



ASTR 1304.01E, Solar System

COURSE SYLLABUS: 2025 Fall; 80889

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Cheri Davis

Office Location: McFarland Science Building STC 148

Office Hours: Monday-Thursday, 8:30-9:30 or anytime I am in the office and available

Office Phone: 903 468 8650

University Email Address: Cheri.Davis@etamu.edu

Preferred Form of Communication: email to: Cheri.Davis@etamu.edu

Communication Response Time: usually a couple of hours during the week

Class Location/Time: **McFarland Science Building (STC) room 125, 2:00 PM**
a.k.a. "the Planetarium"

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Textbook(s) **Required: No Textbook is required.**

Software Required: Microsoft Office Suite and Adobe Creative Cloud (The University provides Adobe access to all students at no additional cost)

Optional Texts and/or Materials: If you prefer to have a textbook for outside reading on your own, this text is recommended: 21st Century Astronomy, Palen & Blumenthal, 7th edition. <https://wwnorton.com/books/9780393877021> (Again, text is not required)
All other reading material(s) will be provided in the course.

Course Description

ASTR 1304: The Solar System introduces students to content-based inquiry by guiding students through an exploration of important questions across all elements of astronomy. Through a deep focus on a connecting theme, students will engage in holistic discussions of topics addressing fundamental questions about life and interactions, develop the skills including critical thinking, research, literacy skills, and

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communication skills, and learn to apply their knowledge to their personal, professional, and academic goals.

This course is a core course for science as well as a foundational course for the Humanities Certificate {HC} program, a TAMU System-wide initiative designed to create an intentional connective pathway through the core curriculum to infuse humanities-based inquiry (critical thinking, research, communication, ethics, morality, cultural awareness, empathy, etc.) into student degree pathways and encourage students to see the relationships between larger questions of the human experience and their own lives and goals. The course is based on Transformative Texts and a Transformative Project.

Astronomy, and more specifically the Solar System, is the focus for the content developed in this course.

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

The readings for this course are partially drawn from a system-wide list of Transformative Texts. **Transformative Texts** are books, films, artwork, music, documents, memoirs, etc. from diverse regions, cultures, ethnicities, ideologies, religions, genders--around the world and throughout time--that reflect the core ideals, ethics, and moralities of humanity.

Required Readings for this section of ASTR 1304: The reading assignments will be selected passages from texts. Since we will be reading small passages, the material will be uploaded into the course so you will not have to purchase additional books. Specific readings will be assigned and available with each unit. Class discussions will follow each reading assignment. Additionally, some periodicals and the use of the planetarium's digital system will be utilized.

Student Learning Outcomes (Should be measurable; observable; use action verbs)

- 1. Critical/Integrative Thinking:** Students will apply insights from the humanities (i.e., examinations of human history, culture, language, ethics, and aesthetics) to problems or questions that intersect with other areas of inquiry, including STEM and professional disciplines. (Core Outcome Alignment: Critical Thinking)
- 2. Communication:** Students will communicate ideas effectively through writing and, where appropriate, through oral communication, visual communication, or creative performance. (Core Outcome Alignment: Communication)
- 3. Ethical Reasoning:** Students will engage with multiple perspectives in exploring the human dimensions of real-world situations and problems. (Core Outcome Alignment: Personal Responsibility; Critical Thinking)

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4. Cultural Awareness: Students will demonstrate an appreciation for social and cultural diversity while engaging in critical analysis of various forms of literary, artistic, or cultural expression. (Core Outcome Alignment: Social Responsibility; Critical Thinking)

Student Learning Outcomes will be assessed by the Transformative Project (see below) presented during the Celebration of Student Learning held on Wednesday, December 10, 3-5 pm (will confirm mid-semester).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

You will use Microsoft Office Suite in addition to the Adobe Creative Suite. Adobe is provided in a cloud-based format to students at no cost (more information below). Google documents are NOT compatible with the university's learning system and will not be acceptable for assignments. If you only have Google access for processing content, save all work as a pdf to assure format is compatible. Providing a link for work is not accepted.

Instructional Methods

This course will be centered on classroom discussion of assigned works, using small group and large group discussions, with short low-stakes writing and reflection assignments that scaffold to a final Transformative Project. The Transformative Project showcases student learning and development of humanities skills, including information literacy, critical thinking, and communication. Students will read, discuss, listen, analyze, and develop an understanding of the assigned texts and their connections to their own lived experience, goals, and beliefs; conduct research; and communicate their ideas. In engaging with the core learning objectives of critical thinking, communication, social responsibility, and personal responsibility, students will gain a greater appreciation of the complexities of the world and their place within that complexity, and gain new skills derived from deep textual reading and analysis, critical thinking and engagement, research and information literacy, and the ability to communicate their ideas. These skills provide a key foundation for the college experience and will bolster students' employability after graduation.

