

ASTRONOMY 104: UNDERGRADUATE ASTRONOMY SEMINAR

SYLLABUS

Unique Number	46705
Class Meetings	Mondays 12–1 RLM 15.216B
Leader	Chris Sneden Office: RLM 17.206 Office Hours: MTW 1–2, email: chris@verdi.as.utexas.edu website: http://www.as.utexas.edu/~chris/ Telephones: 471–1349 (office) 471–3000 (department) 343–0004 (home)
Textbook	none!
Tests, Homework	none!
Report Topic	“Who is this program member? What does he/she do?”
Report Due Dates	interviewee name, November 2 completed report, November 30

Introduction

This purpose of this course is to introduce you to our department, to bring you together with fellow astronomy majors, and those in other majors who are keen on astronomy. We hope to discuss present and future pathways to success in and around astronomy, and to share with you some of the exciting instrumental, observational, and theoretical research of our department. The description of Astronomy 104 given in the Undergraduate Catalog is very clear: *Designed for astronomy majors. Discussions about current astronomical research, with different topics emphasized each semester. May be repeated twice for credit when the topics vary. Offered on the pass/fail basis only.* Let’s expand on these statements.

Offered on a pass/fail basis only. We want you to enjoy this one credit-hour course; the real academic challenges for you will come in other courses (go study your math & physics!). Therefore it is *EASY* to do well here; show up for class, participate, and write one simple two-page-limit paper on your contact with an astronomy program member. Your grade will

be based on your attendance and your essay. The attendance part is simple: miss no more than two (2) class meetings beginning with the September 14 class. A sign-in sheet will be passed around each class to verify your attendance. The paper is nearly as painless: I ask you to find an astronomy program member of some flavor (faculty member, post-doctoral fellow, research scientist, graduate student, education specialist, engineer, etc.), read some thing that they have written (research paper, equipment design report, StarDate script collection, etc.), talk with that person until you understand their document, and write a no-more-than-two page essay on that person and your interpretation of their work. One restriction: each of you needs to find a different person to interview.

May be repeated twice for credit when the topics vary. Yes indeed; our general theme this fall will be: “Who am I, How Did I Get Here, and Why Does It Make Sense to be at UT?” This somewhat silly title covers my desire for you to be exposed to the quite varied types of people who end up as UT astronomy program members, and their work here. We welcome those of you from past years who have signed up for this course again. Please do note the two-credit limit for the course repetition.

This course is designed for astronomy majors. Anyone is welcome, no matter what your chosen major is. However, our discussions will assume that astronomy is of much interest to you, and that you are curious about the various aspects of astronomical research. But not to worry: we do understand that most of you are just beginning your academic exploration of astronomy, and the discussions will not assume graduate-student knowledge of the field.

Preliminary Course Schedule

Here we list the class meeting dates and those activities that have been scheduled so far. Please take this as subject to change, as we juggle the schedules of the class guests.

DATE	SPEAKER	TOPIC [<i>or general area of interest</i>]
Aug 31	Chris Sneden	Introduction to our program
Sep 07	(LABOR DAY)	
Sep 14	Chris Sneden	star clusters, abundances, halo stars
Sep 21	Emily McLinden	distant galaxies, star clusters
Sep 28	Mike/Barbara	planet searches, hot compact stars
Oct 05	Caitlin Casey	distant galaxy formation, surveyors
Oct 12	Anita Cochran	McDonald Observatory
Oct 19	Keely Finkelstein	galaxy observations; education
Oct 26	Harriet Dinerstein	planetary nebulae, chemical compositions
Nov 02	Volker Bromm	early universe, first stars
Nov 09	Karl Gehhardt	HETDEX, distant galaxies
Nov 16	Paul Shapiro	theory of early universe, galaxy formation
Nov 23	Niall Gaffney	scientific large data exploration
Nov 30	Pawan Kumar	gamma-ray bursts, asteroseismology, UTeach