



**ASTR 1303.01W – Stars and The Universe Online
COURSE SYLLABUS: Spring 2016**

WHO I AM

Instructor: Dr. Kurtis A. Williams, Assistant Professor

Office Location: Science 145

Office Phone: 903-886-5516

Office Fax: 903-886-5480

Office Hours: Tues 10:30-11:30, Wed. 10:30-11:30, Fri 2:00–3:00, or by appointment

Virtual Office Hours: Time TBD, <http://connect.tamuc.edu/astr1303>†

University Email Address: Kurtis.Williams@tamuc.edu†

Please include “ASTR Online” in the subject line.

Preferred Form of Communication: Email or Remind chat

Response Time: 24 hours on weekdays

SYLLABUS SUMMARY

There’s a lot in this syllabus, and while you should read it all, I know most of you won’t. So, here’s an executive summary.

1. [What This Course is About](#)†
 - It is about stars, galaxies, and the universe and not about planets or aliens.
2. What You Need to Buy
 - [21st Century Astronomy 4th Edition](#)†
 - [SmartWork online homework subscription](#)†
 - [Stellarium](#)† software (free!)
3. [How to Get Started](#)†
 - Go to [LearningStudio \(eCollege\)](#)
 - Watch the introductory video for the course and for Unit 1.
 - [Get all your books](#)† ASAP. First deadlines are January 31.
4. [How the Course Works](#)†
 - The [course is paced](#)† with due dates every week or two.
 - [Late work is penalized](#)† 10% per day; after one week you get nothing.
 - Graded work includes [reading quizzes](#), [homework](#)†, [discussions](#)†, and [other activities](#)†
 - Three [exams](#)† will be held during the semester.
 - [Extra credit](#)† has only three options: Visit a planetarium show, come to an observing night, or go to a science museum. Nothing else.

- [Grades](#)[†] are visible in LearningStudio gradebook.
5. [Technology You Will Need](#)[†]
 - Your own computer on which you can install software
 - A high-speed internet connection
 - Up-to-date versions of:
 - i. [A browser](#)[†], preferably Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox
 - ii. [Java](#)[†]
 - iii. [Antivirus software](#)[†]
 - iv. [Adobe Reader](#)[†]
 - v. [Adobe Flash Player](#)[†]
 - vi. [Adobe Shockwave](#)[†]
 - vii. [Apple Quicktime](#)[†]
 - viii. [Microsoft Office](#)[†] 2007 or more recent or Open Office
 - ix. [Stellarium](#)[†]
 - x. Some [way to scan](#)[†] completed written work
 - Know how to log in to [Pearson LearningStudio](#)[†]
 - Patience when using [SmartWork](#)[†] online homework
 6. Help!!
 - Make sure you run a [browser check](#)[†] through LearningStudio
 - For problems with LearningStudio, contact [Pearson Support](#)[†]
 - For problems with myLeo, contact [Technology Services](#)[†]
 - For problems with SmartWork, contact [SmartWork support](#)[†]
 - For problems about the class content, [contact the instructor](#)[†]
 - For other problems, talk to the kind folks at the [One Stop Shop](#)[†] or the Academic Success Center
 - Computer / internet problems do not excuse you from work. The full syllabus explains the policy.
 7. Free Apps!
 - Pearson [LearningStudio Courses](#)[†]
 - [Remind](#)[†] (start a chat with the instructor!)
 8. Rules, Rules, Rules
 - Maintain [academic integrity](#)[†]
 - Get work done on time.
 - Do exams on time and without cheating (they're open book....).
 - [Late work](#)[†] is penalized 10% per day.
 - [Late exams](#)[†] are a big fat zero.
 - If you have a disability, contact the [Student Disability Resource Center](#)[†] as soon as possible.
 - We comply with all [nondiscrimination](#)[†] laws and more. You should too.
 - Anything in this [syllabus could change](#)[†]. I'll tell you if it does.
 9. [Course Calendar](#)[†]
 - It's at the very end, and may change.
 10. Tips to doing well:
 - Set aside specific times to work on the course.
 - Expect to spend six to nine hours on each unit. If you get done faster, hurray!

- Don't wait until the due date to start each unit's work.
- Do every assignment. Some are hard. Some are easy. I've balanced them so that if you do all the work and do it by deadlines, you have a really good chance of a good grade.
- Read each assignment's instructions and be sure to do everything that is asked, especially in discussion section.