To prepare for and develop the Transformative Project, students will engage in short writing, research, and oral presentations that provide a scaffolded foundation for their final project, as set out in the Course Schedule. Through reflective assignments, students will develop a project focus that sets out the large issue drawn from their study of the chosen Transformative Text and the relevance students find to their lives and goals. They will conduct research on different approaches to that large issue to understand in a holistic sense the different perspectives on the large issue, and make arguments about how such different perspectives might shape a society's understanding of the issue. Students will prepare a product that articulates the connections between the larger issue they researched and discussed and their own lives, goals, and experiences. The final Transformative Project will be presented using Adobe Creative Campus suite of programs, to allow student creativity of expression in making the connections including course material, inquiry, and personal experiences.

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Throughout the course, discussions and assignments will be geared to reinforcing the basic premises of university education and to emphasizing students' development of skills central to their college career and beyond—exposing students to new ideas, different perspectives, and the variability of the educational experience; developing relationships between and among students, mentors, and faculty; reinforcing persistence and resiliency; encouraging reflection and sense of purpose; and honing reading, writing, and communication skills. It is important for students to meet the due dates provided for each assignment; late work is not accepted. Extra credit is not available for this course.

Assignments are broken down as follows:

REGULAR DAILY ASSIGNMENTS: (total 70% of course grade)

READINGS: (20% of course grade)

- **Students will read the assigned passages outside of class** in preparation for the full-class discussion to follow. **(SLO: 1-4)**
- Students will complete a **reading quiz** online in the course shell, it will be due by the following class, before class discussions. **(SLO: 1-4)**
 - If the assignment is given on Tuesday, the quiz will be due *before the start of class* on Thursday; likewise, if the assignment is given on Thursday, the quiz will be due *before the start of class* on Tuesday.
 - **The quiz will automatically close upon the time due and will not be reopened.** Please make sure that the reading and quiz are completed on time. This is preparation for the work we will be doing in class so it is important that the reading/quiz are completed as assigned.
 - You may use your text for the quiz, you may not use any other online resources or each other.

DISCUSSIONS: (10% of course grade)

- ALL students are expected to participate in all **class discussions**, individual grades will be issued according to participation. **(SLO: 1-4)**
 - There will be some preparation via personal research over specific topics in order to participate in discussions. The discussions will be in class the day following the assignment so it is important that the research is done on time so students are prepared to participate in class.

PRESENTATIONS: (20% of course grade)

- Students will participate in the **“Transformative Project”** by completing several small **presentations using “Adobe Creative Cloud”** in preparation for the Learning Showcase. (More information below) **(SLO: 1-4)**
 - Each unit will focus on a specific topic (reading/reflection/support material/presentations) and should be the focus for the unit presentation.
 - The final project will be the culmination of all material studied this semester.
 - Your project should include a minimum of 2 elements from the course. These elements should come from 2 of the presentations made during the semester.
 - Resources will be listed as a component of each presentation (cite all sources).

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REFLECTION PAPERS: (20% course grade)

- **Reflection papers** will be 1) completed online, 2) typed, and 3) uploaded in the course shell. Papers will be due the day following the class discussion. Papers may NOT be handwritten, physically handed in, or submitted via email. Make sure that you are able to manage your work in the course shell. Feedback and grades will be given in the assignment after uploading. All papers, will include a specific topic. The paper will be saved by the topic and uploaded by topic under the assignments. As assignments are uploaded, they will save under the student's name; it is important that you include the topic in the title. In preparation for discussions, students will provide both sides for an argument, in support and against, to be followed by a personal opinion statement. For full credit, all papers must fit the guidelines given on the assignment. For example, a one page minimum will include 12 point font, double spaced, one full page following the title. Do not waste space including a header of any kind. The first line will be the title, return to line 2, indent, start writing. If there are several lines at the bottom of the page, ½ credit or less will be the outcome. **(SLO: 1-4)**

PARTICIPATION: (30% of the course grade)

- **Attendance (5%)** is a small percentage of the grade however if you miss class you are going to miss material that you will need to complete assignments. All of the work completed for this class will build from previous material. To be successful in this course, you need to attend every class. Class discussions will not be video recorded so an absence can create problems for completing the required material for each unit. You will have **one absence dropped at the end of the semester.**
- **Transformative Project: (25%)** The Transformative Project will ask students to use the course theme, *Solar System*, engage in research about that topic, **identify relevant sources**, present an argument, and link the outcomes to an issue relevant to their own learning, career, or personal trajectory. The Transformative Project aligns with and assesses all Student Learning Outcomes for the course. **The Transformative Project must be completed using Adobe Creative Cloud.** You will upload your mini-presentations into the course shell under the assignment for each topic. At the end of the semester, you will select two of the presentations created to contribute towards your final project. This will be digital and you are required to use Adobe Creative Cloud components. **The final project will be due November 13 by 11 am (no exceptions).** **(SLO: 1-4)**
 - We will discuss more on this project/assignment as the semester is underway.

