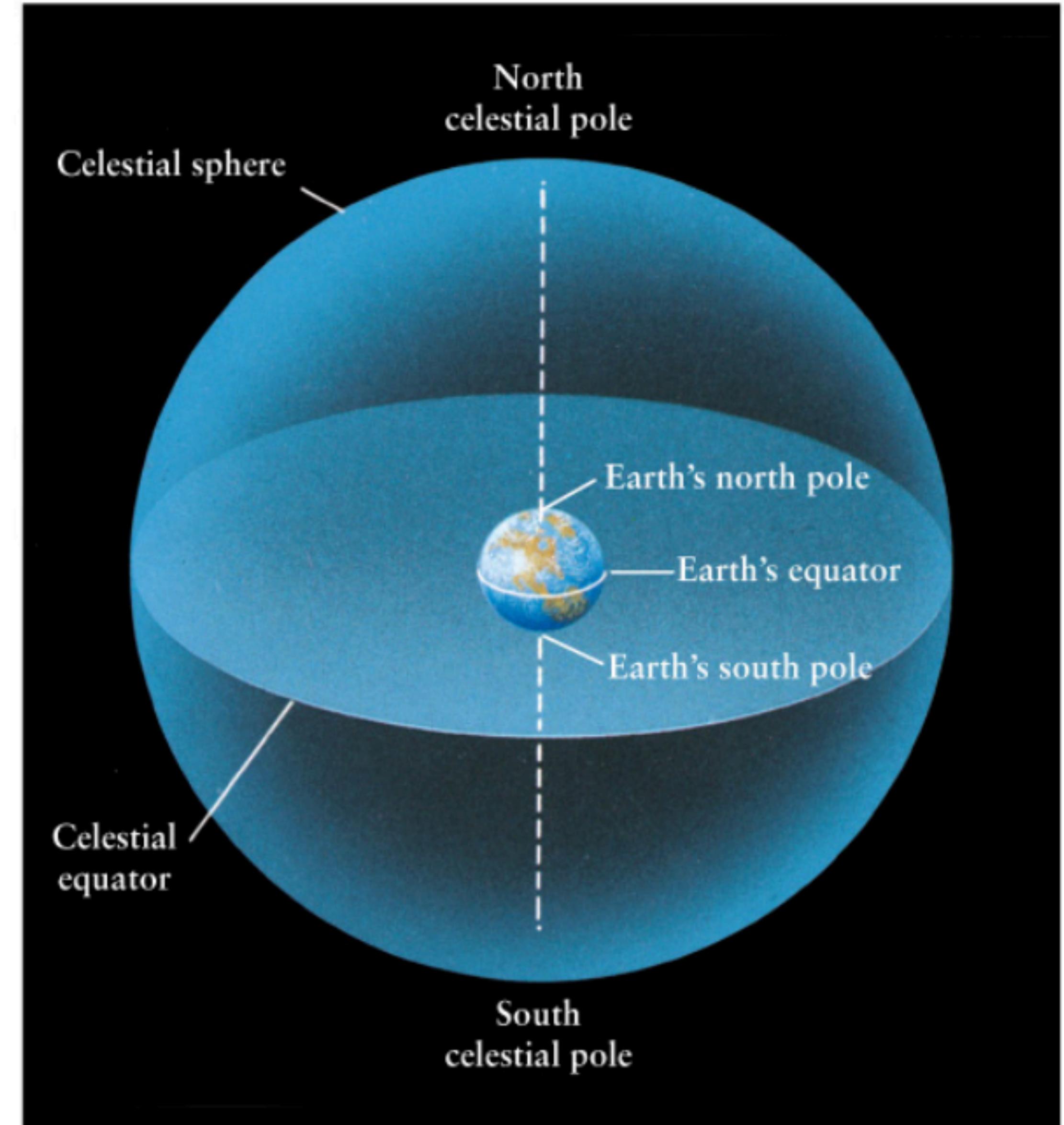


(b) 4 hours (one-sixth of a complete rotation) later

4 hrs later: Andromeda is overhead;  
Cygnus is to the West

# Celestial Sphere

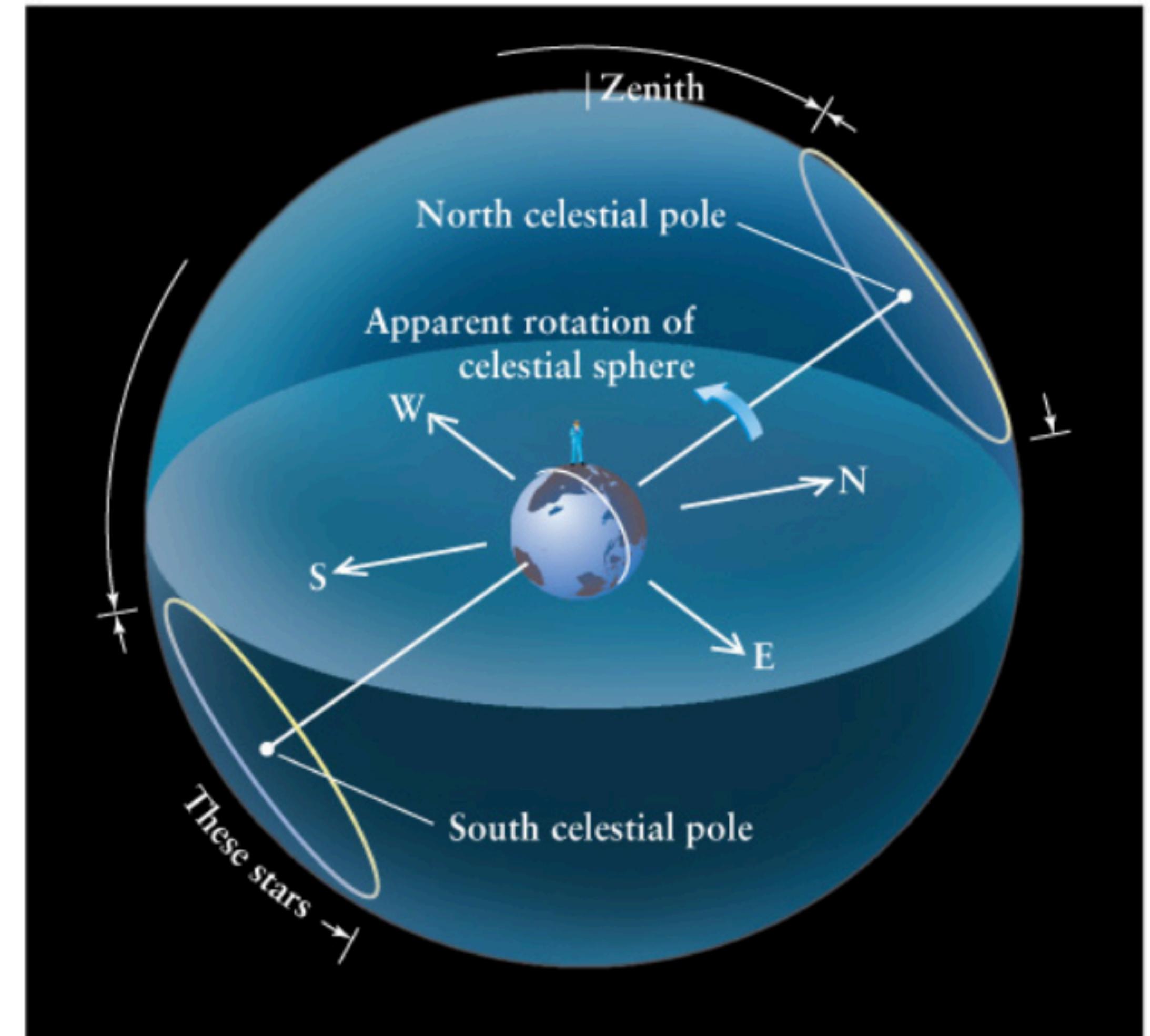
- **Celestial sphere:** Describe objects by their position on a sphere centered on the rotating Earth
- **Celestial North / South Pole:** projection of Earth's North / South Pole
- **Celestial Equator:** projection of Earth's equator



Bailey, Slater & Slater

# Apparent Motion in the Sky

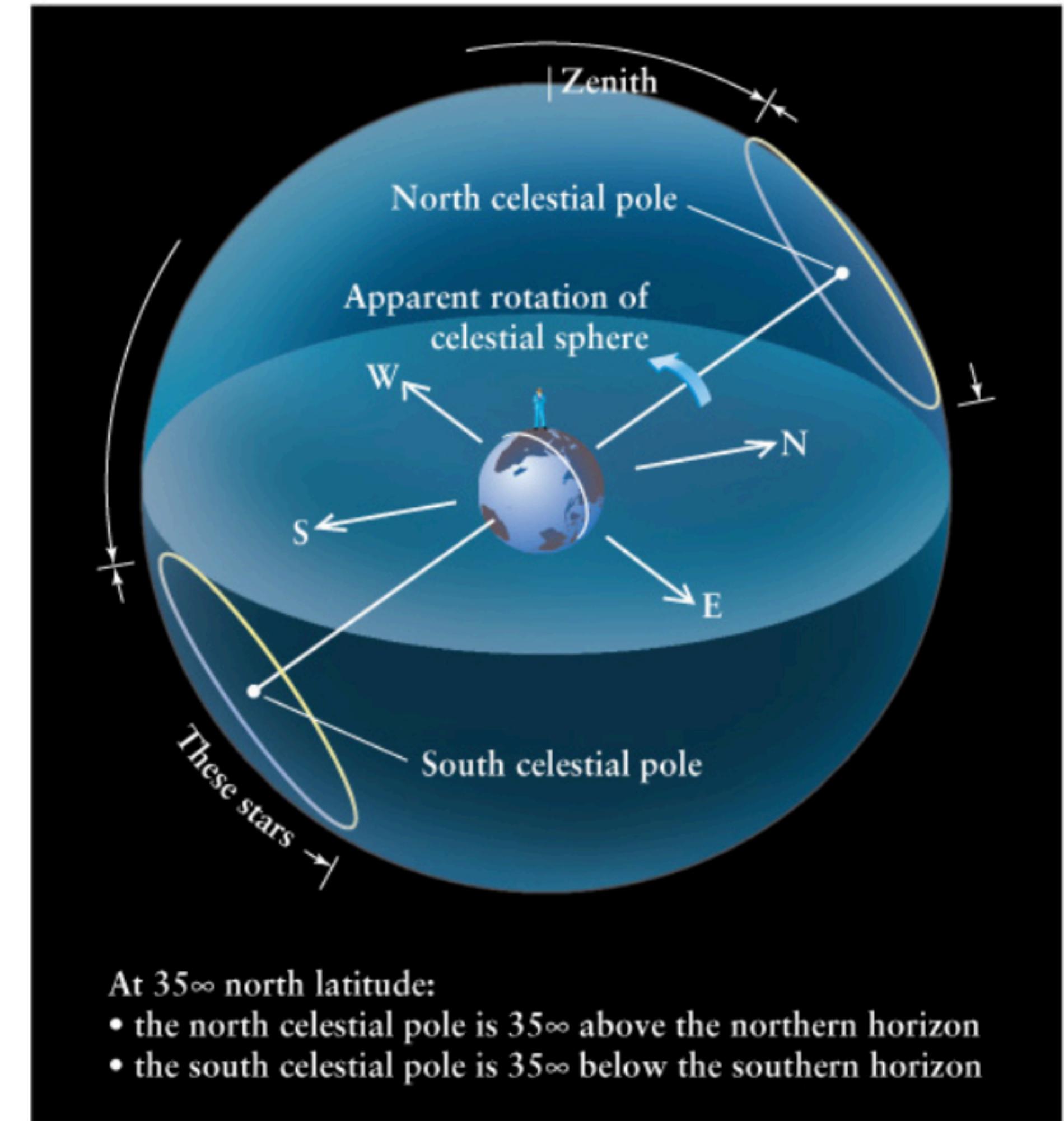
- Apparent sky motion depends on the latitude of the observer
- UChicago is at 41-deg North
- So what altitude is the North Pole at from UChicago?



