Syllabus for Astronomy 101 – “Basic Astronomy”
Section 503 – Prof. Lucas Macri

Fall 2012

Howdy! Welcome to Astronomy 101! This course covers a wide range of topics in modern astronomy and the laws of physics that govern the Universe. This course is intended for students who are not majoring in engineering or a physical science. Some basic knowledge of high-school physics would be helpful, but don’t worry if you never took it or if you’ve forgotten most of it – we will cover these topics in the first few weeks of class. I hope that by the end of the term you will have a firm understanding of the main areas of modern Astronomy and you will be able to explain to your friends and family how planets form, why stars shine, and what might be the ultimate fate of the Universe.

Important information

• Instructor: Prof. Lucas Macri
  
  o lmacri@tamu.edu, Mitchell Institute #423, (979) 314-1592

• Teaching Assistants: Steven Boada & Yi Yang
  
  o sboada@physics.tamu.edu; ngc4594@physics.tamu.edu
  
  o Mitchell Institute #317 & #318

• Classroom: Mitchell Physics Building #203

• Lecture time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:45 to 2pm


• Clicker: i>clicker (original version, not i>clicker 2 nor i>clicker+)

• Office hours (please make an appointment by email or phone call):
  
  o Lucas: Tuesdays 2-5pm, Thursdays 2-4pm
  
  o Yi: Mondays 4-7pm
  
  o Steven: Tuesdays 3-4:30pm & Wednesdays 9:30-11am
Homework

- There will be a total of 13 homework assignments (about one per week)
- Homework will count for 30% of the total grade
- The assignments will always be due before class (12:45pm) on Tuesdays
- Late homework will receive no credit
- You may not collaborate with other students on the homework assignments
- All assignments will be done online at http://www.masteringastronomy.com
- You must register at the web site using a code that is included with each brand-new copy of the textbook. If you have a used textbook, you can purchase a code at the web site.
- Once you have registered at the website, you must “enroll” in our class by using the following class code: TAMUASTR101S503FA12

Exams

- There will be a total of four exams. Each exam will count for 15% of the final grade.
- The exams will test your knowledge of the concepts discussed in class and the homework through a variety of multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank questions.
- Each exam will cover the material presented in 3 or 4 chapters of the textbook.
- The first three exams will take place at the usual lecture time on Thursday, September 27th, Thursday, October 18th and Thursday, November 8th. The fourth exam will take place during finals week, on Wednesday, December 12th at 8am.
Class attendance and participation

- Reading the assigned chapters before lecture, attending class, and actively participating during class are integral parts of this course.
- You should set aside a minimum of two hours a week to read the assigned chapter in depth, review the summary of key concepts at the end of each chapter, and test your understanding of the material by answering the review questions.
- Reading and attendance will be monitored through the use of iClickers, which you must bring with you to every lecture.
  - We will use the clickers at the beginning of each lecture for a short “reading” quiz based on the assigned chapter and the material covered in the previous lecture. This will count for 5% of your final grade.
  - We will use the clickers throughout the rest of lecture for audience participation. This will count for 5% of your final grade.
- Asking a classmate to use your iClicker in your absence will be considered a violation of the Honor Code

Use of electronic devices in class

- Using a cell phone, iPod or similar device during class for any reason (including texting) is strictly prohibited. These devices should be turned off or placed in silent mode prior to the start of class.
- The use of a laptop or a tablet during class is only allowed for class-related activities, such as taking notes.
- Any student found violating these rules will be asked to leave the classroom for the remainder of the lecture and will not be credited with class attendance or participation for that lecture.
Grading policy

If you miss an exam, only officially excused absences as outlined in the University Regulations will be accepted. In this case you have to contact the course instructor as soon as possible. Very few conditions qualify as an authorized excused absence, so avoid missing an exam under all circumstances.

Exam grades may be curved depending on special conditions for a particular exam. The course grade will be determined from the various components of the course as outlined in the preceding pages in the following way:

(a) Homework will count for 30%
(b) Each of the four exams will count for 15%, for a total of 60%
(c) iClicker quizzes and class participation will count for 10%

Tentative grading table (adjustments are possible):

- % of all possible points ≥ 90: A
- 80 ≤ % of all possible points < 90: B
- 70 ≤ % of all possible points < 80: C
- 60 ≤ % of all possible points < 70: D
- % of all possible points < 60: F
ADA Policy

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring special accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities, in Room 126 of the Koldus Building or call 845-1637.

Your Responsibilities

Texas A&M University assumes that all students enroll in its programs with a serious learning purpose and expects them to be responsible individuals who demand of themselves high standards of honesty and personal conduct. All students are expected to behave at all times with respect and courtesy toward their fellow students and instructors and are to have the highest standards of honesty and integrity in their academic performance. Any behavior that disrupts the classroom learning environment or any attempt to present work that the student has not actually prepared as their own work, or to pass an examination by improper means, is regarded as a serious offense. The minimum penalty for such an offense is a failing grade for this course. Aiding and abetting the above behavior is also considered a serious offense resulting in equally severe penalties.

I consider it a privilege to work with students of such character as that of Aggies. The Honor Code sets Texas A&M apart from other universities, and you should be proud of the standard this sets. I expect that you will abide by the Aggie Code of Honor:

The Aggie Honor Code: An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do

Further information regarding the Honor Council Rules and Procedures may be found on the web at http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor
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