

Abstract:

Studies of X-ray binary systems can provide precise measurements of the geometry of accretion onto black holes. Knowing this geometry, these systems can be used as laboratories for accretion physics and strong field general relativity. I will discuss recent advances and current problems in understanding and interpreting these systems. This talk is based loosely on the Rossi Prize lecture prepared and delivered jointly with my long-term collaborators Ron Remillard (MIT) and Jeff McClintock (CfA).