Bailey, Slater & Slater

# Apparent Motion in the Sky

- Apparent sky motion depends on the latitude of the observer
- UChicago is at 41-deg North
  - North Pole is at 41-deg altitude!
- Objects within 41-deg of North Pole are always “up” (i.e., “circumpolar”)
- We can never see objects within 41-deg of the South Pole
- All objects rise in the East, and set in the West

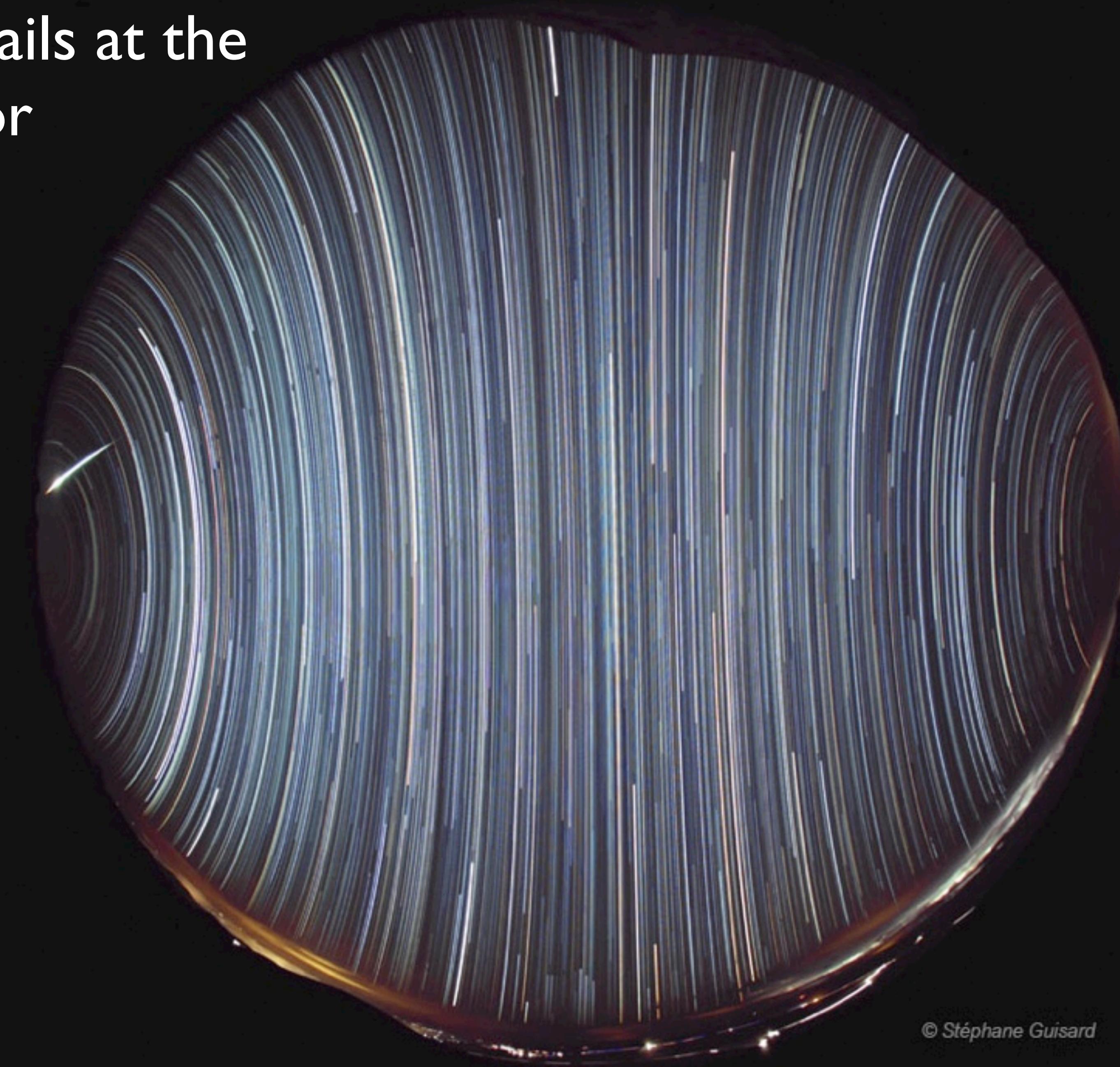


Bailey, Slater & Slater



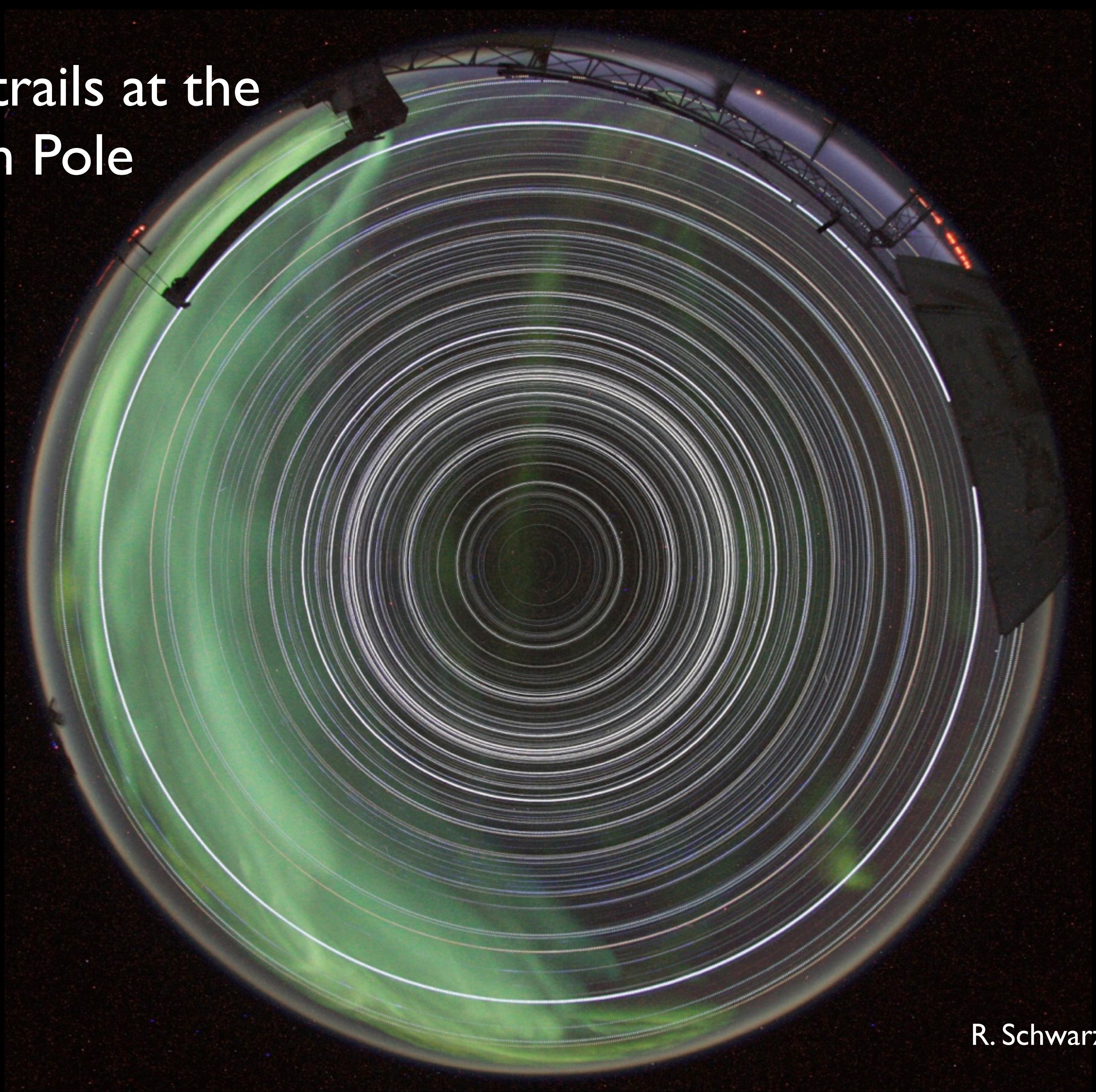
Star trails over CTIO, (c) Jose Delgado

# Star trails at the equator



© Stéphane Guisard

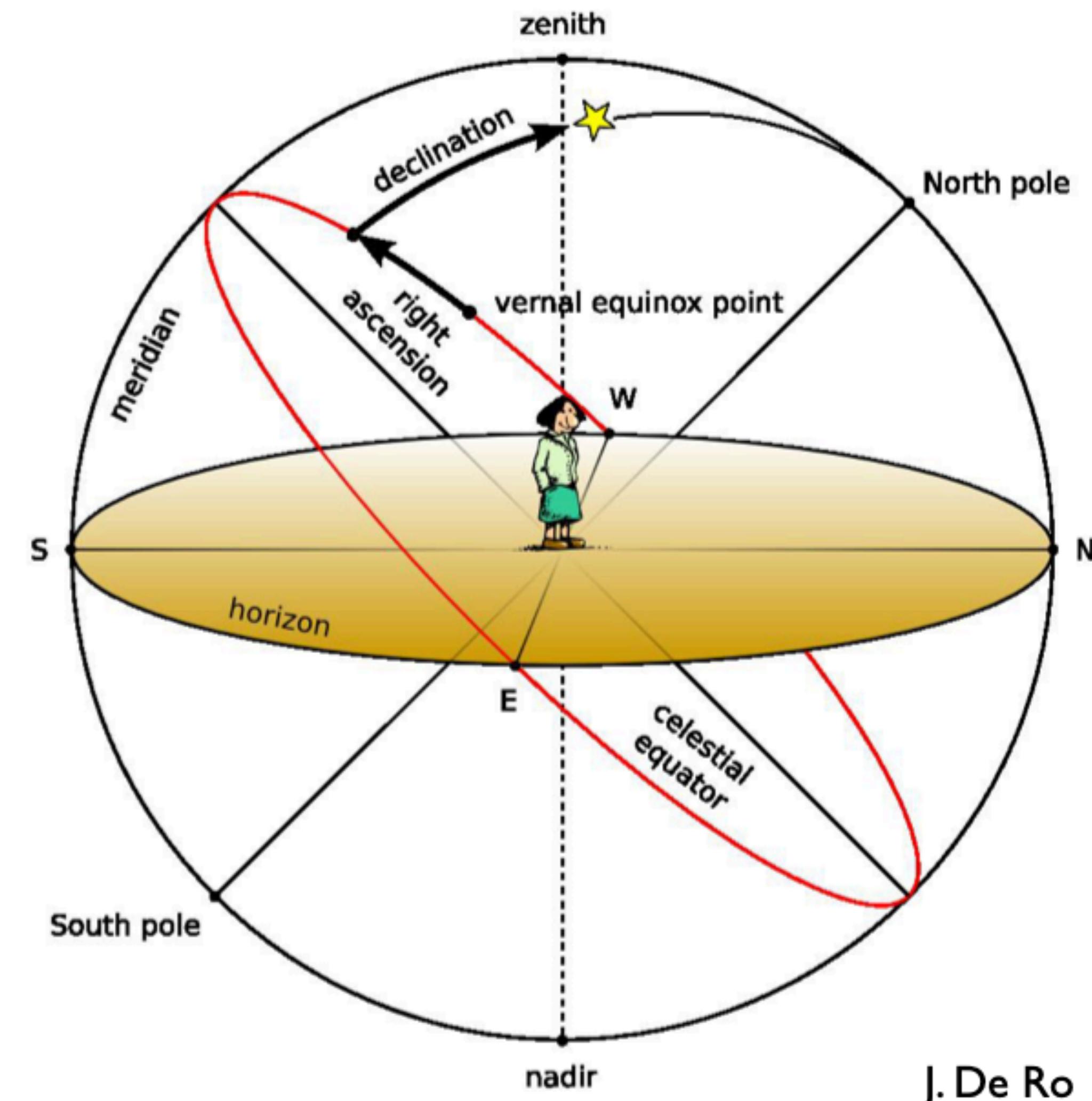
# Star trails at the South Pole



R. Schwarz

