WRITING ASSIGNMENT 1: (due at the beginning of class, Thurs., Oct. 18)

1. Obtain and read the two assigned articles: “Galactic Archeologist,” from the Johns Hopkins College of Arts & Sciences newsletter (Fall 2001), and “Celebrating the Galactic Millenium,” from ASTRONOMY magazine (November 2001). These articles are on the evidence for a past major merger of the Milky Way with another galaxy, and on the prospects for an eventual future merger of the Milky Way with Andromeda, respectively.

(Information on how to retrieve the articles will be presented in class on Oct. 11, and will be posted, possibly even linked, on the class Web site.)

2. Write an abstract for each article (on two separate pages).

What is an abstract? An abstract is a short summary or restatement of the main points of an article (or other document, e.g. book, legal document). It should be written in your own words, that is, avoid direct quotations -- use paraphrases instead. Also, an abstract states the points directly, and should never include the phrases “the author says,” “the article is about,” ... or any similar “filler” phrases. Those phrases would appear in a book review or book report, but never in an abstract.

The abstract for the “Galactic Archeologist” article should be one paragraph, about half a page; for the longer article, “Celebrating...,” it may be two paragraphs long, but no more than one page.

3. On a third page, write a short comparison and joint critique of the two articles. They do not cover exactly the same material, but the topics are somewhat related. State your opinions on these articles as pieces of writing. Specifically address the following questions:
   - Are they informative and well-written?
   - Which article do you prefer, and why? Defend your opinion through general comparisons (organization, style) and specific examples (phrases used, etc.).
   - Compare the “tone” of the two articles; are they aimed at the same audience (make similar assumptions about how much prior knowledge the reader has)?