WHAT THIS COURSE IS ABOUT

Course Description:

Astronomy is an ancient science with records dating back to the dawn of civilization. Despite this long history, it remains an exciting and vibrant area of ongoing study. In the coming years, astronomers may discover Earth-sized planets around other stars, see the first stars emerging from the cosmic dawn, and explore new physics in realms and laboratories that Earth-bound scientists can only dream of.

In this course, we will focus on studying stars and galaxies, as well as the natural laws and tools that astronomers use to study these distant objects. We'll begin by studying light, and telescopes. We'll then study the Sun as an example star and use it as a stepping stone to reach ever further into the Universe. Along the way we'll learn about the lives of stars, peer into the hearts of black holes, witness collisions of galaxies, and piece together vital clues pointing to the origins of the Universe.

One big topic we will not cover is our own Solar System, planetary systems around other stars, or extraterrestrial life. The Solar System (the 8 planets, asteroids, and comets) is covered in Astr 1304; other planetary systems and life is covered in Astr 120.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. You will be able to explain the characteristics of stars and their life cycles.
2. You will be able to identify the classes of galaxies and their basic properties.
3. You will be able to state evidence supporting astronomers' explanations of the origin and fate of the Universe.
4. You will be able to evaluate statements about astronomy using the scientific method.
5. You will be able to identify constellations, stars, and deep-sky objects visible from Texas.

WHAT YOU ABSOLUTELY NEED

Materials – Textbooks, Software and Additional Reading:

Required:

- [21st Century Astronomy, Volume 2: Stars and Galaxies](#), 4th edition, by Kay, Palen, Smith, & Blumenthal, ISBN 978-0-393-92057-4
- A subscription to [SmartWork](#), an online astronomy homework and tutoring system (see more below; this might come included with your textbook)
- A computer on which you can access the internet and install software
- [Stellarium](http://www.stellarium.org) (www.stellarium.org) – FREE planetarium software
- Access to a scanner or other means of turning in some written work and sketches. A scanner gives the best results, but if you don't have one, a camera phone will work. Several students have used the free version of the CamScanner app on a smart phone to do this.

- A (free) subscription to the Remind messaging service, <http://remind.com>†.

Suggested:

- Headphones for listening to online videos and participating in online office hours

Options for purchasing: (Prices as of 1/15/2016)

- **Important: You WILL need access to SmartWork.** Used or rented usually do NOT include access to SmartWork, which will then cost an additional \$20 for 180 day access.
- You only need one textbook (plus SmartWork); these options just give you some choices.
- Be sure to order the 4th Edition; there is a newer edition listed on some websites, but it is not yet in print.
- 21st Century Astronomy Volume 2 with SmartWork and eBook access
 - Best if you are only taking this astronomy course
 - From TAMU-C Bookstore: \$112.90
 - From wwnorton.com: \$98.75
- 21st Century Astronomy (entire book), eBook with SmartWork ONLY (no hard copy)
 - Best if you are sure you are happy with eBooks; 360 day access
 - From TAMU-C Bookstore: \$81.55
 - From wwnorton.com: \$57.08

Course Prerequisites: None

HOW TO GET STARTED

SmartWork Access Information

Homework and Reading Quizzes must be completed using SmartWork, smartwork.wwnorton.com†. You are required to purchase a subscription to this site; an access code for a 365 day subscription comes included with any new textbook available through the bookstore, or it can be purchased separately for \$20. Our Enrollment Key in SmartWork is **OnlineS2016**. SmartWork has support available at: books.wwnorton.com/books/buysmartwork†.

How This Course Is Organized

This course will be organized by units. Most units will last just one week, but some units will cover multiple weeks. Some units cover one chapter in the text, some cover multiple chapters. You should check the course page often to see what activities and assignments are due during the week.

What Should You Do First?

After reading this syllabus, you should proceed to the course page on LearningStudio, watch the introductory video on the course homepage, and then proceed to Unit 1: Introductions. Complete the activities and assignments listed under Unit 1. Due dates are specified on LearningStudio.

How Should You Proceed For Each Unit?

1. All activities and assignments for a unit will be listed on the unit's main page on LearningStudio. The unit home pages are found in the left navigation bar of LearningStudio. A course announcement will be made when each unit is available.
2. Each unit will have a short introductory video explaining the assignments for that unit.
3. You should complete any reading assignments and reading quizzes first.

