

ASTR 170B1: The Physical Universe

Fall 2021 – Section 001

MWF 10-10:50 am

Dr. Don McCarthy

Syllabus

Let's Work Together!

I. Contact and User Information

II. Course Overview

Expected learning outcomes
COVID mitigations
Expectations
Email, software requirements
International Students

III. “In-person” Classes

Times, locations, attendance, behavior
Recordings

IV. Free, Online Textbook

V. Simple Guidelines to Earn Your “A”

VI. Academic Requirements

Daily “Doodle Sheets”
Daily homework; policies about Academic Integrity and teamwork
Exams
Daily Skills

VII. Getting Help

Office hours & Study Session
Tutoring, preceptors
Preparing for exams
Academic advising
Life challenges
Physical & mental health challenges
Food insecurity

VIII. Grading

Course grade
“TBD” grades and *Resurrection Points*
Extra-credit
Honors credit
Incomplete and Withdrawal grades

IX. Policies: This Course and University

General
Academic Integrity, teamwork
Attendance, absences, holidays, behavior,
Special accommodations, nondiscrimination, anti-harassment

X. Subject to Change Statement

Let's Work Together!

We remain in the midst of a global pandemic right now, and we are all affected in different ways. So, if you tell me, you're having difficulty of any sort, I will easily accept that and find a way to move forward. Similarly, I hope you will be as kind to me. Here's what I can offer in this course:

1. You are never required to provide personal information about your health, etc.
2. You are always welcome to talk with me about anything you're going through.
3. If I can't help directly, I will do my best to find someone who can.
4. If you need more help, must miss class, or need more time, just ask, and we'll work together.

I. Contact and User Information

Professor Dr. Don McCarthy
Email: mccarhd@email.arizona.edu
Office: Steward Observatory, room N404. Ride the main elevator up to the fourth floor and look straight ahead.
Office hours: Wed. (2-4 pm) and by appointment
Thurs. (2-4 pm) in Union Bookstore 3rd-floor conference room (304A)
Availability: **any** time. Please (!) do not hesitate to contact me.

Graduate Teaching Assistant Mr. Noah Rivera

Email: nisrivera@email.arizona.edu
Office: Trailer (room T106) immediately north of Steward's main courtyard
Office hours: to be determined
Availability: to be determined

Links, Settings, Times

To receive text reminders (Remind.com): Send @astr17 to 81010 or to (520) 441-3714
Class Web site: <https://d2l.arizona.edu/>
Free online textbook: <https://openstax.org/details/astronomy>
Lecture recordings: available on our [D2L](#) site under the "Content" tab
Study Session: Thurs. (2-4 pm) in Union Bookstore 3rd-floor conference room, 304A
Nighttime observing: on announced Thursdays between sunset and ~8:30 pm

II. Course Overview

ASTR 170B1 is a three-credit, "in-person" general education course at the Tier I level intended for students with no university-level background in science and mathematics. Our course focuses on understanding (not memorizing) the physical processes at work in the Universe and on building an awareness of how science influences daily life. We will also use the subject of astronomy to improve skills in communication (written and oral), in numbers, in problem solving, and in creative thinking.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

1. Demonstrate the ability to meaningfully analyze, apply and integrate the principal findings, common applications, current problems, fundamental techniques, and underlying theory of the astronomy discipline.
2. Employ discipline skills related to the observational techniques, instrumentation, computational methods, and software applications used to investigate modern astrophysical phenomena and problems.
3. Develop proficiency with communicating, translating, and interpreting fundamental astronomical concepts and research results in oral and/or written formats.

4. Conduct guided research and/or develop mastery-knowledge of a specific area of the discipline of astronomy.

5. Participate in the scholarly, ethical, and discipline specific practices of the field at an emergent level.

Compliance with COVID-19 mitigation guidelines: Our health and safety remain the University's highest priority. To protect the health of everyone in this class, students are required to follow the University guidelines on COVID-19 mitigation. Please visit www.covid19.arizona.edu.

