

A121 Discussion/Lab Syllabus

Spring 2012

Contact Info

TA: Holly Sheets (just call me Holly, no formality needed!)

Phone: I don't recommend calling my office. I'm often not in it, and my officemates and I aren't very good about checking the voicemail.

Office: CSS 0224A

Office Hours: Tues 4-5pm, Fri 2-3pm

Email: hsheets at astro dot umd dot edu, or via ELMS (I am very easy to reach via email, unlike the phone.)

NOTE: On occasion, Hotmail decides to block emails from the umd.edu domain. I recommend using your umd.edu account (or, at least, not Hotmail) to email me, especially if you require a quick response.

Website: <http://www.astro.umd.edu/~hsheets/a121.html> and ELMS

Discussion

Discussion is your opportunity to ask me questions, either about the lecture material or the homework. The more you participate, the more interesting and useful the session will be for you.

Please arrive on time and plan to spend the full 50 minutes at discussion. If you habitually turn up late (without a good excuse, such as a class far across campus), I will start docking points from your score.

Your grade will be determined by the activity worksheet each session, or sometimes by attendance only. The worksheets must be completed and handed in during the session. They will be graded out of 10 points, for a total of 120 points. Notice we have 14 sessions on the schedule. I will use only your top 12 scores to determine your discussion grade, meaning you can miss discussion twice without penalty. Your percentage out of 120 points will then be weighted by the percentage given in the main course syllabus.

Unless otherwise stated, you can work together (in groups of 5 or less) on the worksheets and consult your notes. Just be sure to write up your OWN solutions, unless otherwise directed, that you will hand in. I don't want to see 5 carbon copies of one solution.

I reserve the right to occasionally do a pop quiz, for which you will work alone without your notes, just to keep you on your toes.

There will be make-up opportunities for excused absences from discussion, by completing the worksheet on your own time. You must contact me no later than 24 hours after the missed discussion in order to make it up, and you must provide written documentation for your absence. Acceptable excuses, as defined by the University, are illness (your own or a dependent), religious observances, athletics and other sanctioned University activities, and circumstances beyond your own control. Other excuses will be accepted or rejected at my discretion.

Lab

The labs are designed to reinforce the topics discussed in lecture, and also to help you get a more hands-on experience with observational and computational techniques used by astronomers. Again, please arrive ON TIME and plan to spend the full 2 hours in lab. Habitual lateness will result in point deductions here as

well. If you come in late, you might have to work by yourself, rather than slowing down a partner or group while you catch up.

There will be 11 labs, each worth 10 points, for a total of 110 points. Your percentage out of those 110 points will then be weighted by the percentage listed in the main course syllabus. There will also be 3 make-up sessions scattered throughout the term. In order to qualify for a make-up lab, you **MUST** give me notice (by email, so I have a record) no later than 24 hours after the start time of the lab you have missed, and you **MUST** provide a reason for missing the lab. Acceptable excuses, as defined by the University, are illness (your own or a dependent), religious observances, athletics and other sanctioned University activities, and circumstances beyond your own control. Other excuses will be accepted or rejected at my discretion.

You may work with a partner (or group, where indicated in the instructions), but once again, all submitted solutions must be your **OWN**. Just because you worked together doesn't mean you can both turn in the exact same work. I recommend talking things over and then walking away from your partner to write up your conclusions or work out your math. Since we have a limited number of computers, it is OK if you and your partner turn in the same MATLAB code and plots/images, because you will be writing it together in lab. Just be sure to hand in a copy for each partner. **ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS, HOWEVER, MUST BE YOUR OWN.**

Labs will be due at the start of the following discussion section, which will give you extra time to ponder the questions asked or to type up your answers, if you prefer to do so.

The (Tentative) Schedule

The actual lab topic may change, but hopefully the dates will not.

January	27	Friday	Discussion 1
	30	Monday	Lab 1: Intro to MATLAB
February	03	Friday	Discussion 2
	06	Monday	Lab 2: Parallax
	10	Friday	Discussion 3
	13	Monday	Lab 3: Binary Stars and Stellar Masses
	17	Friday	Discussion 4
	20	Monday	Lab 4: Blackbody and Stellar Spectra
	24	Friday	Discussion 5
	27	Monday	Lab MAKE-UP DAY*
March			(Midterm 1 on Thursday)
	02	Friday	Discussion 6
	05	Monday	Lab 5: Cluster HR Diagrams
	09	Friday	Discussion 7
	12	Monday	Lab 6: The Shape and Scale of the Milky Way
	16	Friday	Discussion 8
			(Spring Break)
	26	Monday	Lab 7: HI Rotation Curve for the Milky Way
	30	Friday	Discussion 9
April	02	Monday	Lab 8: Hubble's Law
	06	Friday	Discussion 10
	09	Monday	Lab MAKE-UP DAY*
			(Midterm 2 on Thursday)
	13	Friday	Discussion 11
	16	Monday	Lab 9: Superluminal Motion and Quasar Jets
	20	Friday	Discussion 12
	23	Monday	Lab 10: Galaxy Morphologies and Interactions
	27	Friday	Discussion 13
	30	Monday	Lab 11: Large Scale Structure in the Universe
May	04	Friday	Discussion 14
	07	Monday	Lab MAKE-UP DAY*
			(Last Day of classes Thursday)

* Lab Make-up is only for EXCUSED lab absences