4. After completing reading quizzes, you may listen to any online minilectures listed within the unit and complete the associated response questions.
5. Complete any other listed activities and assignments given in the weekly unit.
6. If there is a Stellarium activity under the unit, be sure to complete it by the deadline.
7. Even after completing the unit, you may want to check for any new content (such as new minilectures or external links) that I may post in order to clear up any confusing topics.
8. No new assignments will be posted in a unit after the announcement that the unit is available.

Being a Successful Student

I *strongly* encourage you to check out the following resources to see if you are likely to succeed in an online course. This course will require just as much work as a face-to-face course. If you are uncertain, you are always welcome to switch sections to join our brick-and-mortar version of Astr 1303 (see the Schedule of Classes for meeting times and course numbers).

- [What Makes a Successful Online Student?](#)[†]
- [Self-Evaluation for Potential Online Students](#)[†]

HOW THE COURSE WILL WORK

Instructional Methods / Activities / Assessments

Course pace

While I realize that some online students prefer to complete a course as fast as possible and others like to wait several weeks and then do as much work as possible, these methods won't work with this course. Student interaction is a crucial part of learning, and we can't interact if no two students are on the same part of the course.

The course is broken up into 12 units. Most of these units last one week, with work due by the end of the day on Sundays, though there are exceptions in some units. I expect you to keep track of unit due dates on progress through LearningStudio (eCollege). LearningStudio has a Course Checklist tool to help you keep track of what you have and have not completed. If you go to the Course Home page and click on "Course Checklist" at the bottom you can access this tool.

Participation

Research into how people learn shows that the best learning comes from interaction. Simply reading material and taking online quizzes won't help you learn anything useful. I therefore will require you to participate actively in the course. Some of the methods we may use for this participation include threaded discussions on LearningStudio, live chat, and live meetings using Adobe Connect on LearningStudio.

For each activity, I will be certain to spell out instructions, due dates, grading procedures, and minimum requirements. Of course, if you want to continue discussions beyond the minimum requirements, I encourage you to do so!

SmartWork: Reading Quizzes and Homework

SmartWork is an online astronomy homework and tutoring tool. Its advantages are that SmartWork will give you instant feedback on whether you got a question right or wrong and

provide you with hints and tools to better learn the material.

There will be two types of SmartWork assignments: reading quizzes and homeworks. I will assign reading for each unit, and the reading quiz checks to see (a) if you did the reading, and (b) where you might be having problems. The reading and reading quizzes are intended to be complete after you have done the reading and watched the minilectures.

Homework will be assigned for each unit. These are intended to be the “capstone” of each week; i.e. they should usually be the last thing you do in a unit. If you do the homework and find you still don’t understand something, you definitely want to ask me about that topic in office hours, chat, or by email.

The grading policy for each SmartWork assignment are shown in each assignment. You may get multiple attempts to answer a question correctly; however, submitting an incorrect answer will cost you some credit. Late homeworks are penalized 10% per day, up to 7 days beyond the due date. After 7 days, you will receive a zero on the assignment.

The following are considered cheating and will not be tolerated: Directly copying text from a website or other printed source, obtaining copies of solutions to homework questions (whether from past students or other sources), directly copying another student’s work, etc. See the section on “Academic Integrity” below for full details.

Mini-Lectures and Response Questions

Within each unit, I will upload mini-lectures that you will be able to view. These videos are approximately 15 minutes each and will focus on one or two important points each.

Each video will be paired with a minilecture response activity on LearningStudio. The responses contain a few thought questions that allow you to check your learning to see if you understood the material and thought processes covered in the mini-lecture. These are an opportunity for you to begin to think about and work with the concepts before they show up on homework or exams without the pressure of getting a right or wrong answer. Some questions will be easy, some hard, and some will require you to put together more than one concept in order to figure out an answer.

The minilecture responses are not graded but allow you to check your learning in a no-pressure environment. Correct answers and brief explanations for the answers should be visible after you complete the response questions.

There will be material covered in the reading that I will not cover in minilectures but yet will expect you to know. If a topic is not covered in a minilecture but appears on a reading quiz and/or homework, it may well appear again.