Expectations: Each student is expected to come prepared for every scheduled class. Students should invest ~3 hours per credit unit outside of class on homework assignments (i.e., ~9 hours per week), preferably starting each assignment well ahead of the due date. During class, students should collaborate actively in problem-solving discussions with their peers. Students are always expected to present logically organized, legible solutions and to write clear sentences and paragraphs using good English grammar.

Email: We will use our official University email addresses for communications. When you email the instructors, be sure to identify yourself by name and to use an appropriate subject line including the term "ASTR 170-001." For example: "ASTR 170-001: Question about lecture". Otherwise, your messages may not be read, and a response will be delayed.

Software Requirements: Ability to download and run the following software: Web browser, Microsoft Word, PDF file reader, "Stellarium," and the University's D2L course management system. FREE software is available to students via this link: <https://softwarelicense.arizona.edu/students>

International Students: This course aims to help you to improve proficiency in English writing and speech. You are strongly encouraged to work with American students and the leaders of this course, both during, and outside of, class. Also, the Center for English as a Second Language ([CESL](#)) provides opportunities, both day and night, to help you improve your writing skills, oral communication, and grammar. They also offer tutoring opportunities. The *Daily Skills* on our Web site will also help you improve.

III. "In-person" Classes

Meeting Times and Location: MWF from 10-10:50 am in the auditorium (N210) of Steward Observatory. Classes will begin promptly at 10 am. If you arrive late, please enter quietly from any of the three entrances but still feel free to come up front for a good seat. Food and drinks are not allowed.

Attendance: Our class has an "in-person" modality, so attendance is required in room N210. However, due to the ongoing pandemic

- If you feel sick, or may have been in contact with someone who is infectious, stay home. Except for seeking medical care, avoid contact with others and do not travel.
- Notify Dr. McCarthy if you will be missing a course meeting or an assignment deadline.
- Non-attendance for any reason does **not** guarantee an automatic extension of due date or rescheduling of examinations/assessments.
 - Please communicate and coordinate any request directly with your instructor.
- If you must miss the equivalent of more than one week of class, you should contact the Dean of Students Office DOS-deanofstudents@email.arizona.edu to share documentation about the challenges you are facing.
- Voluntary, free, and convenient [COVID-19 testing](#) is available for students on Main Campus.

- If you test positive for COVID-19, and you are participating in on-campus activities, you must report your results to Campus Health. To learn more about the process for reporting a positive test, visit the [Case Notification Protocol](#).
- COVID-19 vaccine is available for all students at [Campus Health](#).
- Visit the [UArizona COVID-19](#) page for regular updates.

Recordings (“lecture capture”) of each class can be accessed from our [D2L](#) site under the Content tab. These recordings consist of audio plus video of all content during the class session in Panopto format. Students may not modify content or re-use content for any purpose other than personal educational reasons. All recordings are subject to government and university regulations. Therefore, students accessing unauthorized recordings or using them in a manner inconsistent with [UArizona values](#) and educational policies ([Code of Academic Integrity](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#)) are also subject to civil action.

IV. Online textbook

A free, online textbook is used in this class. “*Astronomy*” is available online at the link below and also in Web view and PDF format. You can also purchase a print version via [OpenStax on Amazon.com](#). The Web view is recommended, and the responsive design works seamlessly on any device. If you buy via Amazon, make sure you use the following link so you get the official OpenStax print version. (Simple printouts sold by third parties on Amazon are not verifiable and not as high-quality.)

<https://openstax.org/details/astronomy>

V. Simple Guidelines to Earn Your “A”

To be most successful, each student should set a personal goal of achievement and ...

1. Read directions carefully.
2. Think about material instead of just memorizing it.
3. Attend every class.
4. Start homework early by reading each assignment as soon as it is posted. Your mind will then be prepared to pickup on hints and examples presented in class.
5. Apply each of the *Daily Skills* (numerical and communication) as they accumulate.
6. Proofread your work carefully to avoid careless errors.
7. Ask questions!
8. Seek help whenever needed by asking questions in class, attending office hours and study sessions, or by making an appointment.

