

ASTR 288I: Introduction to the Astronomy Major—Spring 2023

Instructor: Arjun Savel
Office Hours: TBD, ATL 1231

Location: ATL 1106, Mondays 4–5 p.m.
Email: asavel@umd.edu

Course description

ASTR 288I: Introduction to the Astronomy Major is a 1-credit seminar course that is intended to introduce new Astronomy majors to:

- possible career paths following completion of an undergraduate Astronomy degree
- common skills that would be useful in these possible careers
- and useful skills and knowledge to better prepare them for research as an undergraduate.

Many students enter the Astronomy major with a great deal of enthusiasm for astronomical topics but are unsure about how to channel that enthusiasm into useful skills for their courses, research, and eventually, a career — whether that career is in academia, at a government research facility, or in private industry (or otherwise!).

What you get from this course will very much depend on what you put into this course. I'll provide you with a wide variety of information, options, and topics for discussion, but you must choose to engage with the course material, your peers, and myself in order to get the most out of the course! We expect that you will be an active participant in class, both in discussing material in class and in completing the additional online assignments. This course will include a significant amount of small-group and whole-class discussion, which will be instrumental in your learning in the course.

Learning goals

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- describe several potential career options for students graduating with an Astronomy degree.
- articulate steps they need to take during their academic career at UMD in order to be best prepared for a career of greatest interest upon graduation.
- describe how engaging in research as an undergraduate is useful for their future careers and list skills they need to develop/improve in order to be prepared to begin research.
- articulate why clear communication is very important for a scientist in any career.
- outline and describe the contents of the major sections of a scientific report.

Course grading

This course is based primarily on student participation, both in class and with the online assignments: student participation will make up 50% of the course grade and online assignments will make up 50% of the course grade. There are no exams.

- **Class participation:** Your active participation during the class session is needed in order for you to get the most out of the course. Each class meeting is worth 2 points of participation: your attendance and active participation receives full credit. If you're very late to class or you attend but don't pay attention or participate, you will receive half credit. There are 14 class meetings for each section, and your lowest (or missing) class participation score will be dropped from the course grade.

- Online assignments: Each week, there is a reading, writing, or reflection assignment on ELMS to be completed. There are 14 assignments that will require you to submit a short piece of writing via ELMS. Your lowest (or missing) assignment will be dropped from the course grade. Each assignment is worth 5 points. A sincere, thoughtful, and complete response will generally receive full credit. A response that was obviously submitted without much care or is monosyllabic will generally receive 1 – 3 points at the instructor’s discretion.

Course pre-reqs

None! Sans permission of the Astronomy Department.

Textbooks

None! Readings and other materials will be distributed on the course ELMS website and/or in class.

Course website

Students can access course materials (e.g., quizzes, assignments, and readings) on ELMS (<https://myelms.umd.edu/>).

Course communication

Students are expected to check their messages on ELMS and the email address that they have linked to UMD frequently. You can check to see which email address you have linked to UMD, and set a forwarding email address, by visiting <http://www.testudo.umd.edu/apps/saddr/>.

COVID-19

The University has provided guidance about the wearing of masks for students, faculty, and staff; this guidance may change over time as warranted by the current status of the pandemic. If the university requires the use of face coverings, then they will be required in this course. Students who do not comply with university requirements will be given a warning and/or will be asked to leave the room immediately. Students who have additional issues with COVID-19 safety requirements after a first warning will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for failure to comply with a directive of University officials.

Absences and accommodations

The University Attendance and Assessment Policy will be strictly followed in this class. This policy can be found online at “Course Related Policies” (<http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>). According to these policies, the instructor is obligated to allow makeup work or provide alternate arrangements only for excused absences — see the policy for the definition of an “excused absence”. As “Course Related Policies” describes, if you know ahead of time that you’re going to be absent for an excused reason, you need to notify **me** (asavel@umd.edu) and make arrangements to make up work ahead of time. If you’re unexpectedly absent for an excused reason, you need to notify me as soon afterward as possible. According to University policy, you may only submit one self-signed excuse due to illness per semester — for additional or extended medical absences, you must provide documentation from a doctor or the University Health Center. If you are absent for reasons other than illness, then you must provide documentation upon request.

Please keep in mind that your lowest (or missing) class participation and online assignment scores will not be included in your course grade calculation — this is intended to provide relief for you if you should accidentally miss a class or assignment for an unexcused reason.

If you have a documented disability, you must provide a copy of the University documentation by Monday, Feb. 12, 2022. When you bring the documentation, we can discuss the accommodation you are permitted.

Copyright

These lecture and course materials, including presentations, outlines, assignments, and similar materials, are adapted from material protected by Dr. Melissa Hayes-Gerkhe. As a student in the course, you may take notes and make copies of course materials for your own use. You may not reproduce or distribute course materials publicly, whether or not a fee is charged, or allow others to do so, without my express written consent.

A safe learning environment

The campus is meant to be a safe place to learn, free from harassment and intimidation of any kind. If you have experienced any form of harassment as a member of the university community, you should contact the Office of Civil Rights Sexual Misconduct (http://www.umd.edu/Sexual_Misconduct) on campus. Please be aware that faculty are required by law to report any instance of misconduct brought to their attention. For confidential assistance, contact CARE (<http://www.health.umd.edu/care>).

Due dates

All assignments are disseminated and due on the course's ELMS website. The assignments are described in more detail on ELMS.

Assignments are due before the Monday class for the week. For example, the assignment called "After Week 1" in the module for Week 1 on ELMS is due on Monday, Feb. 6, 2022 at 4 pm. Because all assignments are submitted online via ELMS, there will be no changes in the due dates because of inclement weather or the university being closed; any changes due to extraordinary circumstances will be communicated via ELMS message and/or your UMD email. If the due date is inconvenient for you, it is your responsibility to plan ahead and complete the assignments prior to Monday; assignments become accessible on ELMS the Tuesday before the due date.

Cheating

Please don't do it. For more information, see the Astronomy Department's plagiarism policy: <https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/undergraduate/registration-academic-requirements-regulations/academic-integrity-student-conduct-codes/>

General advice

- *Attack the hoplites*
- Have fun!

Campus Resources

- UMD Accessibility and Disability Service (Website: <https://counseling.umd.edu/ads>)
If you require any type of disability accommodation, please let me know ASAP. You can email me or talk to me during office hours.



Figure 1: The schedule for our course!

- Office of Civil Rights & Sexual Misconduct (Website: <https://ocrsm.umd.edu/>) Please note that under Title XI, I am required to report incidents of sexual harassment. For a confidential resource, consider reaching out to the Care Center (<https://health.umd.edu/CARE>).
- Counseling Center (Website: <https://counseling.umd.edu/>)
If you are ever concerned with how you're doing in the class, please talk to me. But if there's something more serious going on, there are professional counselors that can speak with you about personal, academic, and career issues.