# Equatorial (RA/Dec) Coordinate System

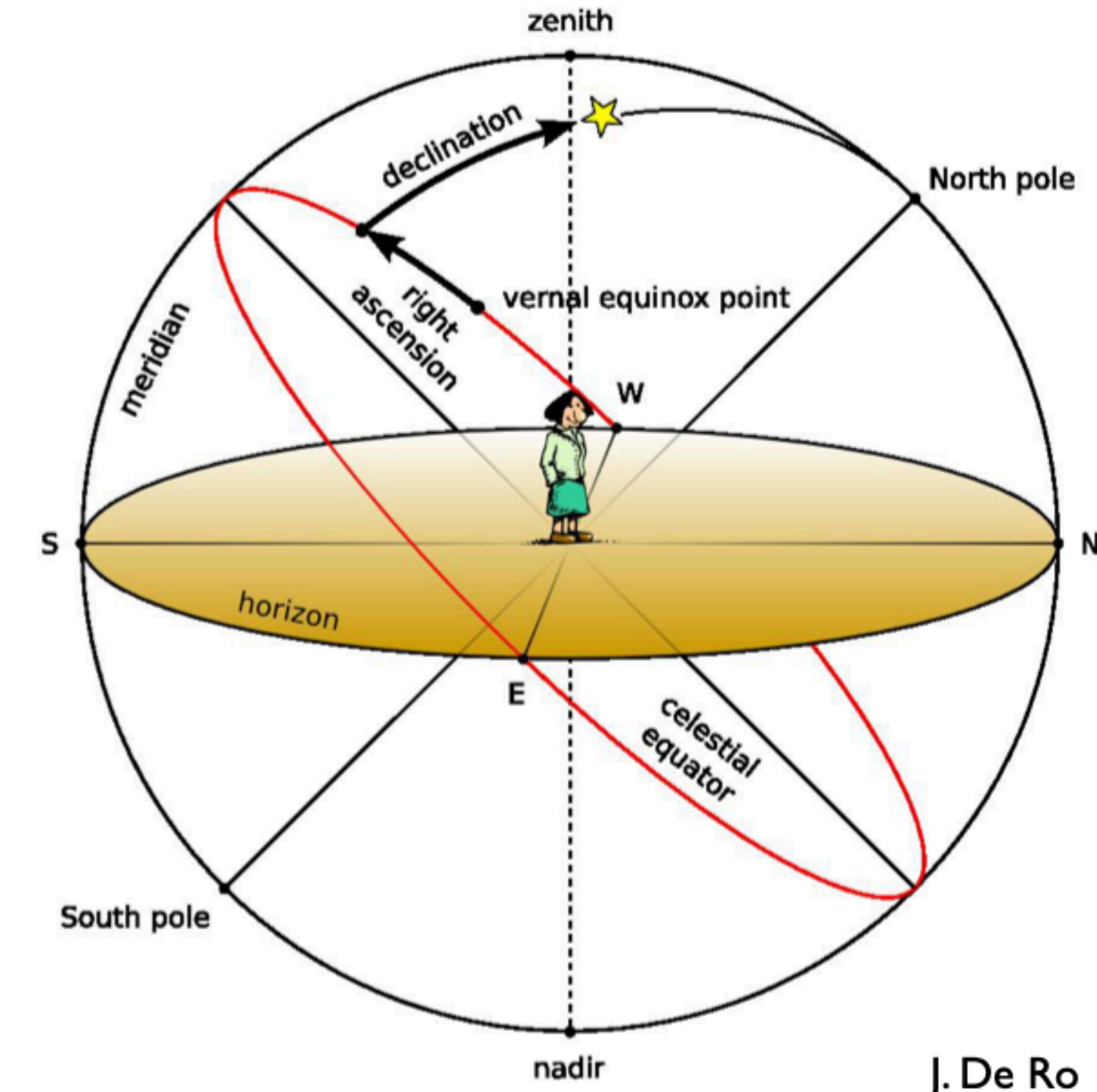
- Fixed to the celestial sphere, rotates with the sky
- **Declination (Dec,  $\delta$ ):** Angular distance from the celestial equator
- **Right Ascension (RA,  $\alpha$ ):** Angular distance from the vernal equinox (i.e., a special point on the equator)



J. De Ro

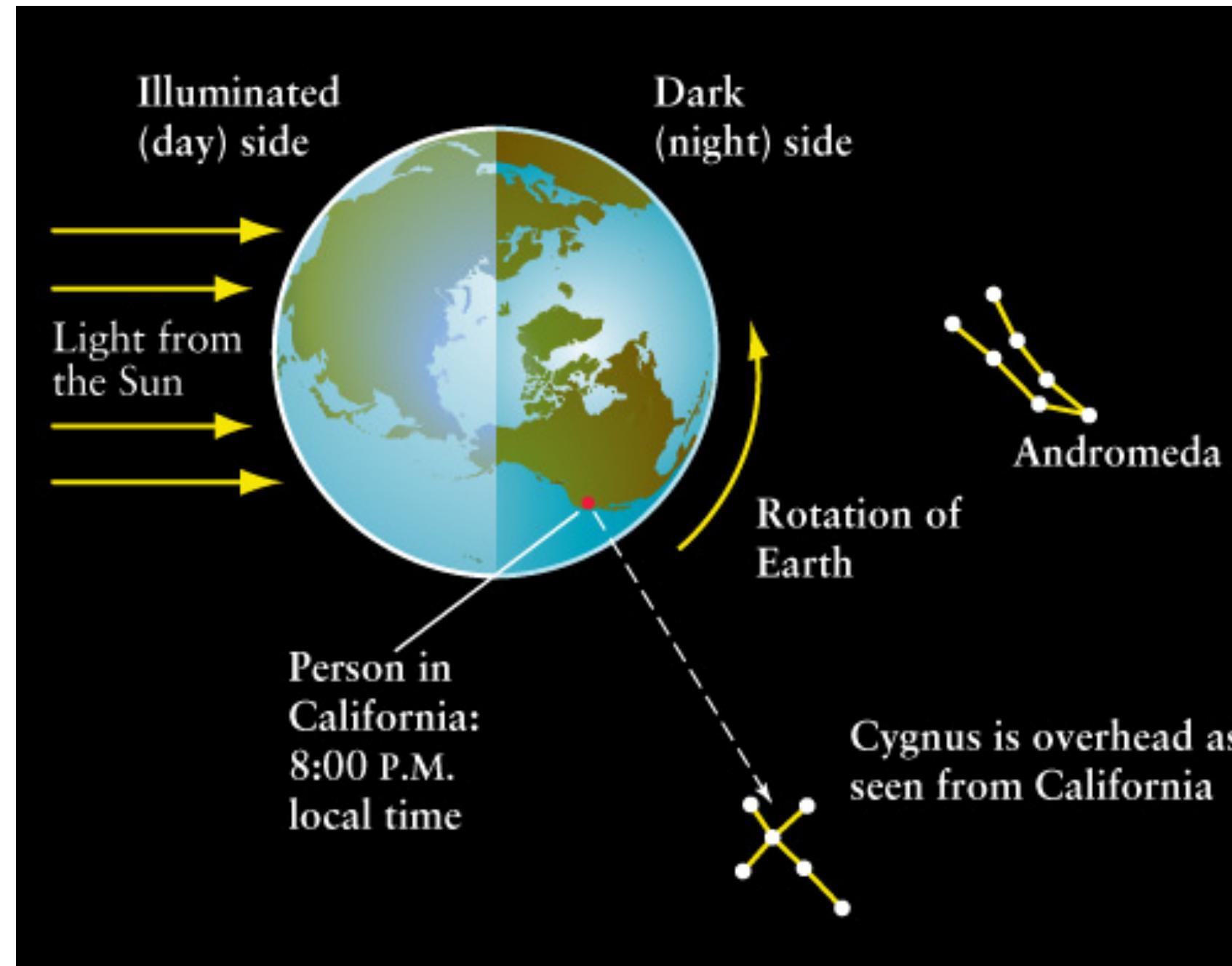
# Equatorial (RA/Dec) Coordinate System

- **Declination (Dec,  $\delta$ ):** Measured in degrees, between  $-90^\circ > \delta > 90^\circ$
- **Right Ascension (RA,  $\alpha$ ):** Angular distance from the vernal equinox (i.e., a special point on the equator). Can also be measured in degrees between  $0^\circ < \alpha < 360^\circ$

