Jamila Taaki

I am a PhD candidate at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign working on data science techniques for exoplanet discovery at the limit.
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github.com/xiaziyna

Education

PhD candidate | Electrical and Computer Engineering | GPA: 3.86 2017 -
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign | Expected graduation: 2024
Advisors: Prof. Farzad Kamalabadi and Prof. Athol Kemball
Thesis title: Complete Statistical Signal Models and Computational Methods for Inference of Exoplanets

M.Sc. (UK equivalent of MS+BS) | Astrophysics | 2:1 2011 – 2015
Royal Holloway University of London
Advisors: Prof. Glen Cowan and Prof. Stewart Boogert

Refereed Publications

"Robust Detrending of Spatially Correlated Systematics in Kepler Light Curves Using Low-Rank Methods" 2024
Taaki, Kamalabadi, Kemball | *The Astronomical Journal* | Vol. 167, No. 2

"Bayesian Methods for Joint Exoplanet Transit Detection and Systematic Noise Characterization" 2020
Taaki, Kamalabadi, Kemball | *The Astronomical Journal* | Vol. 159, No. 6

Proposals

Search for New Exoplanets in the TESS Data using Joint Signal Estimation 2021
Illinois Blue Waters supercomputer allocation: 250K node hours (estimated value $155,075) Co-Investigator

Presentations

Illinois Astrofest 2022
Talk: Searching for Exoplanet Transits in TESS (2-min) Raw Lightcurves

Outreach/Service

NASA Panel 2023
Served on a NASA panel as student executive secretary

Mentoring students on a project for graduate GPU-programming class (ECE 508) 2023
Develop optimizations of CUDA transit detection kernel

Teaching Assistant: Digital Imaging (ECE 558 spring semester) 2023
Deliver lectures, office hours and grading.

Software projects

PyStarshade: github.com/xiaziyna/PyStarshade 2023
Fourier optical modelling of external occulters for direct exoplanet imaging. (ongoing)

spatial-detrend: github.com/xiaziyna/spatial-detrend 2023
Python library for detrending spatially correlated Kepler lightcurves

Efficient GPU computation of Bayesian transit detection 2022
Design and implementation of CUDA codes for Bayesian transit detection search. (ongoing)

INTERNSHIPS

Internship: Mars Climate Lab (the Open University) 2015
Advised by Prof. Stephen Lewis, simulated entry landing and descent profiles for landers

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Programming: Python (NumPy, SciPy, Sklearn, PyTorch, TensorFlow, Matplotlib, Pandas, Astropy, Lightkurve), Blue Waters/HPC (400K node hours), CUDA, C, Bash, Git, IDL
Graduate courses: Random processes, detection and estimation theory, computational inference, Fourier optics, advanced signal processing, linear algebra, vector space signal processing, deep learning theory, statistical learning theory, information theory, pattern recognition

OTHER

Exoplanet of the Day (twitter.com/exoplanet_day): This Twitter bot posts an animation of a lightcurve and associated star-planet pair once a day, providing insight into the transit detection method and the catalog of known exoplanets.