Exams:

Three online exams will be given during the semester through LearningStudio: the first after Unit 5: Telescopes, the second after Unit 9: Star Death, and the third at the end of the term. For the exams you may use whatever materials you like (text, homework solutions, internet searches, etc). However, the exams are *timed* and may only be taken once, so you will want to study the material well before taking the exam. The exams are not officially cumulative, but astronomy is a very intertwined science, and topics covered on exam one will contain information needed to answer questions on exam three.

Stellarium Activities:

These activities help to introduce you to constellations in the night sky. The activities will make use of Stellarium, a free downloadable program for your computer. The installation and basic usage of this program will be covered in Unit 1.

Labs:

Starting in Fall 2014, labs are a separate class (Astr 1103); you do not need to be enrolled in a laboratory section to earn credit in this course. You should speak with your academic advisor to determine if signing up for a lab section is right for your degree plan. You can also take the lab courses in future semesters; they do not need to be taken concurrently. At the present, we do not offer online labs for astronomy.

Extra Credit:

The *only* extra credit available in this course are the three options below. If you fully complete one of the three options, you will earn 2% extra credit on your final grade. You may do multiple activities, but you will only earn extra credit for one. There are no other options for extra credit. **All extra credit must be completed by Sunday, May 1 and turned in by 11:59pm on Wednesday, May 4.**

Visit the Commerce Observatory: If you live close to Commerce, you will have three opportunities for a visit to the Commerce Observatory (about 5 miles south of Commerce). On the evenings of Thursday, March 3 and Tuesday, March 8, we will have telescopes set up to look at planets and other interesting objects in the night sky. At each session, there will be an activity you must complete in order to earn extra credit. One visit is sufficient. Times will be announced closer to the event.

Visit a planetarium show: The A&M-Commerce Planetarium exhibits several different shows every Friday night at 7pm and 8pm. Tickets are \$4 for children and university students (with ID), \$4.50 for senior citizens, and \$5 for adults. <http://www.tamuc.edu/planetarium/>[†] has a current listing of shows. Family of any age is welcome to the planetarium shows; be sure to check on the age-appropriateness of shows (all are rated appropriate for all audiences, but typically the 7pm show is aimed at children and the 8pm show at teens and adults).

If you attend a show, tell the staff that you are a member of this class. They will make a note that you attended. Then email me two paragraphs: one summarizing the show, and a second telling me something specific about the show that you found interesting and why. If and only if you complete both of these steps, you will get extra credit toward your lab grade.

Visit a Science Museum: If you are not near Commerce or cannot make it to these opportunities, you may visit any other planetarium or science-related museum. Museums oriented solely at children do not count. Please send me a picture of your ticket stub and email me two paragraphs: one summarizing the show/visit, and a second telling me something specific about the show/visit that you found interesting and why.

Grading

Grading is on an absolute scale with no competition. If you all earn an A, you all get an A. I may “curve” grades for specific assignments at my discretion; your percentage earned will never go down if I apply such a curve. Your current grades will be available through the gradebook on LearningStudio. The gradebook on SmartWork is *not* official.

Assignment Type	Weighting
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Discussions	15%
Reading Quizzes	15%
Homework Assignments	25%
Exams	30% (10% each)
Stellarium Activities	15%

The grading scale is:

Grade Range	Letter
90% to 100%	A
80% to 89.9%	B
70% to 79.9%	C
60% to 69.9%	D
Below 60%	F

TECHNOLOGY YOU WILL NEED

This course is a fully online course. You need to be comfortable with basic computing skills and web browsing, and to be able to learn to use the various tools on LearningStudio even if you are not familiar with them yet.

To fully participate in online courses you will need to use a current Flash enabled browser. For PC users, the suggested browser is Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox. For Mac users, the most current update of Firefox is suggested.