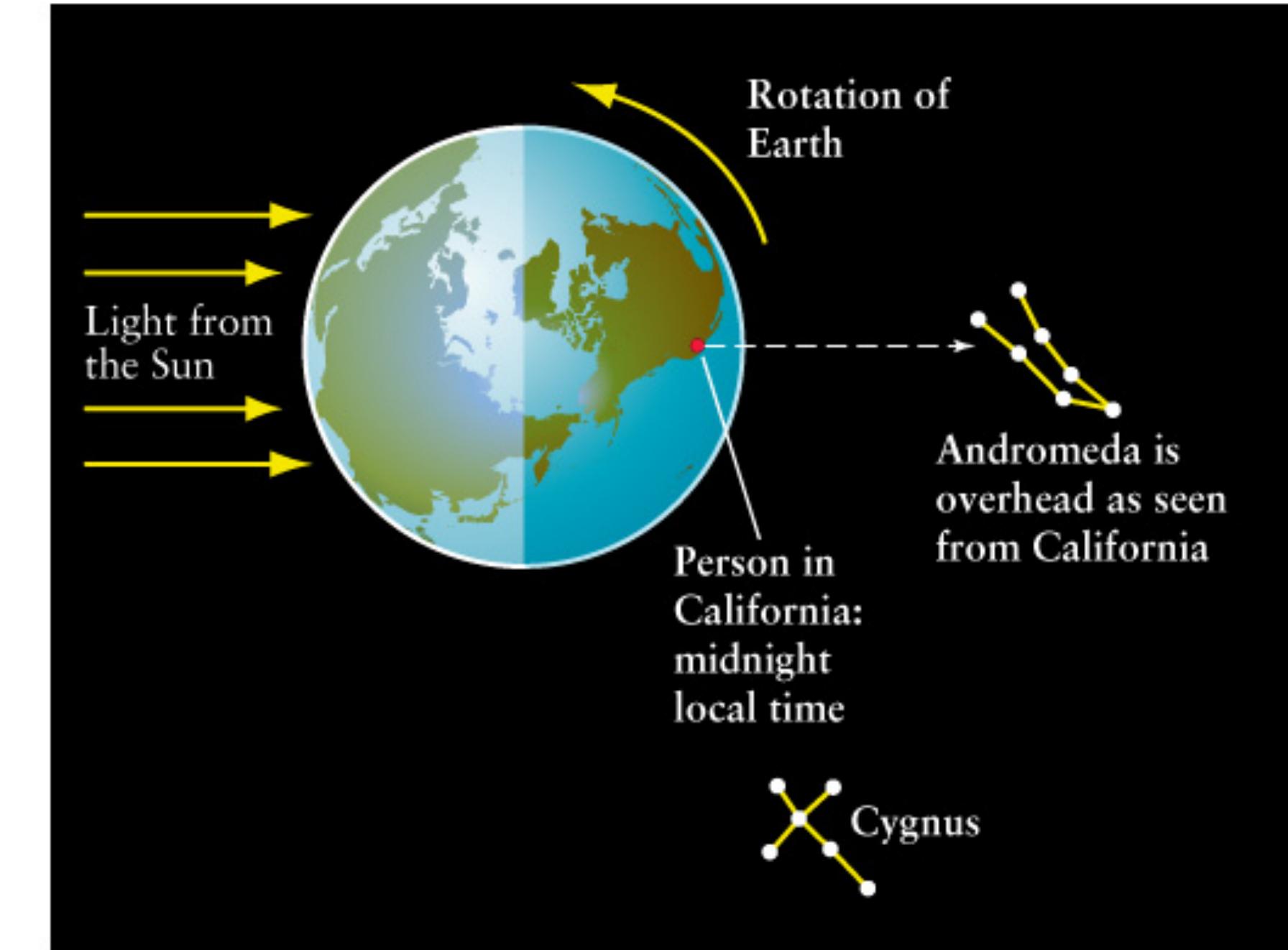


J. De Ro

# Right Ascension (RA)



(a) Earth as seen from above the north pole

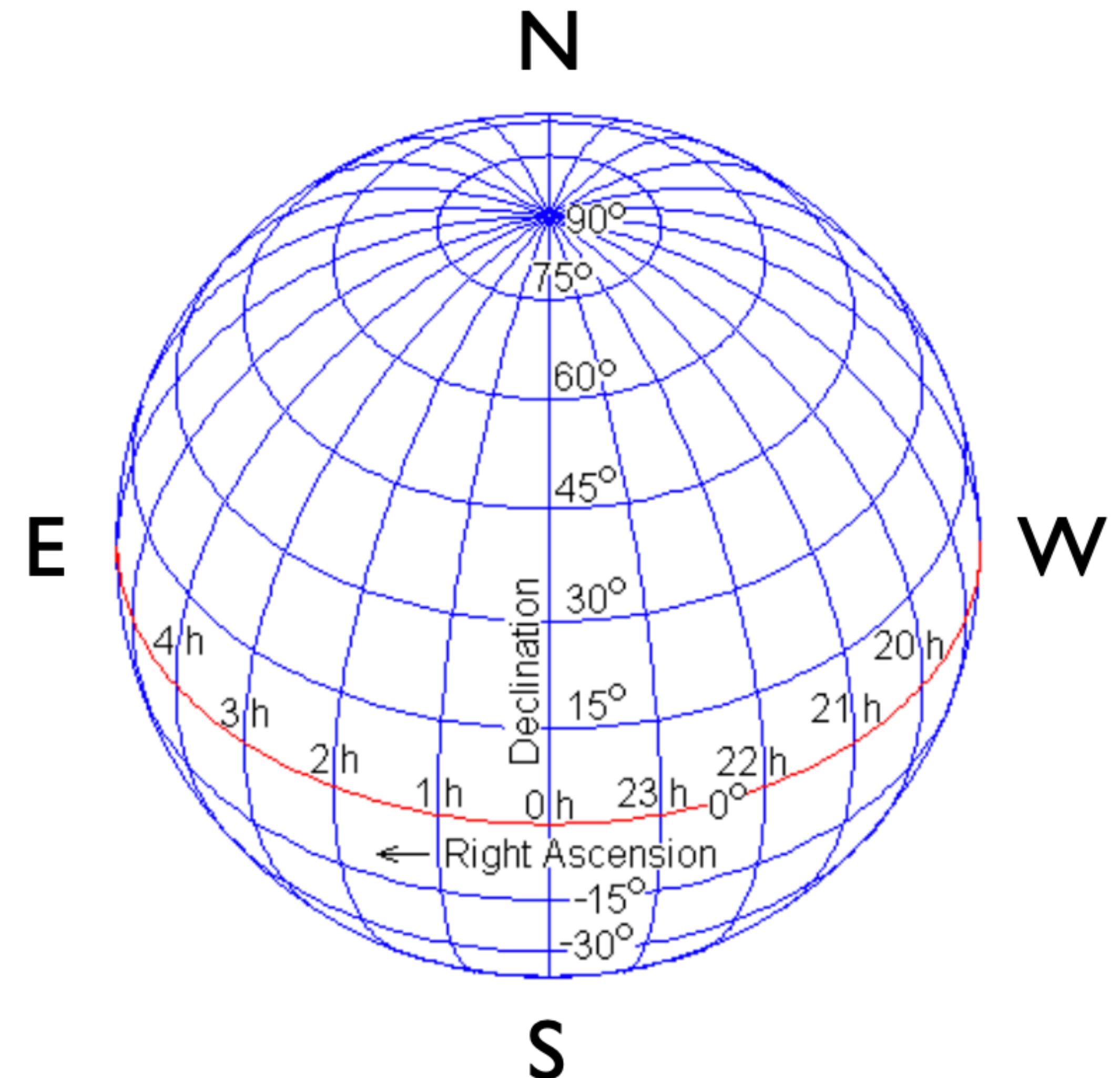


(b) 4 hours (one-sixth of a complete rotation) later

- A “natural” way to define RA is in units of time:
  - “Distance” between two points is given by the time interval between each of them passing the meridian
  - e.g., reference point (0h) culminates (passes meridian) at a certain time, all points that culminate 4-hrs later have  **$\alpha = 4h$**

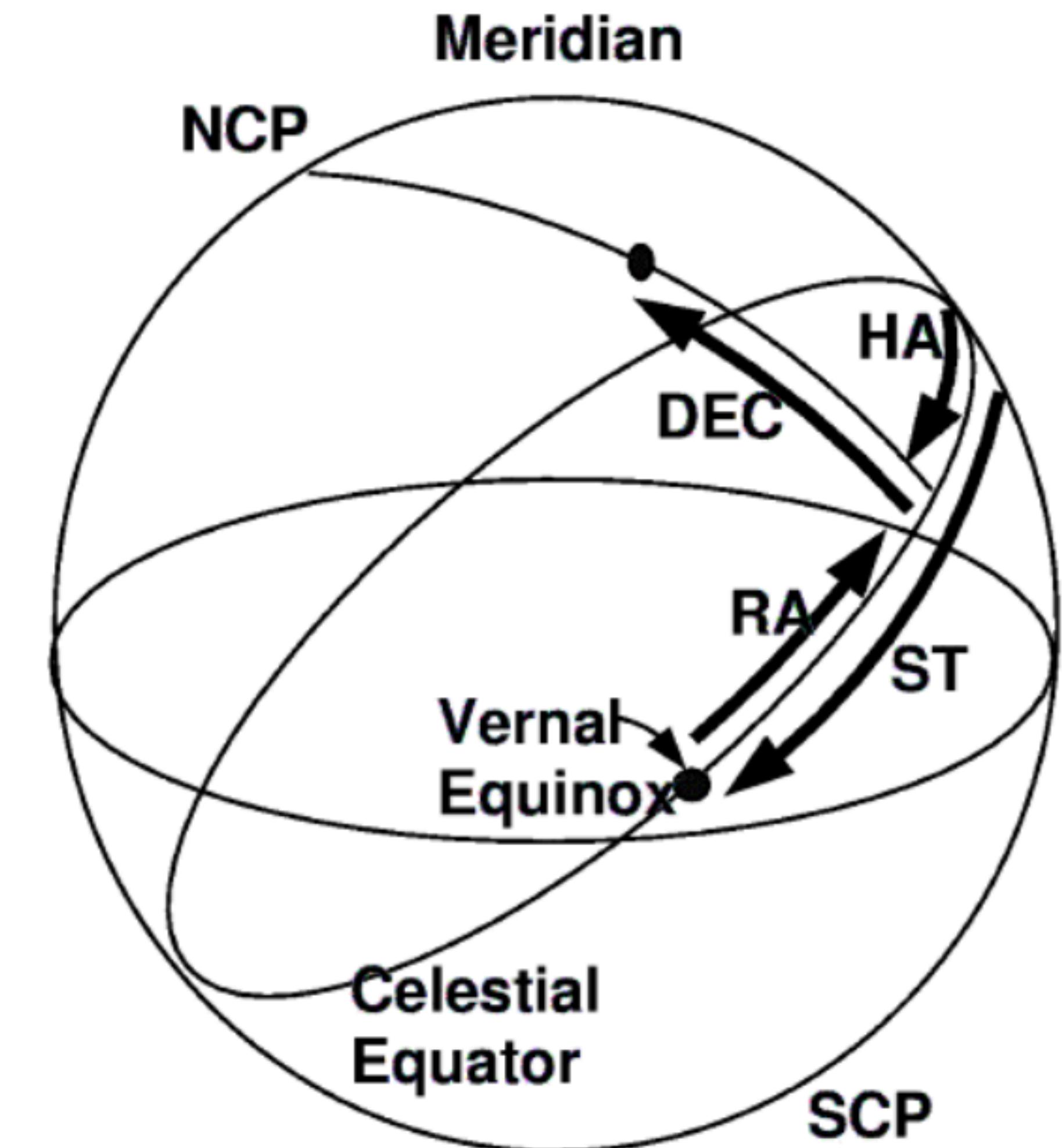
# Right Ascension (RA), Local Sidereal Time (LST)

- Sky rotates East to West
  - East is “left”
- RA runs from right to left in astronomical maps
  - Larger RA values are on left of the image
- Local sidereal team (LST): RA of the objects currently culminating (on meridian)



# RA, LST, and Hour Angle

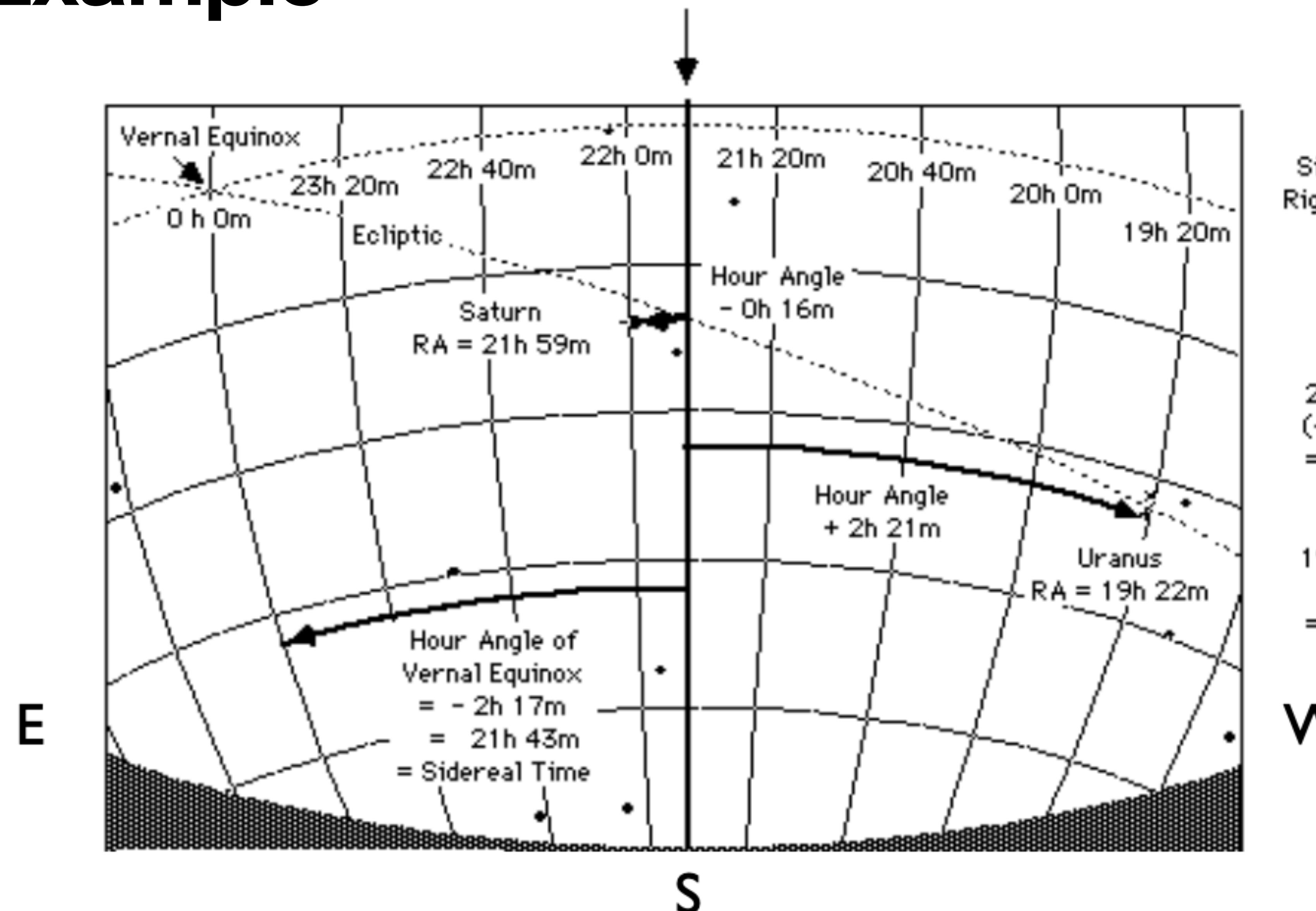
- Hour angle (HA): Time that has passed since object culminated
  - $HA = LST - a_{\text{object}}$
- $HA > 0h$ : Object has already culminated, it is “setting” and in the Western half of the sky
- $HA < 0h$ : Object is rising, is in the Eastern half of the sky, will culminate in HA hours



