INTRODUCTION
The goal of this course is to give you a basic knowledge of the Solar System and the Universe we inhabit. We begin by considering the Universe that we see with our naked eyes — for example, the appearance of the night sky and the phases of the moon. We also ask basic questions like “What is the place of the Earth in the Universe?” and “How can I understand the astronomy I encounter in my life?” Answers to those questions give us the perspective needed to deeply appreciate the physical world we live in and to start to understand the vast scales of time and distance of the Universe itself. At the same time, we develop an appreciation for the tools and concepts used by astronomers that form the practical basis for their work. These tools are both broad, such as the so-called Scientific Method, and specific, such as those used to determine the sizes and compositions of stars and planets.

We will then delve into the science of modern observational astronomy, with an emphasis on how the largest telescopes in the world operate. Once we learn about the facilities, we will investigate how they are used to study the life and death of stars.
This course follows the text closely, as indicated on the schedule handout. The dates indicated in the schedule are approximate: chapter and exam scheduling changes will be announced in class, so be alert. The class lectures will focus only on particularly difficult or interesting concepts from the reading assignment, but you will be responsible for all the assigned reading even if it is not discussed in class. You should attend class and keep up with the reading. Experience shows that students who do well are those who attend class and do not leave the reading until just before exams.

Generally, a class period will consist of me giving a lecture about the topic for the day. During my class lectures I will:

- Highlight and explain difficult concepts from the reading assignment
- Discuss important facts, figures, and problems within the reading assignment
- Incorporate additional material into the lectures to connect the reading topic to modern astronomy and current research

Please take note that class time will not be used to “go through” the assigned chapter for the day. This means that the best way for you to be prepared for class is to:

_Read the assigned chapter BEFORE you come to the class lecture!_

If you do this, you will be more prepared to follow along with me as I discuss the information. Prepping for the class will also make it easier for you to participate in class activities like Q&A sessions, clicker questions, and/or other extra credit activities.

**GRADING**

Your final grade will be made up of several components that will include; grades on exams, grades on homework assignments, and class engagement. There will also be multiple opportunities for extra credit. The most important thing to understand about how your grade is determined is this:

_I do not give you a grade – I assess your performance in the class._

Ultimately, your grade will be determined by your performance in the class, not by me. The way I will assess your performance is through exams, homework, class participation, and extra-credit. Here are the components of your final grade:

- Exam #1 – 15%
- Exam #2 – 25%
- Final Exam – 30%
- Homework – 20%
- Class Participation/Engagement – 10%
Here are important notes about the grading scale:
- The weight of the exams increases as the term progresses. This is to allow you to become familiar with my testing style.
- The exams are *cumulative*.
- Anything that is said in class, displayed on slides, or written in the book is testable.
- There are no scheduled makeup exams. However, I am willing to work with you on special arrangements.
- The ‘participation/engagement’ category may include my personal assessment of your performance in the class.
- Extra credit opportunities will be clearly explained.

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Q:** Can I use my laptop in class?
**A:** Yes. There are no restrictions on laptops or tablets in class. The most important thing is to MAKE SURE THEY ARE MUTED. Interruptions of class due to poor electronics management are rude to both your classmates and to me. This is a huge pet peeve of mine, so be sure to silence your cell phone and mute the sound of your laptop.

**Q:** Do I need to buy the book?
**A:** Yes. I understand that books are expensive, but there is no better way to have access to the information you need to pass the class. Feel free to buy an online version, rent a version, or buy a used version. You will *not* need access to www.masteringastronomy.com to do homework and other class assignments.

**Q:** Do you take attendance?
**A:** Sometimes. Attendance plays a role in your final grade, as it is part of “Class Engagement”. It is difficult to assess performance if there is no performance to assess. The bottom line is, come to class.

**Q:** Can I turn in my homework late?
**A:** No. I will be very clear with homework deadlines.

**Q:** Are there makeup exams?
**A:** Possibly. However, you will need a legitimate and verifiable reason for missing the exam in class. Makeup exams will be oral. That is, you and I will meet and I will test you on your knowledge of the material through discussion, Q&A, and working out examples.

**Q:** Will you curve the class grades?
**A:** No. Your grade is determined by how well you learn the class material.

**Q:** Will this class be awesome?
**A:** Not just awesome…. *astronomically* awesome.