You will need regular access to a computer with a broadband Internet connection. The minimum computer requirements are:

- 512 MB of RAM, 1 GB or more preferred
- Broadband connection required courses are heavily video intensive
- Video display capable of high-color 16-bit display 1024 x 768 or higher resolution

You must have a:

- Sound card, which is usually integrated into your desktop or laptop computer
- Speakers or headphones.
- Both versions of Java (32 bit and 64 bit) must be installed and up to date on your machine. At a minimum Java 7, update 51, is required to support the learning management system. The most current version of Java can be downloaded at: [JAVA web site](http://www.java.com/en/download/manual.jsp)[†]
<http://www.java.com/en/download/manual.jsp>[†]
- Current anti-virus software must be installed and kept up to date.
- Run a browser check through the Pearson LearningStudio Technical Requirements website. [Browser Check](http://help.ecollege.com/LS_Tech_Req_WebHelp/en-us/#LS_Technical_Requirements.htm#Browser) http://help.ecollege.com/LS_Tech_Req_WebHelp/en-us/#LS_Technical_Requirements.htm#Browser[†]
 - Running the browser check will ensure your internet browser is supported, pop-ups are allowed, JavaScript is enabled, and cookies are enabled.
- You will need some additional free software (plug-ins) for enhanced web browsing. Ensure that you download the free versions of the following software:
 - [Adobe Reader](https://get.adobe.com/reader/)[†] <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>[†]

- [Adobe Flash Player](https://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/)† (version 17 or later)
- [Adobe Shockwave Player](https://get.adobe.com/shockwave/)†
- [Apple Quick Time](http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/)†

At a minimum, you must have Microsoft Office 2013, 2010, 2007 or Open Office. Microsoft Office is the standard office productivity software utilized by faculty, students, and staff. Microsoft Word is the standard word processing software, Microsoft Excel is the standard spreadsheet software, and Microsoft PowerPoint is the standard presentation software. Copying and pasting, along with attaching/uploading documents for assignment submission, will also be required. If you do not have Microsoft Office, you can check with the bookstore to see if they have any student copies.

For additional information about system requirements, please see: [System Requirements for LearningStudio](https://secure.ecollege.com/tamuc/index.learn?action=technical)†

For this course in particular, you will need the following software and subscriptions:

- Access to a scanner or other way of making digital copies of handwritten materials.
 - I prefer PDF files to images
 - Scanners work best
 - Many students have used the app CamScanner (the free basic version is sufficient) with their camera phone.
- Stellarium – a free planetarium program available for PC, Mac, and Linux at www.stellarium.org†
- SmartWork – the web-based astronomy homework system at smartwork.wwnorton.com†. See *What You Absolutely Need* for details on how to purchase a subscription.
- Remind (<http://remind.com>) is a free service for you to safely receive course announcements by text or by email and to start text chats with me.

Pearson LearningStudio (eCollege) Access and Log in Information

This course will be facilitated using Pearson LearningStudio, the learning management system used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. To get started with the course, go to [myLeo](http://www.tamuc.edu/myleo.aspx)†.


You will need your CWID and password to log in to the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact Technology Services at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu†.

It is strongly recommended that you perform a “Browser Test” prior to the start of your course. To launch a browser test, login to Pearson LearningStudio, click on the “My Courses” tab, and then select the “Browser Test” link under Support Services.

Free Mobile Apps

The Courses apps for phones have been adapted to support the tasks you can easily complete on a smaller device. Due to the smaller screen size course content is not presented.

The Courses app is free of charge. The mobile Courses Apps are designed and adapted for different devices.

	App Title:	iPhone – Pearson LearningStudio Courses for iPhone
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		Android – LearningStudio Courses - Phone
	Operating System:	iPhone - OS 6 and above Android – Jelly Bean, Kitkat, and Lollipop OS
	iPhone App URL:	https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/pearson-learningstudio-courses/id977280011?mt=8 [†]
	Android App URL:	https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.pearson.lsphone [†]

Once downloaded, search for Texas A&M University-Commerce, and it should appear on the list. Then you will need to sign into the myLeo Mobile portal.

The Courses App for Android and iPhone contain the following feature set:

- View titles/code/Instructor of all Courses enrolled in online
- View and respond to all discussions in individual Courses
- View Instructor Announcements in individual Courses
- View Graded items, Grades and comments in individual Courses
- Grade to Date
- View Events (assignments) and Calendar in individual Courses
- View Activity Feed for all courses
- View course filters on activities
- View link to Privacy Policy
- Ability to Sign out
- Send Feedback

HELP!!!!

Are you lost, confused, or worried?