R. O'Connell

# HA Example

Sidereal Time  
= Right Ascension on Meridian  
= 21 hrs 43 min



Sidereal Time =  
Right Ascension +  
Hour Angle

Saturn:  
21h 59m RA +  
 $(-0\text{h } 16\text{m})$  HA  
= 21h 43m ST

Uranus:  
19h 22m RA +  
2h 21m HA  
= 21h 43m ST

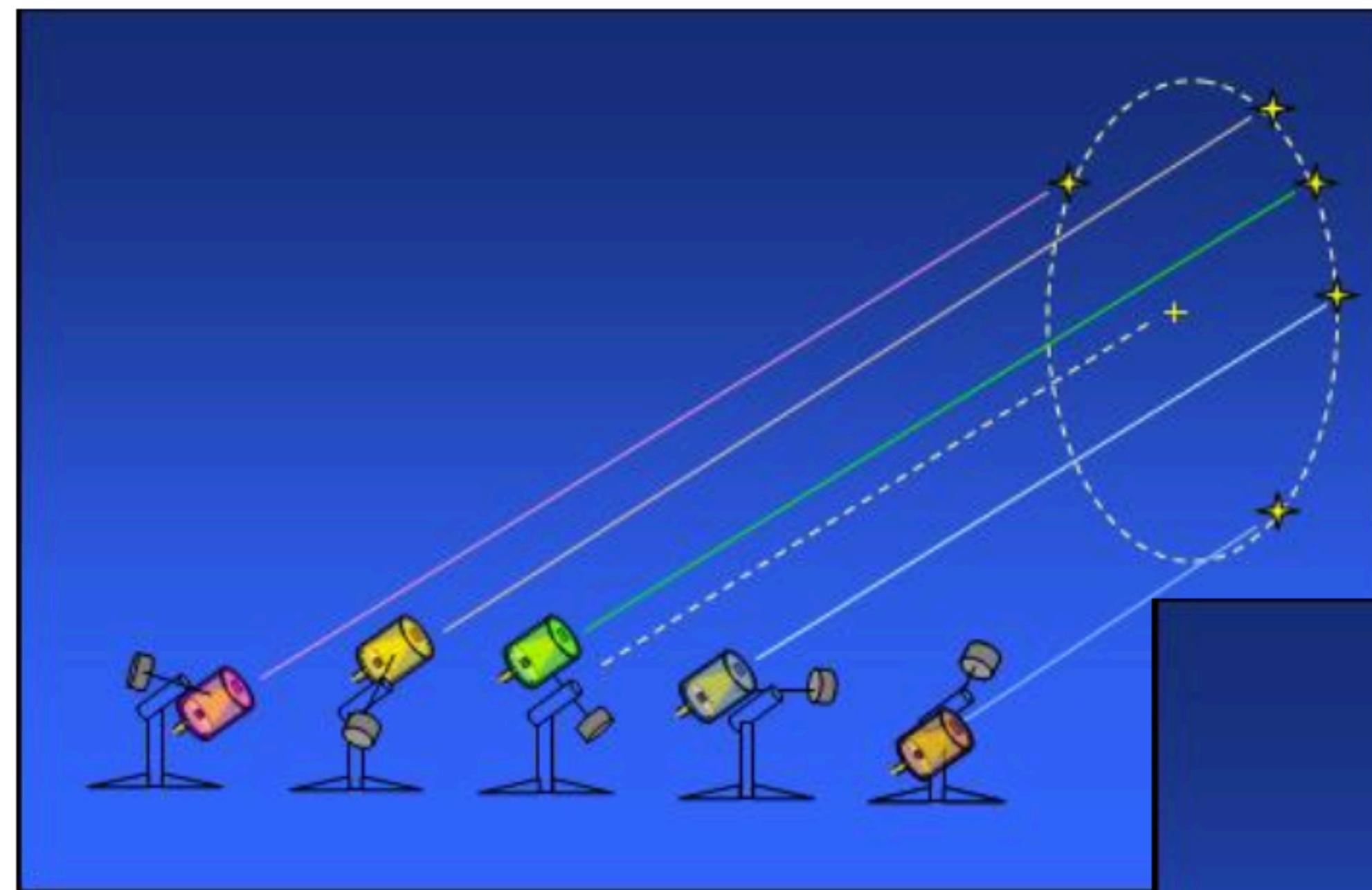
# Equatorial Telescope Mounts

- **Alt/Az mounts:** need to track object in two axis, with variable speed
- **Equatorial mount:** One axis is parallel to Earth's rotation axis -> Need to track only in this axis with constant speed