VI. Academic Requirements

Daily “Doodle Sheets” are required worksheets to be used during each class and uploaded afterwards. Your written responses will help you assess your understanding, enable you to participate in team problem solving, and help you maintain good notes to prepare for exams. They also provide an opportunity to give feedback to the instructor and are a major part of your participation grade.

Printed Doodle Sheets will be available at the start of each class. During class, you will answer the questions we cover during class. After class (until 11 pm that night), you should upload your completed sheet (cell phone image or scanned copy) to the Assignments tab on D2L.

Daily Homework assignments are a major required component (25%) of this course and will emphasize skills in numeracy and writing. These assignments will reinforce and apply concepts and will improve your capabilities with numbers and writing throughout the semester using the “*Daily Skills*.” Typically, the daily homework will prepare you to understand the next day’s lecture material and to collaborate with other students on related activities during class.

You must adhere to the policies about Academic Integrity and about Teamwork in Section IX!

The following **rules** apply to all homework assignments:

1. All homework must be typewritten. Math symbols and calculations may be handwritten but must be legible.
2. Homework is due at the start of class on the specified date. If an assignment is turned in late, a **late-penalty** of 15% will be assessed for each class period that has elapsed since the due date. Assignments will not be accepted after two subsequent classes.
3. You must always **SHOW** or explain **HOW** you reached a solution by recording intermediate steps in a calculation or describing your solution logically in words. Simply listing an answer is not acceptable and will not receive any points.
4. Some assignments require your opinion to be clearly stated, so your grade will be determined more by your reasoning and writing abilities than by the exact answer.
5. **Teamwork Policy:** You may **START** an assignment in a team. However, after deciding **HOW** to approach a problem, **you must then make all your own measurements, graphs, and tables and always use your own wording to interpret and express conclusions.** Homework solutions that appear identical are a violation of the Code of Academic Integrity and will receive a grade of zero plus potential expulsion from the course.

Exams: There will be two online exams during the normal class period (Sep. 24; Oct. 22) and a final exam (Dec. 10, 10:30 am to 12:30 pm). The two-hour final exam will emphasize the final third of the course. The last two exams will provide "*Resurrection Points*" for students to earn back points lost in previous exams. There will be **NO** makeup exams except in cases of extreme difficulty such as a proven illness.

All exams feature a format allowing you to continue answering a question until you answer correctly. The number of points awarded decreases with each attempt. Typically, this format improves your grade by 10%, i.e., a full letter-grade. Most questions will be multiple-choice, but each exam will include at least one short-answer essay question.

You are encouraged to use a handwritten, double-sided page of notes ("crib sheet") during each exam. Exams will emphasize understanding instead of memorization.

Here is a link to the University's Final Exam Schedule and regulations:

<https://registrar.arizona.edu/faculty-staff-resources/room-course-scheduling/schedule-classes/final-exams/final-exams-fall-2021>

Daily Skills: Students are expected to write clear sentences and paragraphs using good English grammar for all assignments and exams. Each class period is associated with a suggested basic "*Daily Skill*" in communication and numerical thinking. Dr. McCarthy recommends that you read these skills regularly and put them into practice throughout our course. Both sets of *Daily Skills* are located in the Content section of our Web site.

VII. Getting Help

Office Hours: See Section I for details. Feel free to suggest other times and make appointments!

Study Session: Dr. McCarthy will lead an optional homework study session each Thursday (2-4 pm) Union Bookstore 3rd-floor conference room, 304A. Students are welcome to attend and work with each other and with the instructors. To receive help from the instructors on any problem, you must

already have attempted that problem. Students may be asked to help each other and to lead discussion.

Tutoring: The "[Think Tank](#)" offers tutoring for astronomy. Location and time will be announced.

Preceptors are highly motivated students who wish to help teach their peers under the supervision of the course instructor. Often students learn best from other students and preceptors can really "make a difference." As a preceptor in this course you would take an active role in the teaching process by working directly with Dr. McCarthy. You would also receive University credit by enrolling in LASC 197a (<http://teachingteams.arizona.edu/?q=preceptor/howto>) and completing several workshop sessions with other University preceptors to learn and practice skills in effective teaching. If you would like to become a preceptor, please contact Dr. McCarthy and also learn about the Teaching Teams Program (<http://teachingteams.arizona.edu/>).