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Student Responsibilities or Tips for Success in the Course

GRADING

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

- A = 90%-100%**
- B = 80%-89%
- C = 70%-79%
- D = 60%-69%
- F = 59% or Below

Weights of the assessments in the calculation of the final letter grade.

Daily work	70 %
• 10 % Discussions	
• 20 % Quizzes	
• 20 % Presentations	
• 20 % Reflections	
Transformative Project	25 %
<u>Attendance</u>	<u>5 %</u>
TOTAL	100 %

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

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ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@etamu.edu

Note: Personal computer and internet connection 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, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact me via email: cheri.davis@etamu.edu

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

Interaction with Instructor Statement

Please take advantage of office hours; that time is scheduled for you. Otherwise please email any questions you may have. Office hours are Monday-Thursday 8:30-9:30 am.

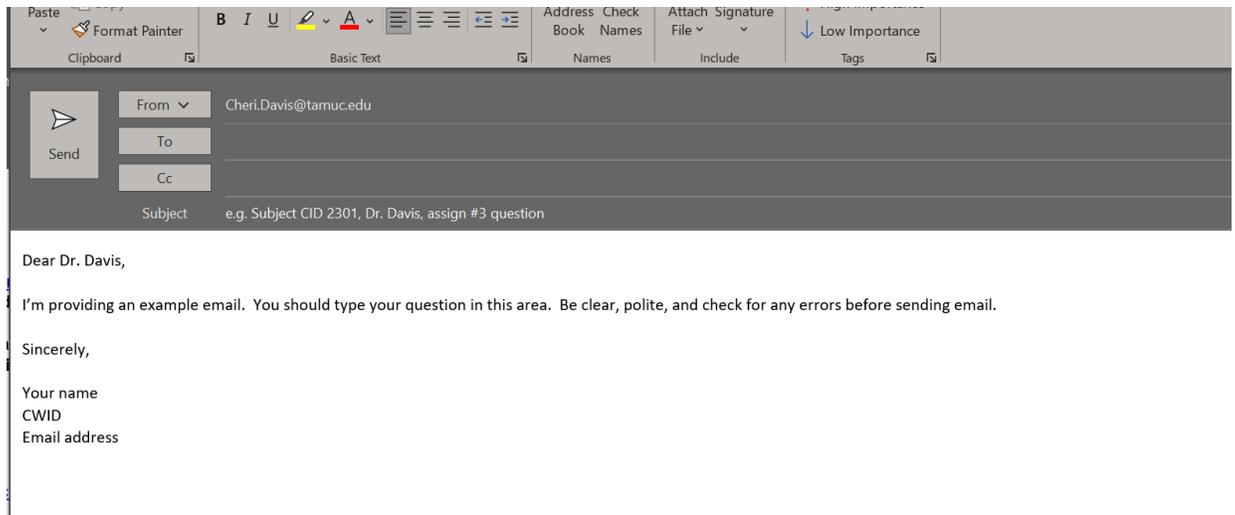
Students are welcome to visit during office hours or at any other time I am in my office and available. For a specific time outside of the scheduled office hours please feel welcome to call my office (903 468 8650) or email to schedule an appointment.

All written communication should be through email at this address: Cheri.Davis@etamu.edu

Students will be expected to regularly check their email provided by the University through D2L as this address is provided to the instructor. In **ALL email**, students are required to include the following information in the subject line: **the course name, last then first name, and a (very) brief statement/inquiry.**

e.g. Subject CID 2301, Dr. Davis, assign #3 question

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This will allow all inquiries to be answered as soon as possible. If a response is not received within 2-weekdays then assume there was a problem with the email and please follow-up through other contact options. I have had IT issues, if you do not hear back, stop by the office or give me a call.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