First, **DON'T PANIC!**

Next, step back and try and pinpoint the source of your confusion:

- Have you read the textbook sections? If not, go read them! If you have, maybe you need to try a different reading methods. Science textbooks are not like novels; they present information in a completely different method than most reading material, and there is no plot thread unfolding as you get further into a chapter. Here are some websites with suggestions on how to read science textbooks:
 - How to Read Effectively in the Sciences: <http://academic.cuesta.edu/acasupp/AS/621.htm>
 - Reading Assignments in Science: <http://www.studygs.net/science/readingtexts.htm>
 - The SQ4R Method for Reading: <http://scs.tamu.edu/?q=node/105>
- Have you watched the minilectures? These are designed to go over the main points where I think you might struggle with concepts.
- Do you just need some time away? Astronomy is too much to deal with all at once. Work on the assignment over the week and give your brain some time to absorb and mull over the information. Except for the exams, all activities are untimed. You can start your homework on SmartWork, go away a couple days, and pick up where you left off, and not lose any points.

- Review the How To Get Started section above, and focus on how to be a successful student and how to proceed in each unit.
- If after all of this you are still confused or uncertain, it's time to seek help. Don't wait until the exam! Here you have many options:
 - Talk to your classmates! Use the student lounge or email to solicit help.
 - Attend my office hours (see next section). You can come to real or virtual hours, or make an appointment with me if none of those times work.
 - If you are on or near campus, go to the JAMP room (Science 110). JAMP offers peer counselling and tutoring in many of the sciences; look for times when a physics tutor is available.
 - If you are still stuck,
 - visit the One Stop Shop, created to serve you by attempting to provide as many resources as possible in one location.
<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/onestopshop/>[†]
 - Contact the Academic Success Center to search for other options that may help you.
<http://www.tamuc.edu/studentLife/campusServices/academicSuccessCenter/>[†]

Are you experiencing technical difficulties?

If your problems are with LearningStudio:

Texas A&M University-Commerce provides students technical support in the use of LearningStudio.

Technical assistance is available 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week.

If at any time you experience technical problems (e.g., you can't log in to the course, you can't see certain material, etc.) please contact the Pearson LearningStudio Help Desk, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The student help desk may be reached by the following means 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

- **Chat Support:** Click on '*Live Support*' on the tool bar within your course to chat with an LearningStudio Representative.
- **Telephone:** Call (toll-free) 1-866-656-5511 or (direct) 1-720-931-3847.

Accessing Help from within Your Course: Click on the '*Tech Support*' icon on the upper left side of the screen inside the course. You then will be able to get assistance via online chat.

Note: Personal computer problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, an Internet cafe, or a bookstore, such as Barnes & Noble, etc.

Policy for Reporting Problems with Pearson LearningStudio:

Should you encounter Pearson LearningStudio based problems while submitting assignments, discussions, comments or exams, the following procedure **MUST** be followed:

1. You **MUST** file your problem with the help desk and obtain a help desk ticket number
2. Once a help desk ticket number is in your possession, email me to advise me of the problem and to provide me with the help desk ticket number
3. I may contact the help desk to confirm your problem and follow up with you.

PLEASE NOTE: Your personal computer/access problems won't be solved by contacting the Pearson LearningStudio Help Desk. You are strongly encouraged to check for compatibility of your browser **BEFORE** the course begins and to take the Pearson LearningStudio tutorial offered for students who may require some extra assistance in navigating the Pearson LearningStudio platform.

If your problems are with myLeo:

Your myLeo email address is required to send and receive all student correspondence. Please email helpdesk@tamuc.edu[†] or call us at 903-468-6000 with any questions about setting up your myLeo email account. You may also access information at [myLeo](https://leo.tamuc.edu)[†]. <https://leo.tamuc.edu>[†]

If your problems are with SmartWork:

- If you are having trouble joining the class, see the "Joining SmartWork" link in the LearningStudio menu bar and the links on that page.
 - The most common problems are that you are confusing your registration code, which comes with your book or your online purchase, and the enrollment key, which is listed under How To Get Started above.
- If you are having other problems, go to the SmartWork student support page at <http://books.wwnorton.com/books/buysmartwork>[†].
- Please do both of the above before emailing me with any problems.

HOW TO CONTACT ME AND STAY CONNECTED

Interaction with Instructor

Email: I can be reached by email at Kurtis.Williams@tamuc.edu[†]. Please put "ASTR Online" in your email subject header. It may take me up to 24 hours to send you a response (48 hours on the weekend or holidays). If you don't hear back from me in that time, please send another email or give me a call. I assume you check your campus email daily, so if I send out a class email, I'll assume you read it.

