

## MEMO TO UNDERGRADUATE ASTRONOMY STUDENTS REGARDING ASTRONOMY COURSES

Welcome to this undergraduate Astronomy course. To prevent misunderstandings, we wish to clarify the ground rules set by the Astronomy Department for our undergraduate courses. These courses operate with mutual responsibilities between faculty and students.

For each of our classes:

- A written syllabus will be handed out at the first class meeting containing a description of the course, the material that the course will cover, all requirements in the course, and an explanation of what fraction of your grade is derived from each activity. These requirements or percentages are not to be changed during the semester.
- Special note for AST 301 students: This course, although designed for non-science majors, is nevertheless a **science** course. You will be exposed to scientific reasoning in the course, which you will be required to use on tests and in solving homework problems. Only simple mathematics is used; the level varies from instructor to instructor.
- Students in the College of Natural Sciences should note that AST 301 and AST 309 courses do NOT count towards fulfilling your degree requirements. We encourage you to consider our AST 307 course for science majors instead.
- There will normally be help available outside of class at least once a week (more often in the larger sections); if you have too much trouble understanding the material, or other problems arise, such as illness, *please let your instructor know as soon as possible*. Don't let the problem continue until the end of the semester, for it may then be too late to find a solution.
- You should not need to pay for any outside tutoring. The outside help that is provided with the courses should be adequate. If you need extra help, please see your instructor first. He or she can probably arrange help at no cost. Should you still feel the need of a tutor, please remember that astronomy graduate students cannot tutor for money without special permission from their chair and college dean. The Learning Skills Center maintains a list of tutors, and runs sessions on general study techniques and math review. Many of their services are free. Go to JES A332A or phone 471-3614.

Note that our undergraduate courses are taught by faculty members, who are also professional astronomers. In addition to their obligations to you and the other students in

this and other courses, members of our faculty have responsibilities to their graduate students and to remain professionally competent through individual research. As a consequence, your instructor may occasionally need to be away conducting research or attending a scientific meeting. Usually a faculty member will conduct the class when the regular instructor is absent.

We expect, and usually find, honesty in our students. Your instructor will explain any special rules, such as the encouragement of genuine collaboration (not copying!) among students on homework assignments and projects. However, submission of another's work or cheating on examinations are automatically grounds for failure in the course and reporting to the Dean of Students.

If you have any complaints or problems, please try to work out a solution with your instructor first. If you and your instructor cannot find an amicable solution, then please see either:

Craig Wheeler  
Astronomy Undergraduate Studies Chair  
(Office: RLM 17.230, Phone: 471-1402)  
or  
Dan Jaffe  
Chair of the Astronomy Department  
(Office: RLM 15.218, Phone: 471-3302)

If you are in crisis and need immediate assistance, please telephone the Office of the Dean of Students Emergency Staff: 512-471-5017. They can help you with a number of services, and may be able to contact your professors for you if you have an emergency that prevents you from attending class. (<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>)

For general questions about undergraduate courses, please consult Rachel Walker in the Astronomy Student Office, RLM 15.202AA, [rachelw@astro.as.utexas.edu](mailto:rachelw@astro.as.utexas.edu). This office handles many student matters including departmental adds at the beginning of the semester.

Finally, all students enrolled in undergraduate Astronomy courses are encouraged to attend our free Astronomy events (e.g. star parties, public lectures) and/or visit the 9-inch telescope on the roof of Painter Hall and the 16-inch one on the roof of RLM. For more information, read the flyers posted on the 4th floor of R.L. Moore Hall, call our Skywatchers' Report at 471-5007, or check the Astronomy Department webpages at <http://www.as.utexas.edu/>.

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Upon request The University of Texas at Austin provides appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-4641 TTY.