- Students are expected to attend all classes.
- Class will meet in the Planetarium; no food nor drinks are allowed in the facility.
- Students are expected to be on time to class. Late arrivals miss material, interrupt class in progress, and are disruptive to everyone. When working in dark conditions, in the dome, the door will not be opened for late arrivals. Opening the door creates a safety hazard so please be on time to class.
- Students are expected to complete all work according to the dates due.
- Students are expected to participate fully to the best of their ability in all components of the course as outlined above.
- Students are expected to follow the class policies as determined week 1.
- Students are expected to be respectful of each other and the professor.
- **Students will not bring (or use) electronic devices to class** unless preapproved by me before the start of the semester; this includes but not limited to: cell phones,

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head phones/ear buds, computers, tablets, or recording devices. These (and other) devices become a distraction and reduce class interaction. (see next statement)

We have a closed wireless system in the planetarium which will do 2 things: limit the use of WIFI, and restrict conflicts with our system. This is why electronic devices do not function well in the planetarium. It is for this reason that digital copies of the texts are not recommended. You will not be able to get enough signal to read the text by a digital device.

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.

University Specific Procedures

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the Student Guidebook.

<https://inside.tamuc.edu/admissions/onestopshop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance](#) webpage and [Procedures 13.99.99.R0.01](#)

<https://inside.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

<https://inside.tamuc.edu/aboutus/policiesproceduresstandardsstatements/rulesprocedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10.pdf>

<https://inside.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/faculty/GraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

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Students with Disabilities-- 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
Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
Email: studentdisabilityservices@etamu.edu

Website: [Student Disability Services](#)

<https://www.etamu.edu/student-disability-services/>

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.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

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A&M-Commerce Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.etamu.edu/counsel

Mental Health and Well-Being

The university aims to provide students with essential knowledge and tools to understand and support mental health. As part of our commitment to your well-being, we offer access to Telus Health, a service available 24/7/365 via chat, phone, or webinar. Scan the QR code to download the app and explore the resources available to you for guidance and support whenever you need it.



<http://telusproduction.com/app/5108.html>

AI use policy [Draft 2, May 25, 2023]

Texas A&M University-Commerce acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course.

Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed.

In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

13.99.99.R0.03 Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty

13.99.99.R0.10 Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty

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Department or Accrediting Agency

Required Content

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

In addition to our regular coursework (see below), *Student Success* resources will be available and will be a part of the varied discussions. These may include: establishing priorities, time management, coping with failure, navigating syllabi and D2L, finding campus resources, engaging with diverse people and experiences, the Writing Center, Tutoring, College Life Coaches, etc.

Week 1 **Navigating syllabi & D2L**

- Managing expectations, syllabi, D2L navigation
- Syllabus quiz (online) (due before the next class)
- Class policies

Week 2-4 **Notetaking skills**

Unit 1

- Assigned Reading 1 & Quiz 1 (**DUE** before the start of class)
- Discussion from text, reflection paper 1, presentation 1 (**DUE** before the start of class)
- Video/support material
- Discussion from support material, assign presentation topic & Adobe component
- Presentation 1 in class

Week 4-6 **Finding resources/Writing center (requested visit)**

Unit 2

- Assigned Reading 2 & Quiz 2 (**DUE** before the start of the next class)
- Discussion from text, reflection paper, presentation 2 (**DUE** before the start of class on (to be announced))
- Video/support material
- Follow-up discussion from support material
- Presentation 2 in class

Week 6-8 **Time Management & Priorities**

Unit 3

- Assigned Reading 3 & Quiz 3 (**DUE** before the start of the next class)
- Discussion from text, reflection paper, presentation 3 (**DUE** before the start of class on (to be announced))
- Video/support material
- Follow-up discussion from support material
- Presentation 3 in class

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Week 8-10 **Coping with failure**

Unit 4

- Assigned Reading 4 & Quiz 4 (**DUE** before the start of class)
- Discussion from text, reflection paper, presentation 4 (**DUE** before the start of class on (to be announced))
- Video/support material
- Follow-up discussion from support material
- Presentation 4 in class

Week 10-13 **Final Projects-Final presentations are due 11/13 by 11 am**

Unit 5

- Work on & turn in final presentations

Unit 6

- Assigned Reading 5 & Quiz 5 (**DUE** before the start of the next class)
- Discussion from text, reflection paper, presentation 5 (**DUE** before the start of class on (to be announced))
- Video/support material
- Follow-up discussion from support material
- Presentation 5 in class

Week 14-16 **Wrap-up & feedback**

Unit 6

- Assigned Reading 6 & Quiz 6 (**DUE** before the start of the next class)
- Discussion from text, reflection paper, presentation 6 (**DUE** before the start of class)
- Video/support material
- Follow-up discussion from support material
- Presentation 6 in class

Celebration of Student Learning (a.k.a. the Learning Showcase) will be held on the Wednesday, December 10, 3-5pm. This date/time was provided by the university and participation is mandatory for all students.

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