

AST 100: Astronomy Today

Spring 2025

M 2:00-2:53 PM, SBS N107

PREREQUISITES: None. Students who have taken any college-level astronomy classes are discouraged from taking AST 100.

INSTRUCTOR: James Lattimer, james.lattimer@stonybrook.edu, ESS 449, Office Hours MW 1:00 - 2:00; or as requested by Zoom.

GRADING: In this course, students give a single 20-minute presentation concerning a recent discovery or activity in astronomy which counts for 50% of your grade. A letter grade will be assigned. I have pre-assigned presentation dates for each enrolled student. To prevent too many talks on the same or similar topics, you have to reserve your topic in advance by emailing your request to me at least one week ahead of time (failing to reserve a topic by email less than one week in advance will result in a penalty to your presentation score). The presentation schedule is kept on this webpage, see below. It will be revised continuously as new information is received, so check frequently.

- We will meet on Jan. 26 and Feb. 3 and 10 for orientation, discussion and help with topics, and questions. The first presentations are scheduled for Feb. 17. However, any student may volunteer to give their talk early, on Feb. 10, to free up time slots later in the semester for contingencies. Persons presenting early, especially on Feb. 10, but also on February 17, will be graded more leniently since they will not have seen other presentations by that time. Students are expected to submit short summaries and critiques of their peers' presentations through Brightspace assignments. Each summary is due by Sunday midnight following a talk. Late

summaries are downgraded by 50% and not accepted more than a week late without a valid excuse. These summaries count for 30% of your grade. Each summary will be assigned a letter grade. Students will sign-in at the beginning of each class beginning Feb. 5. Attendance forms 20% of the grade. The attendance percentage will be converted to a letter grade.

The threshold scores for letter grades are as follows: A 95-100; A- 90-94; B+ 87-89; B 83-86; B- 80-82; C+ 77-79; C 73-76; C- 70-72; D+ 65-69; D 60-64; F < 60. These are threshold conversions only. Actual final scores needed to earn a certain letter grade may be lowered if warranted based on class averages. In other words if your score is 95% you would earn not less than an A, but I may set the threshold for an A to a lower score after all talks, summaries and attendances have been recorded.

In addition to my own perceptions, I will convey the peer summaries (in anonymous form) to provide feedback to speakers to help their future presentations, so be considerate and attentive.

You should prepare your presentation, which should last roughly 16- to 20-minutes, as a powerpoint or adobe acrobat pdf file which must be emailed to me at least 1 day before your talk; points will otherwise be deducted. If your talk is emailed to me even earlier, I will be able to review your presentation and offer suggestions or corrections in time for you to make modifications. Presentation slides will be posted on the course website after the presentation is delivered. Normally, you would log in on the classroom computer and access your talk for presentation, but I will bring my laptop and your emailed copy could be used as backup. Many students find using Google Drive is convenient for their presentations.

You should practice your talk and make sure it works online (including any videos). It is your responsibility to make sure your talk projects properly, and it affects your grade if it does not. Be

prepared to answer questions during and following your talk (this will not take away from your talk time).

Your grade is based, in part, on how well you keep to your 20-minute time limit, the accuracy and quality of your presentation, and your contact with the audience during your talk. If you are asked to respond to questions during your talk, you will receive additional time to compensate; plan your talk to last between 16 and 20 minutes. I will end your talk after 25 minutes elapse (NOT including questions) so there is enough time for two presentations per week. Be prepared for a few questions during and following your talk.

Grades for presentations and summaries will be posted on Brightspace.

I will be available by email and in person during posted office hours; prearranged Zoom meetings by request for other times is also possible.

PRESENTATION SCHEDULE: I arbitrarily preassigned selected dates for each presentation, which are shown below. This is now preliminary and will be revised as students add and drop the course; it will be finalized by the middle of February. I will alert you if it is necessary to change your talk date during this period. If necessary, the time scheduled for the final exam for our class period, Tuesday May 14 at 2:15PM, will be used for overflow (we will finish as soon as possible and not use the entire period, but this will depend on the number of talks).

You may switch presentation dates with another student if the two of you agree and both provide me the new information at least 2 weeks in advance. (I will need emails from both of you to confirm the change.) Topics are reserved by email, and they will be posted with the speakers' names on the schedule as soon as possible when received. Speakers' slides will also be posted following the

presentation. If you accidentally select a topic already chosen, I will alert you to change your topic. This schedule is subject to change, especially during the first few weeks, because of adds/drops, so check it regularly. I will directly inform students of any changes to their presentation dates occurring after February 15.

- **26 Jan:** Overview, review of the presentation schedule, and questions
- **3 Feb:** Overview and questions
- **10 Feb:** Two volunteers are requested for this date
- **17 Feb:** Hojun Kwak ; Ranwoo Kwon
- **24 Feb:** Chemin Kim ; Ju Yeon Lee
- **3 Mar:** Yunho Kang ; Michelle Lee
- **10 Mar:** Gabriela Graidianu ; Alex Stephen Lopez
- **24 Mar:** Sumin Choi ; Christine Meiselbach
- **31 Mar:** XIang Chen ; Kathrin Mikhaeli
- **7 Apr:** Tabitha Cavanaugh ; Jinah Park
- **14 Apr:** Joseph Caracci ; Tammy Ruan
- **21 Apr:** Kavin Bala ; Andy Servan
- **28 Apr:** Christian Akaeze ; Caitlyn Thayer
- **5 May:**