

PHYS 1062, Section 001: Stars and the Universe with Laboratory Summer 2026 5W2 Syllabus

Meet your instructor!



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Office hours: M/W 6:00 PM-7:00 PM, ENV 290 or
by appointment (in person or on Zoom/Teams)

Welcome to PHYS 1062: Stars and the Universe! I'm incredibly excited that you've decided to take this class, and I hope that by the end of the semester you will have developed an appreciation for (if not a genuine interest in) astronomy. I'm a current third year Ph.D. student in the Department of Physics here at UNT, and I research quasars – that is, supermassive black holes in other galaxies – with Dr. Ohad Shemmer. I also have a genuine interest in pedagogy and making STEM content accessible for everyone, regardless of their field of study. I look forward to working with you this semester, and please don't hesitate to reach out to me if you need anything!

Key Course Information

Lecture Meeting Times: M/T/W/Th 7:00 PM – 8:50 PM

Location: ENV 110

Lab Meeting Times: Self-scheduled

Location: Lab dependent (more information on Canvas and in the lab syllabus)

1. Course Description, Structure, and Objectives

This is an introductory astronomy course offered by the UNT Department of Physics, designed for both physics majors and non-majors. During the first third of the course, we will cover a brief history of astronomy, astronomical units of measurement, and celestial motions. In the second third of the course, we will move on to studying electromagnetic radiation and light, gravity, telescopes and optical systems, stellar life cycles and evolution, and compact objects like black holes. Finally, in the final third of the course, we will discuss galaxies and galaxy evolution, introductory cosmology, the expansion of the Universe, and whether life could ever exist elsewhere.

Course Objectives

This course is a part of the Life and physical sciences core. Courses in this category focus on describing, explaining and predicting natural phenomena using the scientific method. Courses involve the understanding of interactions among natural phenomena and the implications of scientific principles on the physical world and on human experiences by fostering skills associated with the four core objectives:

- *Critical Thinking Skills*, including creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information
- *Communication Skills*, including effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication
- *Empirical and Quantitative Skills*, including the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions
- *Teamwork*, including the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal

Course Structure

This is an “in person” course which requires in-class participation on the part of the student during scheduled class periods. This course also has a required laboratory section. **Please see the lab syllabus for further details.**

This course does also have several required digital components. In order to fully participate in the class, students will need to have reliable Internet access and a device with which to view the e-textbook and reference content on the Canvas Learning Management System course page.

2. Required Materials

Because I am also a student, I understand from personal experience how expensive college can be. Therefore, the majority of the content for the course is free and open access, save for the Astronomy Lecture-Tutorials workbook listed below.

Textbook and Workbook

The primary textbook we will be using for this course is Astronomy, 2nd Edition by OpenStax. It is available **for free** on the OpenStax website here:

<https://openstax.org/details/books/astronomy-2e>

Additional details about this textbook, as well as the workbook required for the course, are below.

Book Title	Author(s)	Publisher	ISBN #
Astronomy, 2 nd Edition	Andrew Fraknoi, David Morrison, and Sidney Wolff	OpenStax	978-1-711470-57-3 (full color)
			978-1-711470-56-6 (black and white)
			978-1-951693-50-3 (digital PDF)
Lecture-Tutorials for Introductory Astronomy, 4 th Edition	Ed Prather, Gina Brissenden, Colin S. Wallace, and Jeffery P. Adams	Pearson	978-0-137619-64-1 (e-textbook) 978-0-135807-02-6 (paperback)

Both books are required for this course. **You do not need a physical copy of the OpenStax textbook, which is free in e-book format**, but you may purchase one if you desire. Please ensure that you have the Lecture-Tutorials book in either print or e-book form (specifically the 4th edition!) because we will be using this workbook in class and for homework assignments.

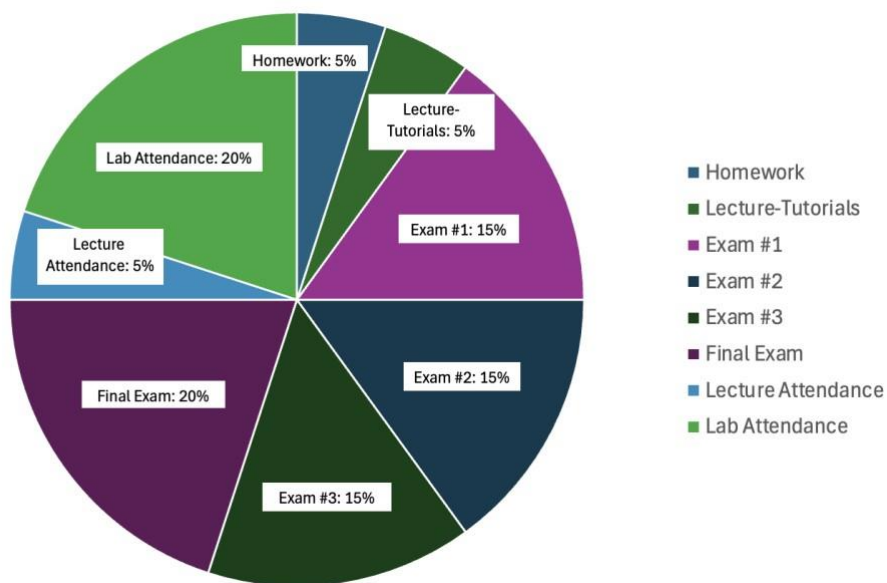
Additional Recommended Materials

- A scientific calculator, such as a TI-30X, available at most school supply retailers for ~\$15
- A notebook, binder, laptop, tablet, or other means of taking notes during class

3. Grading, Assessments, and Attendance Policy

Work Assessment

For the lecture portion of the course, your grade will be broken down as follows:



Assessment	Percent of Total Grade
Lab Attendance	20%
Lecture Attendance	5%
Homework	5%
Lecture-Tutorials	5%
Exam #1	15%
Exam #2	15%
Exam #3	15%
Final Exam	20%
Total	100%

Please see the lab syllabus for further information about lab grading.