Adobe Connect: This is the web-based software that we will use for virtual office hours. Participation is optional, and instructions are provided on LearningStudio.

Text Messages and Automated Email Announcements: I have set up an SMS (text and/or email) account for brief messages like reminders of due dates, updates on class events, and other important announcements. I expect you to register for this service

To register for text (SMS) updates, text "@astronline" (without quotes) to 81010 or (754) 333-5306. The service is free, but any standard messaging fees charged by your mobile provider will apply. To get automated email copies of any texts (like if you don't have texting or don't want to pay for it), send a blank email to: astronline@mail.remind.com[†]. The service

is also private: nobody (including myself) will see your phone number or email, and only I can send messages.

You can also download the Remind app for your smartphone; this will allow you to initiate chats with me. Again, your phone number is always private.

Office Hours: Office hours are available in both real-world and virtual formats. Office hours are times that I set aside when I promise to be in my office so that you can come by and talk to me. During real-world office hours, you can ask questions about the course material, ask about homework, see your current grade, or ask other questions about the class or astronomy in general. During virtual office hours, I will have a preset list of topics and you'll be free to ask questions when we get to that time.

It's important to realize that office hours are *not* just for students who are having problems in the course. If you are uncertain about anything, please visit, email, phone or drop into virtual hours before your small problems grow into big ones. If you are worried about what might be on the test, stop in. If you are curious about astronomy jobs and research opportunities, come by.

Office hours work best if you have your textbooks, class notes, and homework sets with you.

If you want to talk but cannot come during office hours, please contact me by email in order to set up an individual appointment. By setting an appointment, you both guarantee that I will be in my office (or online) and that I will have plenty of time to talk with you. You may feel free to stop by my office any time my door is open, but if you do not have an appointment and if it is not my scheduled office hours, please understand if I'm not free to talk at that instant.

Social Media: Please don't follow me on Facebook or LinkedIn until after you've graduated.

Netiquette

I expect all students to behave to basic standards of etiquette on the web (and in real life). Abusive or inappropriate comments will be removed and earn a reprimand; any additional lapses could result in disciplinary action. For a simple guide to netiquette, see <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>

RULES, RULES, RULES (UNIVERSITY POLICIES)
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Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

Academic integrity

A major goal of this and most every university course is for you to learn and appreciate subject material. Academic dishonesty ("cheating") actively prevents you from achieving this goal. Academic dishonesty is taken seriously by the University and by me, and ***will not be tolerated***. (See the TAMU-C Code of Student Conduct and the TAMU-C Procedures A 13.04, 13.12, 13.31, and 13.32.)

This conduct is not only considered wrong in this course and at this University, but also in the real world. Engaging in these activities will get you fired from a job and prevent you from

getting another job.

Unethical student conduct includes:

- **Plagiarism**, or copying the words of others with the intent of making it look like your own. Whether you use someone else's phrase word for word, or whether you try and change a few words, or even if you just borrow someone else's original idea and don't give them credit, that's unethical. Use your own words whenever possible, give credit to wherever you got an idea, and put direct quotes inside quotation marks.
- **Cheating** involves trying to trick me or others into thinking you did work that you really didn't do, or into thinking you know what you really don't know. This can include stealing exams, changing your answers on a graded exam or assignment and claiming it was graded wrongly, putting your name on someone else's homework, and so on.
 - ***Searching the Internet for homework solutions and cutting/pasting the text you find is considered cheating.*** Searching the Internet for help on a topic is okay. For example, suppose a question asks "Describe the life cycle of a star that has the same mass as the sun." Typing that phrase into Google and cutting and pasting the text in the answer box is considered cheating. Typing "star life cycles" into Google, reading a few web pages, and summarizing the information in your own words is not cheating.
 - ***Borrowing a previous student's homework, exams, or solution sets is considered cheating.*** "Borrowing" includes looking at someone's submitted homework, screen shots, stealing returned homeworks, and so on.
- **Collusion** is working with another person to cheat. This can include copying someone else's answers to an exam or assignment, doing work for another student, buying or otherwise obtaining homework/exam solutions from any source online or off-line, or any other instance of multiple people engaging in some form of cheating or dishonesty. Working with other students on an assignment is fine as long as everyone contributes and each student does their own work.
- **Any other activity that, to a reasonable person, looks wrong.** If you have any doubt whatsoever whether a certain action is considered dishonest, please ask me *before* engaging in the activity. There is no need to be embarrassed about asking, and I won't penalize you for asking! In this class, if you follow the maxim "it's easier to beg forgiveness than to ask permission", don't expect forgiveness to be forthcoming.

