



Planetary Astronomy Course Expectations

text: [Voyages to the Planets](#)
by Franknoi, Morrison, Wolff

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This is the first of a two-semester sequence in Astronomy. This semester we will study those objects, which orbit the Sun. The course begins with a quick look at the history of astronomy, from the Ancients to the Renaissance. We will spend a couple of weeks finding out how planetary astronomers do what they do. Next we will take each of the members of the solar system in turn. You will be expected to learn the important features of all of the major planets. We have the advantage of more than forty years of planetary probes sent to every planet except Pluto. We now have a wealth of information about comets and minor planets, as well.

At its heart, Astronomy is an observational science. We make observations of the sky and interpret those observations. You will be making your own observations throughout the semester in a journal of your observations, which will be checked four times during the course. You will find details on the web page <http://carpecaelum.com/planetary/skywork.htm>.

This course will also be activity based. We will be doing lab work every week. The type of lab that we will do will be the measurement and analysis of actual data such as photographs and spacecraft data. We will use the text as a reference for some facts, but for the most part, you will be required to think things through for yourself.

There certainly will be math involved in the course, primarily simple algebra. We use the metric system exclusively in Astronomy so you will be expected to remember what you have learned in your Measurements and Analysis course. Now might be a good time to review that material.

You will be expected to have an active computer account at the school. See one of the computer science teachers about doing so if you have any questions. Your assignments will be available on the World Wide Web as well as by e-mail. Everyone in this class has access to both of these services. You will need to check my own web page as well as the web page of the textbook often.

You will need a metric ruler, a protractor, a magnetic compass and a calculator with trigonometric functions for this class.

It is expected that you will be to class on time and ready to work. I always have the correct time, so if your clock does not agree with mine, yours is incorrect. Anything that might disrupt a learning atmosphere for the rest of the students will not be tolerated. If the rest of the class is not able to enjoy a learning experience because of your presence, you will be asked to leave. It would be appropriate in that case that you have a conversation with the dean concerning proper decorum. Returning to the class would be contingent on receiving written confirmation of your talk with the dean.

My system for grading:

Throughout the semester, you will be accumulating points. In order to get a certain letter grade at the end of the semester; you must have received a certain number of points.

Here are the various components of the course and the point value for each:

Observing Journal	50
Weekly Quizzes	100
Laboratory Reports	160
Tests	300
Final Exam	140
Total Points	750

There will be frequent quizzes in this class; about once each week. Tests will be at approximately two-week intervals with the first being on September 17. You must tell me by e-mail or phone at least 24 hours in advance if there is to be any reason why you would not be able to take the test on time. The only reason for missing a test is an absence that is properly excused for illness or some other urgent reason.

One final thought. All work is expected to be original. This is especially true of lab reports and observations. With very few exceptions, you always collect your own data, and those exceptions will be pointed out to you. This means that anyone just copying someone else's data or drawing will receive zero credit for the lab or observation and will be subject to disciplinary action.

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