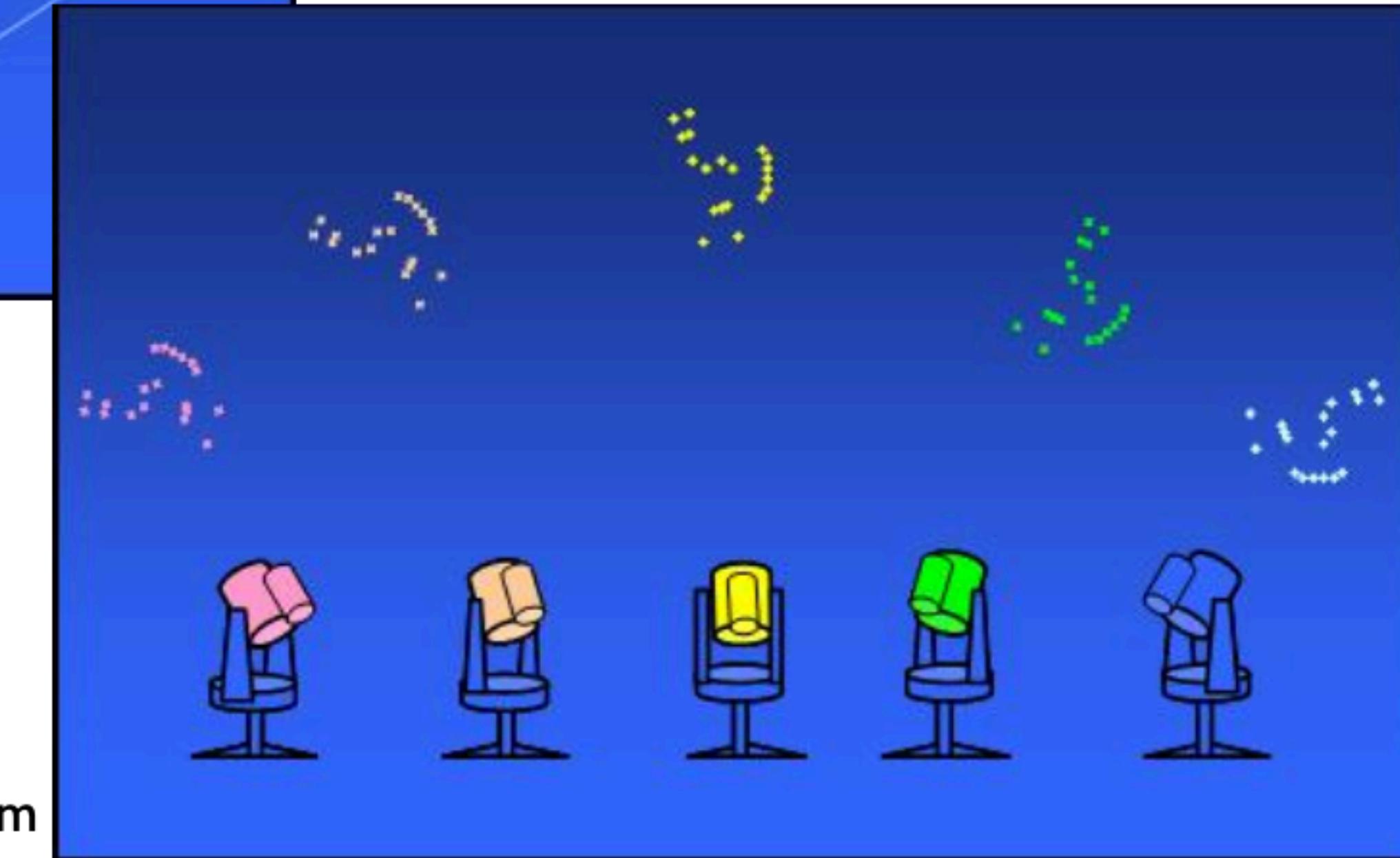
# Equatorial Telescope Mounts

removes the need for a **field de-rotator**



equ. mount

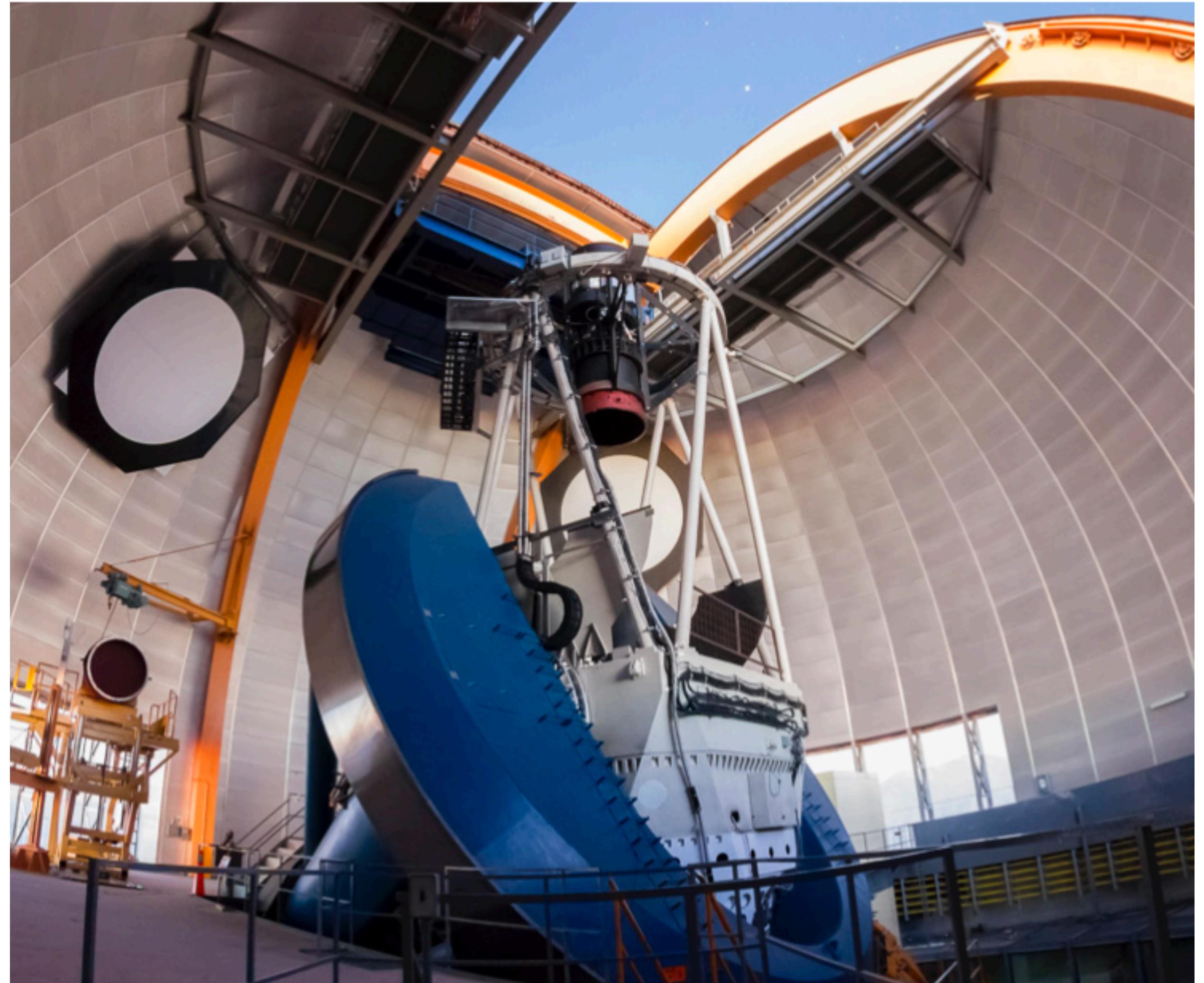
Astronomy Asylum



alt/az mount

# Equatorial Telescope Mounts

- Not feasible for the largest telescopes
- But found on some intermediate class telescopes, e.g., the 4-meter telescopes on Kitt Peak and Cerro Tololo



# R.A. and Dec Format

both can be expressed as degrees:

$$0^\circ \leq \alpha < 360^\circ$$

$$-90^\circ \leq \delta \leq +90^\circ$$

e.g. M31:  $10.6847^\circ, +41.26875^\circ$

often expressed in sexagesimal system:

$$00^{\text{h}}42^{\text{m}}44.33^{\text{s}}, +41^\circ16'07.5''$$

$$00:42:44.33, +41:16:07.5$$

note:

$$24^{\text{h}} = 360^\circ$$

$$1^{\text{h}} = 15^\circ$$

$$1^{\text{m}} = 15^\circ/60 = 0.25^\circ = 15'$$

$$1^{\text{s}} = 15^\circ/3600 = 0.25' = 15''$$

# Looking up Coordinates and Information on an Object

- SIMBAD astronomical database: <https://simbad.u-strasbg.fr/simbad/>

The screenshot shows the SIMBAD database interface for the star AR Sco. The URL in the address bar is [simbad.u-strasbg.fr/simbad/sim-basic?Ident=AR+Sco&submit=SIMBAD+search](https://simbad.u-strasbg.fr/simbad/sim-basic?Ident=AR+Sco&submit=SIMBAD+search). The top navigation bar includes links for CDS, Portal, Simbad, VizieR, Aladin, X-Match, Other, Help, and the SIMBAD logo. Below the navigation bar, the object name "AR Sco" is displayed. A menu bar offers "other query modes" like Identifier query, Coordinate query, Criteria query, Reference query, Basic query, Script submission, TAP, Output options (which is highlighted in yellow), and Help. The main content area shows the query "Query : AR Sco" and the timestamp "C.D.S. - SIMBAD4 rel 1.5.8 - 2016.08.31CEST02:44:42". Below this, a "Available data" section lists links for Basic data, Identifiers, Plot & images, Bibliography, Measurements, External archives, Notes, and Annotations. The "Basic data" section details the star's classification as "V\* AR Sco -- Variable Star of delta Sct type". It provides coordinates in various systems: ICRS (J2000: 16 21 47.28 -22 53 10.3), FK5 (J2000 eq=2000: 16 21 47.28 -22 53 10.3), FK4 (B1950 eq=1950: 16 18 47.99 -22 46 07.8), and Galactic (J2000: 353.5192 +18.7121). Fluxes in B, V, J, H, and K bands are also listed. To the right, there is a "SIMBAD query around with radius 2 arcmin" button and an "Interactive AladinLite view" window showing a small astronomical image with a crosshair at the star's position. The FoV is indicated as 1.99'.

# Looking up Coordinates and Information on an Object

- NASA/IPAC Extragalactic Database (NED): <https://ned.ipac.caltech.edu/>

NED results for object MESSIER 031

1 objects found in NED.

SOURCE LIST

Row No.	Object Name (* => Essential Note)	RA	DEC	Object Type	Velocity/Redshift km/s	Mag./z	Separ. Qual Filter arcmin	Number of Refs Notes Phot Posn Vel/z Diam Assoc Images Spectra
1	MESSIER 031	00h42m44.3s	+41d16m09s	G	-300 -0.001001	4.36	... 4055 23 147 20 31 7 2	<a href="#">Retrieve</a> <a href="#">Retrieve</a>

Detailed information for each object

Object No. 1 - MESSIER 031

INDEX for MESSIER 031

Essential Data (jump to sub-section of this query report):

- [Essential Note](#)
- [Cross-IDs](#)
- [Coordinates](#)
- [Basic Data](#)
- [Quantities Derived from Redshift](#)
- [Redshift-Independent Distances](#)
- [Quick-Look Photometry and Luminosities](#)
- [Quick-Look Angular and Physical Sizes](#)
- [Classifications](#)
- [Foreground Galactic Extinction](#)
- [External Services](#)

Detailed Data (NED queries):

Images

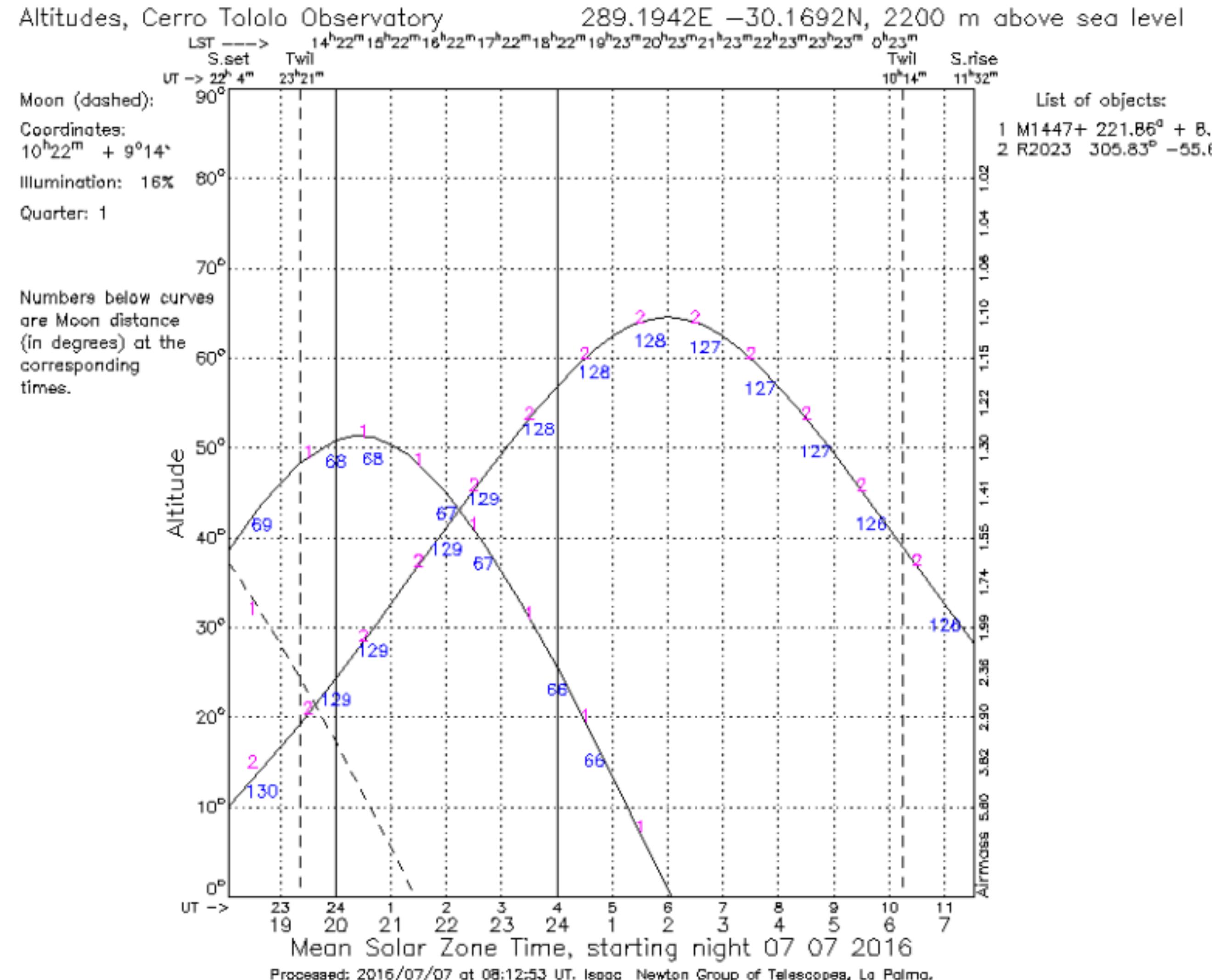
147 Photometric data point(s) and SED

\*\*\* Data outside fixed range. Plot again using autoscaling \*\*\*

Spectra  
Redshift-Independent Distances  
4055 Reference(s)  
20 Position data point(s)  
31 Redshift data point(s)  
7 Diameter data point(s)  
23 Note(s)  
2 Association(s)  
UGC data  
RC3 data

# Object Visibility Tool

- “StarAlt”: <http://catserver.ing.iac.es/staralt/>
- Given catalog of object positions, StarAlt will plot their altitude vs time (and other features)
- Also see how to do this in python using week-1 tutorial linked on the wiki:
  - [https://docs.astropy.org/en/stable/generated/examples/coordinates/plot\\_obs-planning.html](https://docs.astropy.org/en/stable/generated/examples/coordinates/plot_obs-planning.html)