If you engage in academic dishonesty during any graded activity, you will receive no credit for that activity. More than one instance of dishonesty by a student will result in automatic failure of the course and referral of the student for disciplinary action.

For further information, search the A&M-Commerce website for "academic integrity policy".

SmartWork and LearningStudio provide me with tools that check for common forms of online cheating and collusion. These include, but aren't limited to: time stamps, location stamps, and automated comparison of essay answers. I will use these tools.

Examination Policy

- For the online exams you may use whatever static materials you like, including your text, homework solutions, internet searches (as long as you do not cut-and-paste), etc. But see the next point...
- You must work on the exam alone – you may not discuss the exam with other students prior to the due date, you may not use any sort of communication like email, Skype, texting, ChaCha, talking, writing, semaphore, etc., etc., etc. to communicate with any

other human during or after the exam.

- The exams are *timed* and *may only be taken once*, so you will want to study the material well before taking the exam.

“Attendance” Policy

While this class will have no required synchronous (live online) meetings, you will be required to participate in online discussions. As such, you should be active in the class weekly. If life happens and you will be unable to log on for an extended period of time (like > 1 week), please contact me in advance to discuss options.

Assignment Policy and Due Dates

All assignments will be posted at least one week before they are due. Assignments and due dates will be posted in the main page for each unit. Submission requirements for each assignment will also be given on that page.

Late Work

Late assignments are penalized 10% for each day late (including weekends). After 7 days, late assignments will receive a zero. Exams may not be taken late. Any missed exams will receive a zero.

Dropping The Course

A student may drop this course by logging into their myLEO account and clicking on the hyperlink labeled 'Drop a class' from among the choices found under the myLEO section of the Web page.

Incompletes

I only offer incompletes in extraordinary circumstances. Any student interested in an incomplete should contact me as soon as possible after the situation arises, and should keep in mind that I am not required to give you an incomplete and so may not offer you the opportunity. You should also know that you only have access to a LearningStudio course for two weeks following the final day of term.

Administrative Withdrawl

Although I have the right to drop you for excessive absences, I won't do so. You have a right to get an F if you decide to quit working but don't withdraw.

University Specific Procedures

ADA Statement

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 have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Gee Library

Room 132

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu[†]

www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/[†]

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See *Code of Student Conduct from Student Guide Handbook*).

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

The course will cover many of the topics outlined below. The dates below may change (never earlier, but possibly later) so pay attention to announcements on LearningStudio for final due dates.

1st Block: Tools of the Astronomer

- Unit 1: Introductions (Jan 19–Jan 31); *due date on Jan 31.*
- Unit 2: The Scientific Method & Astronomy (Jan 25–Jan 31)
- Unit 3: Radiation (Feb 1–Feb 7)
- Unit 4: Spectroscopy (Feb 8–Feb 14)
- Unit 5: Telescopes (Feb 15–Feb 21)
- **Exam 1: February 24 and 25**

2nd Block: Stars

- Unit 6: The Sun (Feb 22–Feb 28)
- Unit 7: Properties of Stars (Feb 29–Mar 11); *2 week duration and Friday due date*
- *Spring Break: March 12–March 20. No Assignments*
- Unit 8: Stellar Evolution (Mar 21–Mar 30); *1.5 week duration and Wednesday due date*
- Unit 9: Star Death (Mar 31–Apr 10); *Note 1.5 week duration*
- **Exam 2: April 11 and 12**

3rd Block: Galaxies and the Universe

- Unit 10: The Milky Way and its Neighbors (Apr 11–Apr 17)
- Unit 11: Cosmology (Apr 18–Apr 24)
- Unit 12: The Big Bang (Apr 25–May 4); *1.5 week duration and Wednesday due date*
- **Exam 3: Dec May 5 and 6**
- *No Final Exam*

All work (except exams) is due on the last day of a unit unless otherwise announced.

All extra credit must be completed by May 1 and turned in by May 4.

Observatory Visits:

- Thursday, March 3 Time TBA
- Tuesday, March 8 Time TBA