

Bowdoin College's 2021 Honorary Degree Recipients

For the Degree of Doctor of Science

JESSICA MEIR, SD

Jessica Meir is a NASA astronaut, marine biologist, and physiologist. Meir received a bachelor of arts in biology at Brown University before going on to earn a master's degree in space studies from International Space University and a doctorate in marine biology from Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California–San Diego, where she studied the diving physiology of marine mammals and birds, focusing on oxygen depletion in diving emperor penguins and elephant seals. Meir later joined the staff of Harvard Medical School as assistant professor of anesthesia at Massachusetts General Hospital, where she continued her research on the physiology of animals in extreme environments. She also took part in Smithsonian Institution diving expeditions to the Antarctic and Belize, and has been active with scientific outreach efforts. In 2013, Meir was selected as one of eight members of the 21st NASA astronaut class and six years later, in September 2019, she launched as part of Expedition 61 and 62 to the International Space Station aboard Soyuz MS-15 and a month later, she and Christina Koch became the first women to participate in an all-female spacewalk. Her crew contributed to hundreds of experiments in biology, Earth science, human research, physical sciences, and technology development. Among the investigations to which she contributed is a study examining how human heart tissue functions in space. Meir spent 205 days in space, took 3,280 orbits of Earth, and traveled 86.9 million miles. Born in the town of Caribou in northern Maine, Meir became the first woman from the state to reach space. NASA announced in December 2020 that Meir is among candidates for the Artemis Team, which is to be the first human mission to orbit and land on the moon in nearly fifty years. If chosen, Meir would be the first woman on the moon.