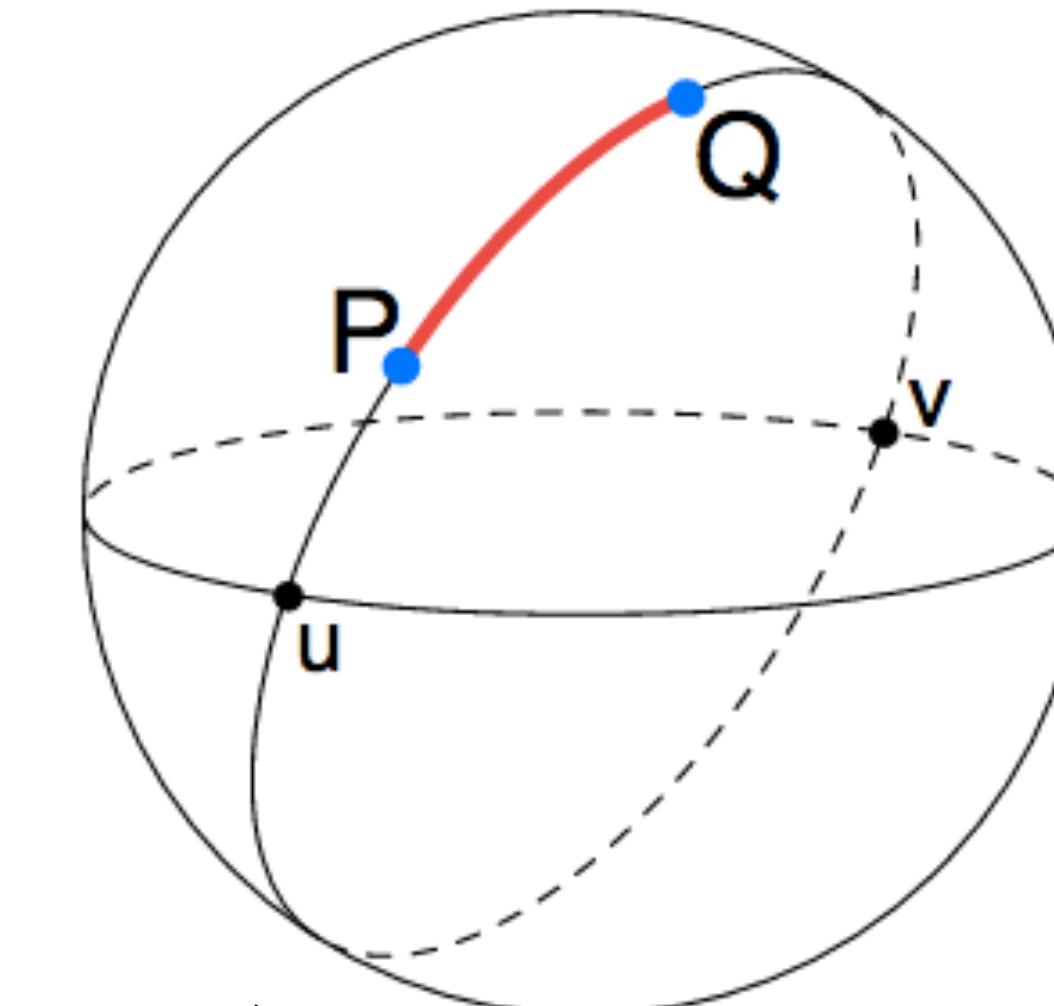


# Distance between two objects

two objects at  $(\alpha_1, \delta_1)$  and  $(\alpha_2, \delta_2)$  - how far apart are they?

- surface of a sphere is non-Euclidian
- e.g. sum of angles in a triangle is  $> 180^\circ$
- need to use spherical geometry

$$\cos(\gamma) = \cos(90^\circ - \delta_1) \cos(90^\circ - \delta_2) + \\ \sin(90^\circ - \delta_1) \sin(90^\circ - \delta_2) \cos(\alpha_1 - \alpha_2)$$

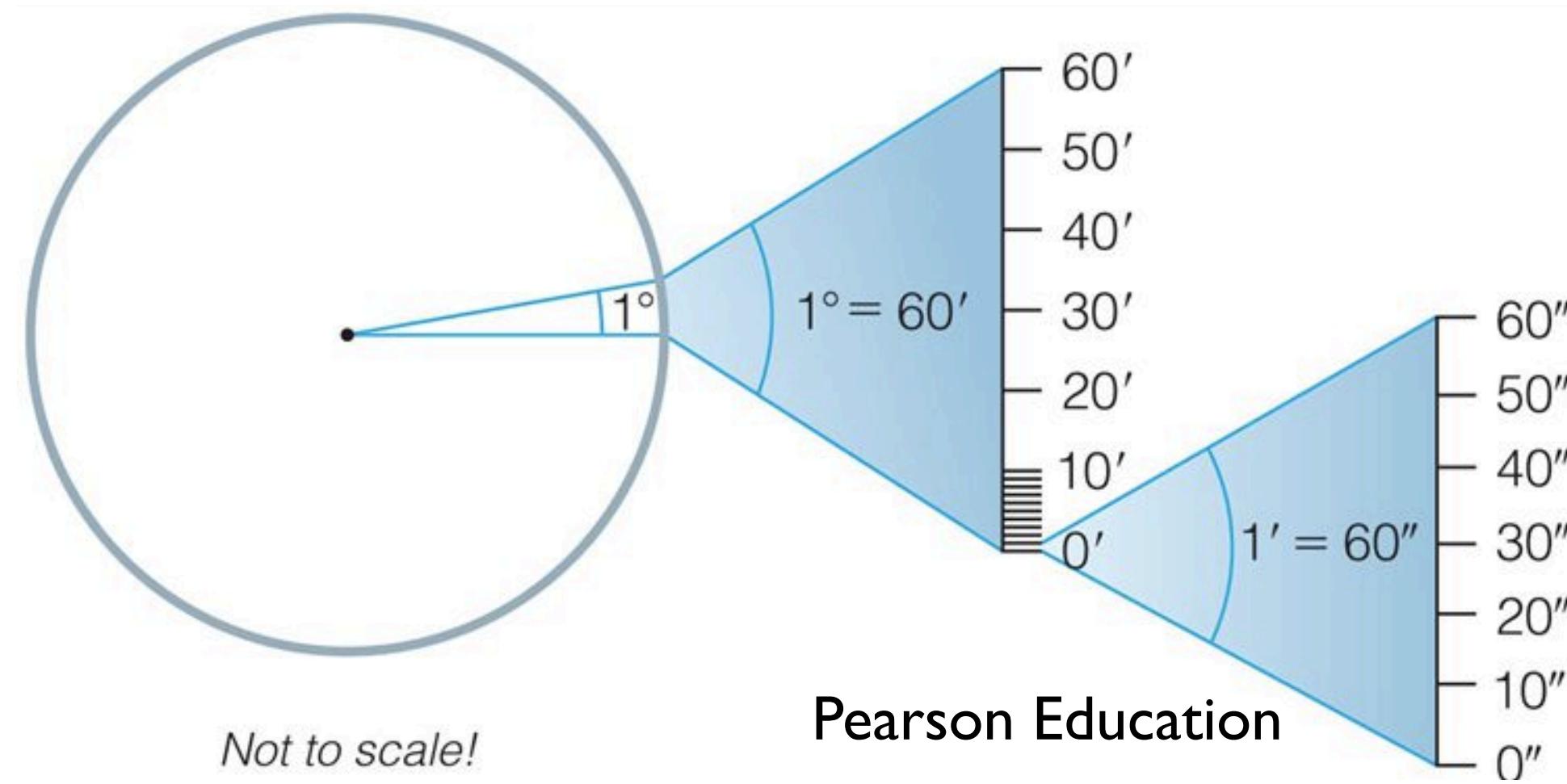


for small distances, can use Euclidian approximation;  
HOWEVER, need to include  $\cos(\delta)$

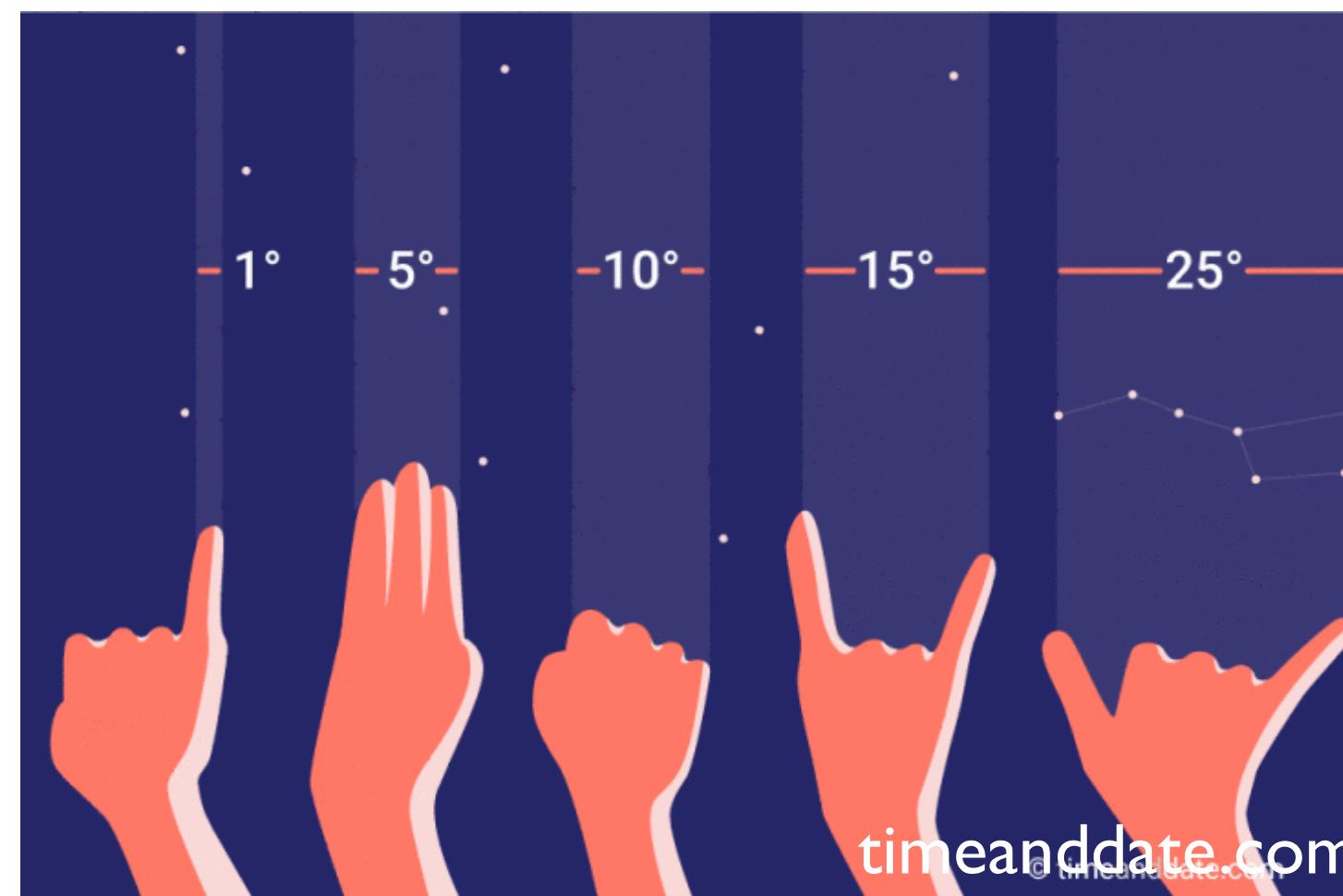
$$\gamma \simeq \sqrt{((\alpha_1 - \alpha_2) \cos(\delta_1))^2 + (\delta_1 - \delta_2)^2}$$

# Lengths and Distances on the Sky

- Usually given in degrees ( $^{\circ}$ ), arc minutes ('), and arcseconds(")