Your final letter grade will be determined by the total percentage of the course you complete. Per UNT's grading policy, I have listed the necessary percentages for each letter grade below. I will not automatically "bump" your grade up to the next letter grade if you are close to the threshold, but I may offer an extra credit opportunity or two if you feel as though you'd like to earn a few additional percentage points.

Letter Grade	Percent Range
A	90.0% - 100.0%
B	80.0% - 89.9%
C	70.0% - 79.9%
D	60.0% - 69.9%
F	< 60.0%

Homework is due on Canvas by 11:59:59 PM on the posted deadline. You are also welcome to print out the homework and turn in a hard copy, but keep in mind that you will have to do so by class time on the day the assignment is due. I will make every effort to remind you when you have a due date coming up, but you are responsible for keeping up with the course schedule as it is listed on Canvas and at the end of this syllabus.

Exam Policies

As a student, I have mixed feelings about exams. On one hand, they can be a useful metric to gauge a student's progress and mastery of material. On the other, they can be needlessly stressful, especially if you're anything like me and tend not to perform well academically under duress. Therefore, while we will have **three midterm exams** (each worth 15% of your course grade) **and a final exam** (worth 20% of your course grade) during the semester, I want to offer you the opportunity to correct your exams after receiving feedback, as it can be a helpful learning opportunity. Making exam corrections is optional, but if you choose to do so, **you will receive up to 50% credit (half of your missed points) back for any questions you successfully correct.** Exam corrections will be due at the start of the next class period after I hand back your exams. Please either submit **your hand-written corrections** on Canvas or turn in a hard copy to me directly. As with regular exams, you must show all of your work to receive credit for your answers.

If you need to reschedule an exam, please come talk to me and we can make arrangements for you to take it at a different time.

Late Work and Missed Classes

By rule, I will not offer extensions on assignments, but because I want to maintain some flexibility should you encounter any difficulties turning something in on time, **I am willing to accept late work up to two days (48 hrs) after an assignment deadline. After that 48 hour period, you will not be able to earn points for that assignment unless you have discussed the situation with me beforehand.**

With that in mind, I know that we're all only human, and sometimes unforeseen events occur that make it difficult to complete work on time or study for an exam. While I *do* expect you make a reasonable effort to turn in your work on time and attend all of the lecture classes and labs, I am happy to make accommodations if an extraordinary situation should arise. If you encounter something that makes it difficult for you to complete any work for this class, please email me and we can chat about it.

There are many valid reasons why someone might have to miss a class or an assignment, including (but not limited to) interviewing for a job, presenting at a conference, observing a religious commitment, participating on a sports team or performance group, attending a funeral, or recovering from an illness. **Some absences are covered by the University's**

approved absence policy. If you have to miss class because of a reason that is excused by the University, then I highly encourage that you request a University Approved Absence (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-039>). The University will excuse absences for religious observances, significant personal and family emergencies, long term and ongoing health issues (both mental and physical), and participation in official University events (e.g., playing with one of UNT's sports teams or music groups). Getting this documentation helps you in this class and can help you in other classes, too!

Due to the abbreviated length of the summer semesters, **I am willing to allow up to two unexcused absences before missing class will begin to affect your course grade.** If you are unclear on the difference between an excused and unexcused absence, again, please let me know and we can discuss it.

4. Other Policies and Frequently Asked Questions

Disability Accommodations

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disabilityaccess) website (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disabilityaccess>). You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

If you have any physical access needs and will require accessible transport to and from observatory labs, please let me and your lab instructor (whose email is on the lab syllabus) know ASAP so that I can coordinate with the lab instructor(s).

Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment

I value the perspective of every student in my class, as you all bring different backgrounds, life experiences, and opinions shaped by your personal and educational histories. I encourage you to think critically and debate with each other; even minor disagreements are fine, as long as you remain respectful of one another. Personal attacks on other students are unacceptable. By working together, we can create a learning environment that is

welcoming to and inclusive of everyone. If you ever feel as though this is not the case or you wish to discuss something in particular, please email me and I'll be happy to set up a time to meet with you.

Generative AI Policy

I am aware that many students use generative AI to enhance their own learning and to help meet their individual learning needs. However, there are both productive and unproductive ways of using every tool available to you, and that includes AI. I have seen many cases firsthand where a given generative AI tool has been **very incorrect** when being asked about factual information. While I encourage students to learn in the way that best fits their needs, please maintain a critical eye and, if nothing else, ask the tool you are using to cite the sources it is pulling information from.

As far as *using* generative AI in the course, **you may not use generative AI to assist you in completing homework assignments, lab work, or Lecture-Tutorials.** It should also go without saying, but **I expect that any written work you submit during this class (both for lecture and lab) is your own original work** and has not been produced using AI. You are welcome to use AI tools such as Grammarly to help you check your work for grammar, clarity, and other minor edits, but you must submit work that is your own.

In accordance with the UNT Honor Code, unauthorized use of GenAI tools is prohibited. Using GenAI content without proper credit or substituting your own work with GenAI undermines the learning process and violates academic integrity. If you're unsure whether something is allowed, please seek clarification. If I have reason to suspect that you have violated this policy, I will request a meeting with you, after which I will determine whether further action is necessary.

Please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy (PDF) for further details:

<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-049>

Grading and Syllabus Changes

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus, including assignment due dates and exam dates. If implemented, any changes will be announced as early as possible.