Preparing for Exams: Interactive review sessions will be held one or more days ahead of each exam to provide an opportunity to ask questions and to practice concepts presented during the course. A study guide and sample questions will be posted to help you prepare for exams.

Academic Advising: If you have questions about your academic progress this semester, please reach out to your academic advisor (<https://advising.arizona.edu/advisors/major>). Contact the Advising Resource Center (<https://advising.arizona.edu/>) for all general advising questions and referral assistance. Call 520-626-8667 or email to advising@arizona.edu

Life Challenges: If you are experiencing unexpected barriers to your success in your courses, please note the Dean of Students Office is a central support resource for all students and may be helpful. The [Dean of Students Office](#) can be reached at 520-621-2057 or DOS-deanofstudents@email.arizona.edu.

Physical and Mental-health Challenges: If you are facing physical or mental health challenges this semester, please note that [Campus Health](#) provides quality medical and mental health care. For medical appointments, call (520-621-9202. For After Hours care, call (520) 570-7898. For the [Counseling & Psych Services](#) (CAPS) 24/7 hotline, call (520) 621-3334.

Food Insecurity: Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. In addition, the University of Arizona [Campus Pantry](#) is open for students to receive supplemental groceries at no cost. Please see their Web site (campuspantry.arizona.edu) for open times.

VIII. Grading

All course materials are due at the end of our last class (Dec. 8).

Course Grade: Students have two options for calculating their semester grade if you consult with Dr. McCarthy by September 29. Grades will be derived from the following categories with the indicated percentage weights.

OPTION #1 (Default):

Daily homework (45%)

Participation (see below) (25%)

Three exams, including the final exam (10% each)

OPTION #2 (Negotiable by September 29):

You may negotiate with Dr. McCarthy the percentages of homework and exams.

“Participation” includes attending class regularly, completing assignments, Doodle Sheets, asking relevant questions during class, working collaboratively during classes, seeking help during study/review sessions and office hours, helping to lead discussions, etc.

Final course grades will be assigned as follows: A (90-100%); B (80-89%); C (70-79%); D (60-69%); E (<60%). Borderline grades, such as B+ ($\geq 87\%$), will be rounded to the next letter grade only if the student completed extra-credit work as discussed below.

“TBD” Grades: Sometimes students misread a question, or get started in the wrong direction, or make a simple mistake that leads to the wrong conclusion. Such assignments will receive a “TBD” grade (i.e., to be determined), allowing you to get back on track to earn a 100% score if you meet with Dr. McCarthy within one week to discuss your work and arrange to improve it.

“Resurrection Points”: Dr. McCarthy encourages long-term learning throughout the semester. Even if you perform poorly on Exam #1 or #2, you can “resurrect” points lost by demonstrating correct understanding of the same concepts on the next exam(s). **Therefore, you can earn a 100% grade on the exam component of this course until the very last moment of the semester.**

Extra-credit: Excellent work on two extra-credit activities can increment your semester grade by as much as one-half a letter grade. For example, a B+ (87-89%) will become an A; however, <87% will still be registered as B. No extra-credit activities will be accepted after December 9. A maximum of two extra-credit activities is allowed, but you are welcome to undertake more! Extra-credit may be obtained by participating in activities such as public lectures, observing projects, field trips, etc. A description of such opportunities is posted on the left-hand side of our class Web site.

Honors Credit: Students wishing to contract this course for Honors Credit should email Dr. McCarthy to set up an appointment to discuss the terms of the contract. Information on Honors Contracts can be found at <https://www.honors.arizona.edu/honors-contracts>.

Incomplete (I) or Withdrawal (W) Grades: Requests must be made in accordance with University policies, which are available at <https://catalog.arizona.edu/policy/grades-and-grading-system>

IX. Policies: This Course and University

General: UA Academic policies and procedures are available at <http://catalog.arizona.edu/policies>.

Student Assistance and Advocacy information is available at

<http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/student-assistance/students/student-assistance>.