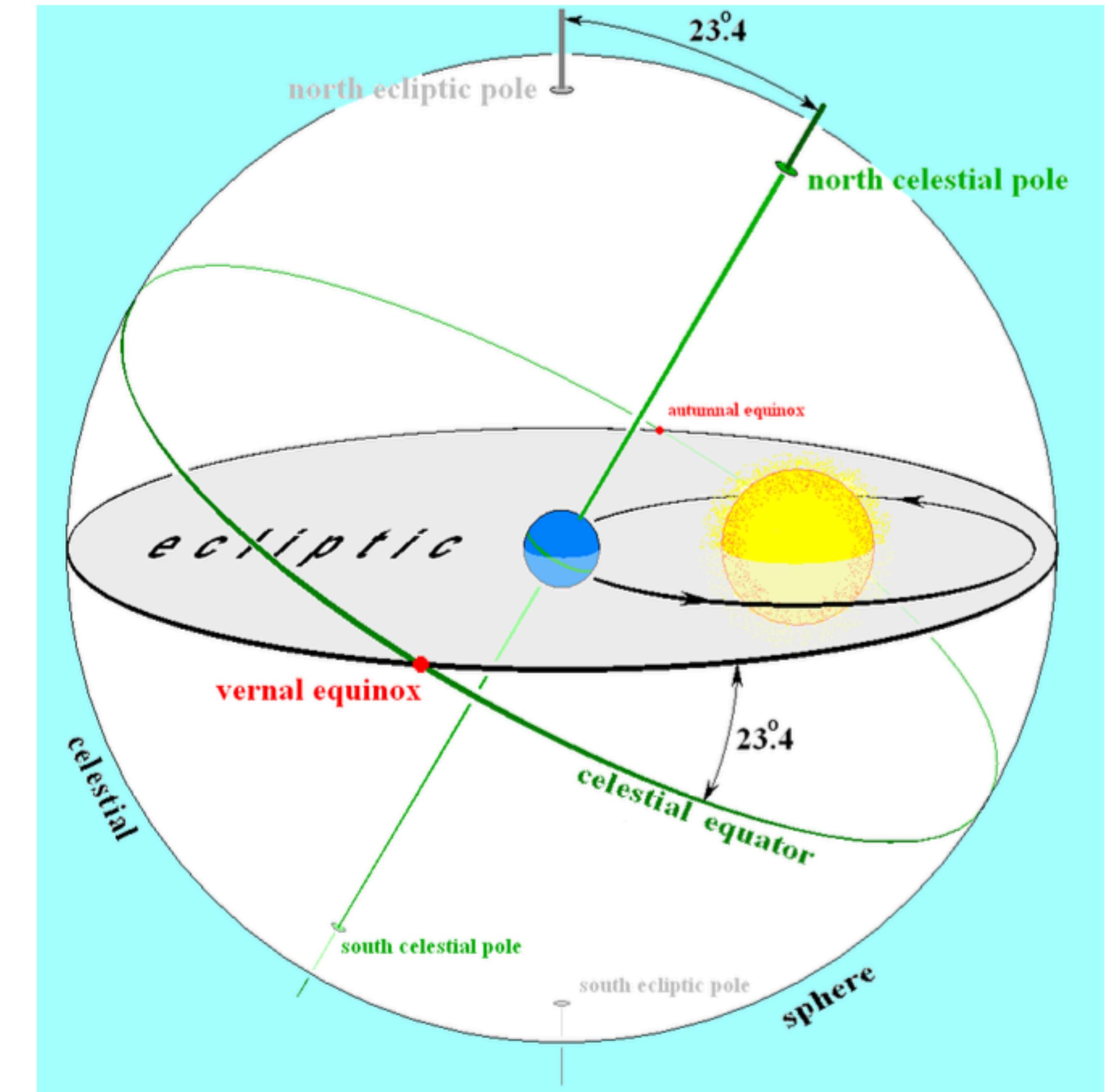


Moon: diameter is  
 $\sim 0.5^{\circ} = 30'$



# Ecliptic Coordinates

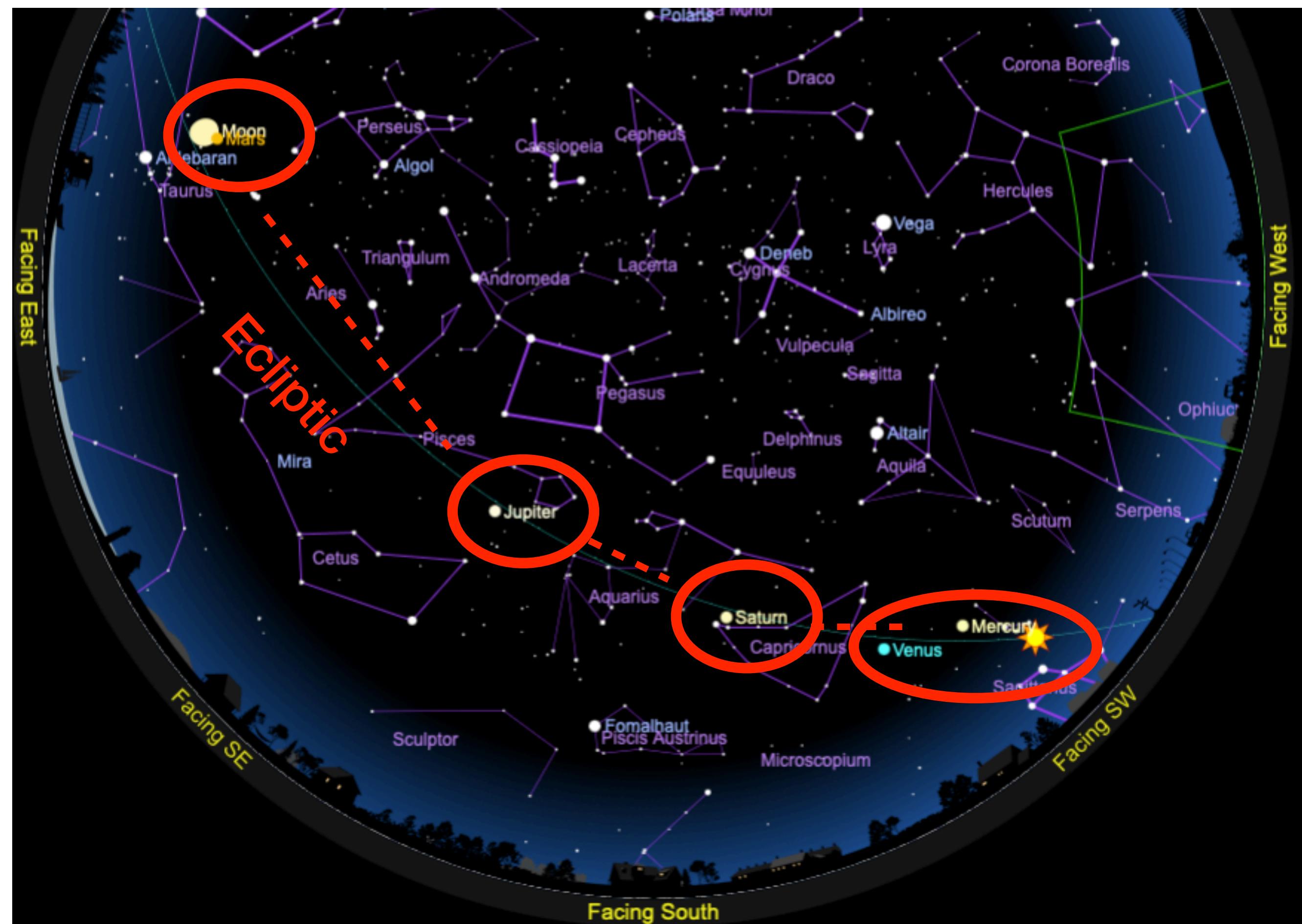
- Sun travels along the “Ecliptic”
- Equator and ecliptic intersect in two points: the equinoxes
  - Vernal (spring) equinox marks RA=0h



wikipedia

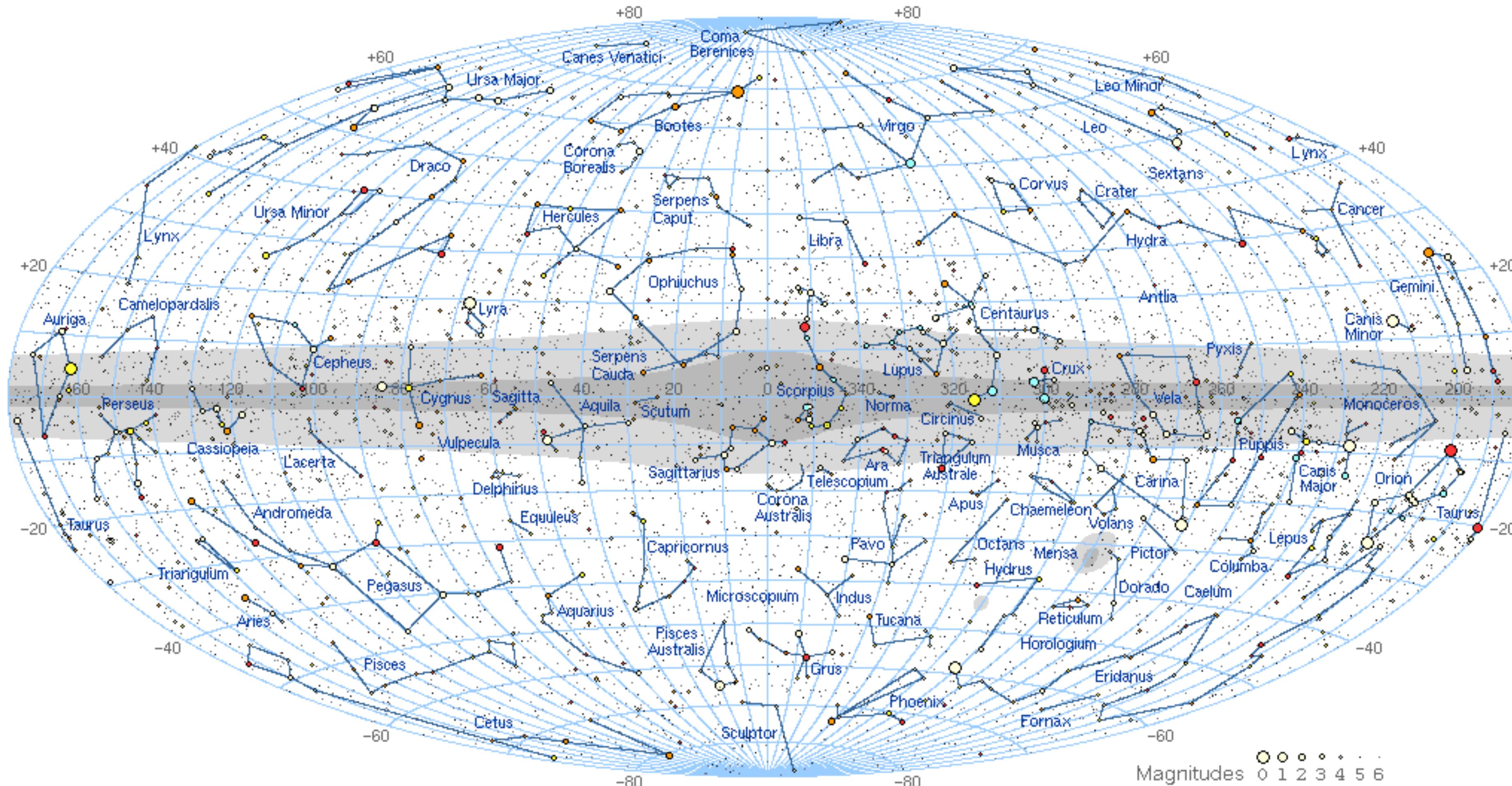
# Solar System Objects

- Orbital planes of most planets and moons are similar to the Earth's orbital plane -> Moon and planets also approximately follow the ecliptic



# Galactic Coordinates

- Can also use the plane of the Galaxy as the “equator”



# Any final questions?

