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• We now know the cosmic recipe. The earth and its inhabitants are made of the rarest stuff of all: stardust (0.01%). Everything that we can see makes up only about 1/2% of the cosmic density, and invisible atoms about 4%. Most of the universe is invisible stuff called "nonbaryonic dark matter" (25%) and "dark energy" (70%).

• The ACDM Cold Dark Matter ("Double Dark") theory based on this appears to be able to account for all the large scale features of the observable universe, including the details of the heat radiation of the Big Bang and the large scale distribution of galaxies.

 Constantly improving data are repeatedly testing this theory. The main ingredients have been checked several different ways. There exist no convincing disagreements. Although there are possible problems on galactic scales, these may be due to the poorly understood physics of gas, stars, and the massive black holes at the centers of massive galaxies.

• But we still don't know what the dark matter and dark energy are, nor understand in detail how galaxies form and evolve. Maybe you can help answer these questions!

In our Cosmology and Culture course at UCSC and in our forthcoming book, to be published in April 2006 by Riverhead/Penguin, Nancy Abrams and I present the modern cosmos – but we also address its possible meaning by trying to explain how we humans fit in.

We show, for example, that we humans are central to the modern cosmos not in a simple geographic sense but in at least seven deep and unexpected ways, all of which follow directly from astronomy and physics.





seven ways we are central or special

) We are made of the rarest material in the universe, stard

2) We live at the center of our Cosmic Spheres of Time, because every plates is the center of its own cosmic spheres of time. The finite speed of light makes this inevitable in a uniformly expanding universe.

3) We live as the midpoint of time, which is also the peak period in the entire evolution of the universe for autonomical observation. Most nearby galaxi ar middle aged, part their violent youths but net y or suscents and finished with an eforusion. The more distance galaxies — which we have, are acquise

horizon now that the once-slowing expansion of the universe has begun instead to accelerate. The universe as we are observing it nodes, will truly become the box Golden Age = a fabuloation with day that, our distant descendants w know, actually existed but will never be seen again.

4) We live at the middle of all possible sizes - in Midgard, where the possibility of tremendous waitery and complexity coming in mull package keeps life interesting. Life of our complexity could bloom on no other size scalar of the Counti Ucobores.

3) We live in a sumeries that may be a not bubble of spacetase in the infinite, see that grant and the set of about any set of the neither space not time at we know it. But here nist, there is in time for evolution and hintory, and there is space across which connections can for d structures r.cm devolve. We are not accompatibility contained instants. Not devolve the set of the s

6) We live at more or less the midpoint in the life of our planet. It formed, S) We live at more or less the midpoint in the life of our planet. It formed, along with the sum and other planet; about four and a half billion years ago. It has about its billion more to so theffere it is maxed when our unreal in the sum about its billion.

a red giant star. We also love in the middle of the billion year period during high Earth in conclusion the hopsitch Eor. From the point of view of our genices, whose recorded history in a meet 5000 years, today in late enough to have evolved to ouesense abilities while early mough still to have a potential future to van it begans the magination.

generations alive at this moment, it is late enough that we are sobering up to the scale of our problems, but not so late that we have lost all chance to solve them. This is a very special time that will never come again.