Academic Integrity: Dr. McCarthy and the Department of Astronomy adhere to the University's Code of Academic Integrity. The Dean of Students' Web site below describes the Code and resources that are available to you for improving your work. Students are encouraged to share intellectual views and discuss freely the principles and applications of course materials. However, graded work/exercises must be the product of independent effort unless otherwise instructed. Such violations of the Code can be penalized by expulsion from the University and negative reports in your official records. **If you are having difficulty in this course, PLEASE just ask for help instead of sacrificing your future.**

<http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/academicintegrity>

The University Libraries have some excellent tips for avoiding plagiarism, available at <https://new.library.arizona.edu/research/citing/plagiarism>.

Selling class notes and/or other course materials to other students or to a third party for resale is not permitted without the instructor's express written consent. Violations to this and other course rules are subject to the Code of Academic Integrity and may result in course sanctions. Additionally, students who use D2L or UA e-mail to sell or buy these copyrighted materials are subject to Code of Conduct Violations for misuse of student e-mail addresses. This conduct may also constitute copyright infringement.

Teamwork Policy: You may **start** an assignment in a team. However, once you decide HOW to approach a problem, **you must then make all your own measurements and use your own wording** to interpret and express conclusions. Any assignments that appear identical will be awarded "zero" points and can lead to expulsion from the class and the University. At a minimum, such violations of the Code will lead to an Academic Integrity investigation with the Dean of Students Office.

Attendance and Absences: See also Section III above. Participating in the course and attending lectures and other course events are vital to the learning process. As such, **attendance is required** at all lectures and discussion section meetings. Students who miss class due to illness or emergency are required to bring documentation from their health-care provider or other relevant, professional third parties. Failure to submit third-party documentation will result in unexcused absences. Notify [Dr. McCarthy](#) if you will be missing an in-person or online class session.

The UA's policy concerning Class Attendance, Participation, and Administrative Drops is available at: <http://catalog.arizona.edu/policy/class-attendance-participation-and-administrative-drop>

The UA policy regarding absences for any sincerely held religious belief, observance or practice will be accommodated where reasonable:

<https://policy.arizona.edu/human-resources/religious-accommodation-policy>

Absences pre-approved by the UA Dean of Students (or Dean Designee) will be honored:
<https://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/absences>

Holidays: All holidays observed by organized religions will be honored for those students who show affiliation with that particular religion. All absences pre-approved by the Dean of Students will also be accepted. <http://www.registrar.arizona.edu/calendar-religious-holidays>

Behavior: To foster a positive learning environment, students and instructors have a shared responsibility. We want a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment where all of us feel comfortable with each other and where we can challenge ourselves to succeed. To that end, our focus is on the tasks at hand and not on extraneous activities (e.g., texting, chatting, reading a newspaper, making phone calls, Web surfing, etc.).

Dr. McCarthy promises to be respectful of all students. He expects you will do the same as stated in the Student Code of Conduct and other University guidelines concerning disruptive and threatening behavior.

<http://policy.arizona.edu/education-and-student-affairs/disruptive-behavior-instructional-setting>

The University's Threatening Behavior by Students Policy prohibits threats of physical harm to any member of the University community, including to oneself.

<https://policy.arizona.edu/education-and-student-affairs/threatening-behavior-students>

Special Accommodations: At the University of Arizona, we strive to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on disability or pregnancy, please contact the Disability Resource Center (520-621-3268, <https://drc.arizona.edu>) to establish reasonable accommodations.

Please meet with Dr. McCarthy to discuss your accommodations and how the course's requirements and activities may impact your ability to fully participate.

Nondiscrimination and Anti-harassment: Dr. McCarthy is committed to creating and maintaining an environment free of discrimination as described in the University's policy at the link posted below. Our classroom is a place where everyone is encouraged to express well-formed opinions and their reasons for those opinions. He also wants to create a tolerant and open environment where such opinions can be expressed without resorting to bullying or discrimination of others.

<http://policy.arizona.edu/human-resources/nondiscrimination-and-anti-harassment-policy>

X. Subject to Change Statement

Information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policy, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

