

PHY205 Exploring the Solar System

Spring 2011 Section 05: Monday Thursday 1:40pm – 2:55 pm, HUM 118

Professor

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Office hours:

Monday 3:15-4:15
Tuesday 2:00-4:00
Wednesday 11:00-12:00
and by appointment

Course Objectives

Students in this course will become knowledgeable in the astronomical topics of our solar system, as listed in the course schedule. Students will learn an appreciation for science and how it works, and learn about both historical astronomy and the topics that astronomers are currently researching today.

Textbook

The textbook for this course will be *Pathways to Astronomy* by Steven Schneider and Thomas Arny. The book comes as one complete textbook or separated into two volumes. We will only cover material in Volume 1: Solar System. I will use the second edition, but there is not much difference from the first edition so it is also acceptable.

Grading Format

Your course grade will be determined in the following way:

- 45% Tests (The lowest test score will be dropped)
- 20% Final Exam
- 20% Participation activities and mini-homework
- 15% Astronomy project

Tests

There will be four tests, held on the following days: 2/17, 3/14, 4/11 and 5/2. Your lowest test score will be dropped. The tests will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions. Multiple choice does not mean easy memorization! More information about the test format, including sample questions, will be made available before the first test. If you are unable to attend a test for a legitimate, excused reason you must notify me *in advance* of the test to make alternate arrangements.

Final Exam

The final exam will be comprehensive and will be similar in format to the tests. The final exam is scheduled for Thursday 5/19 from 12:30pm-2:30pm. Note that this is the last day of finals. Absolutely no early final exams will be given; make your summer plans accordingly.

Participation Activities and Mini-Homework

You will receive a grade based on your participation in class, which is based on several factors.

- We will typically do a “lecture-tutorial” worksheet everyday in class. These worksheets are for you to actively engage in the material, and you will keep them to study for the tests.
- I will ask multiple choice questions during the class time. At the beginning of the semester I will provide you with a colored piece of paper that you will use to answer

these questions. *You are required to bring this response paper to class everyday.* If you lose it you must print off a new one on your own.

- I will also ask you to answer a question to be turned in every class period. I will use this to record your participation grade, though a lack of participation in the other class activities can also affect your grade.
- You may also have the opportunity to visit campus activities to boost your participation score. This is the only “extra credit” available in the class.

In addition to the participation activities there may be times when I will want you to do something outside of class, such as visiting a website or looking at the night sky. These pseudo-homework assignments will be included in the participation grade.

Astronomy Project

You will complete a project of your choosing that demonstrates your knowledge of astronomy. This may be an art piece, creative writing, website, lesson plan, etc. More information will be given about the project specifications at a later date.

A Note About Grades

I do not grade on a curve. The average test score in the class is in the mid-70 range, a C grade. However, students typically get very high scores in participation and the astronomy project, which brings the class average to a low B or B-. Since the higher grades come at the end of the semester many students may get nervous about their course grade during the semester. Please keep this in mind. If you do find yourself struggling in the beginning to middle of the semester I would be happy to help you figure out what you need to do to improve your grade. Any requests for higher grades at the end of the semester will be ignored.

Blackboard

I will use the Blackboard course management software as part of this class. The Blackboard system is located at <https://blackboard.newpaltz.edu/> or via a link on the main New Paltz website. Course materials such as my lecture notes, homework assignments, and test solutions will be posted to the class website. Your grades will be posted there as well. I will also use this system to communicate with you; make sure your email address in the Blackboard system is one that is current and checked regularly.

Academic Honesty and Collaboration

“Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty in their academic work. Cheating, forgery, and plagiarism are serious offenses, and students found guilty of any form of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action.” (Student Handbook page 14)

I take this seriously.

Science is a collaborative effort. Therefore, you are expected to work with your classmates, share ideas, discover together, and learn from each other. However, the work that you turn in must be your own and written in your own words.

Students With Disabilities

Students with documented disabilities who believe that they will need classroom and/or testing accommodations are encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center in the Student Union, room 210, 257-3020 as close to the beginning of the semester as possible. The DRC will provide forms verifying the need for accommodations for you to deliver to your instructor. Reasonable accommodations will be put into place once the instructor receives the form.