

# COURSE SYLLABUS

## PHY 133 – Introduction to Astronomy

**Credit Hours: 3**

**Fall 2007**

**Farrington Building, Room 105**

**12:00 – 12:50 MWF**

**Instructor:** Dr. Joel W. Walker  
**Phone:** (936) 294-4803  
**Main Physics Office:** (936) 294-1601  
**Fax:** (936) 294-1585  
**Email:** jwalker@shsu.edu

**Office Location:** Farrington, room 204 D

**Office Hours:** 9-11 & 2-3 MWF

**Course Description:** This course is designed to give a modern perspective on mankind's home: the planet Earth, our Solar System, the Milky Way Galaxy, and the Universe at large. Topics to be discussed include: 1) A historical description of the development of astronomy and planetary mechanics 2) Selected background material in physics, as applied to understanding motions in the night sky, and decoding of the information received through our telescopes 3) Observing instruments (telescopes) suited to the wide range of available electro-magnetic spectra (i.e. visible light, radio waves, x-rays, etc.) 4) Astronomical view of the seasons, tides and lunar phases 5) Origins of planetary features and diversity. The development of an analytical thought process for interpreting the features of our world will be stressed throughout. No prerequisites.

**Required Textbook:** The Cosmic Perspective, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition by J. Bennett, M. Donahue, N. Schneider, and M. Voit. Do not confuse this text with the shorter version, "The *Essential* Cosmic Perspective", by the same authors.

**Required Supplies:** Pencils, Pens, Paper, Calculator, Scantron Forms (15-question "Quizstrips" and Full Length double-sided)

- Assignments:** Assignments will be made from the questions at the end of each chapter in the book. These will be collected and scored, offering an excellent opportunity to easily boost your grade, while also increasing comprehension of the chapter's material. Failure to participate may furthermore damage your test and quiz performance. You are welcome to work in groups, but each group member must turn in their own **HAND WRITTEN** set of answers. It is expected that each team member should contribute to the determination of the answer for **EACH** question, and **INDIVIDUALLY** phrase that answer in their own style. Late submissions will not be accepted unless the student presents an excused absence for the original date due.
- Quizzes:** A multiple choice quiz will be given in class approximately weekly. Good class attendance will increase the chances of announced quiz dates. Two quizzes will be dropped from grading for the semester. With rare exceptions (e.g. prolonged medical absence), additional drops will not be granted.
- Exams:** Three major examinations will be given during the semester in addition to a comprehensive final. If a special situation exists which would cause you to miss an exam, this **MUST** be made known to me prior to the date of the test if possible. Otherwise, a makeup will be allowed in only the **MOST EXCEPTIONAL** situations, evaluated on a case-to-case basis.
- Grading Plan:** Quizzes, Homework and the Final will each count 20%, while the three semester exams together make up the remaining 40%.

**Class Rules:** All class members are expected to respect the proceedings of this course, and the learning environment of their fellow students. This principle has several practical implications, some of which are enumerated below.

- 1) Do not cheat. Violators are subject to dismissal on a 1<sup>st</sup> offence.
- 2) Regular punctual attendance is expected of all class members.
- 3) **There is to be absolutely no use of Cellular phones** in the classroom, for either voice or text communication. Parents of young children and professionals who may reasonably expect some chance of an emergency contact should silence their phones, and discreetly excuse themselves if it becomes necessary to take a call. All others should turn their phones off entirely.

**Email Guidelines:** Email communication with your instructor should be made in a professional manner. Instant-Message style notes are not acceptable in a business or academic setting. All email should employ the standard features listed following.

- 1) Include your name, course number and class meeting time.
- 2) Include a proper salutation, body and closing.
- 3) Make a reasonable attempt at correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation and spelling.

### **University Policies**

The following are university-wide official policies which apply to this course. Additional details are available at the web address: <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

**Academic Dishonesty:** Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom.

**Classroom Rules of Conduct:** Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students are to treat faculty and students with respect. Students are to turn off all cell phones while in the classroom. Under no circumstances are cell phones or any electronic devices to be used or seen during times of examination. Students may tape record lectures provided they do not disturb other students in the process.

**Student Absences on Religious Holy Days:** Students are allowed to miss class and other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Students remain responsible for all work.

**Students with Disabilities Policy:** It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center.

**Visitors in the Classroom:** Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.