**Course Description**

Astronomy I is a course that introduces planetary astronomy. Emphasis will be placed on the planets of our solar system. This course will include: (1) a brief look at the development of the Universe, including the formation of our planetary system, and the beginnings of scientific thinking. (2) A history of astronomy from the ancient Greeks, to the renaissance, and on to the more modern astronomers of the 19th and 20th centuries. (3) The physics tools used to study the Universe and the role of light in our studies of space. (4) We will investigate the planets of our solar system. (5) We will look at other objects, comets & asteroids, that occupy our solar system as well as the space missions that are contributing to our understanding of the Universe.

**Competency with math at a level gained upon graduation from high school is expected.**

**Textbook & Materials:**

*The Cosmic Perspective* by Bennett, Donahue, Schneider, & Voit, 7th Ed.
ISBN: 9780321839558

Because astronomy is a very dynamic discipline, additional online resources will be made available through D2L to augment the text.

**Instructional Method:**

This course will be instructed entirely online via Desire2Learn ([http://d2l.sdbor.edu](http://d2l.sdbor.edu)). While this is an online class, it is not a Self-Paced or Correspondence-Like course. Each week you will be required to complete a number of tasks and assignments. Please pay careful attention to the assignment and quiz due dates in D2L.

**Expectations:**

Students are expected to read, understand, and abide by all policies and procedures outlined in this syllabus, as well as those in the CDE Online Orientation, which can be accessed on the “USD Getting Started” widget on the course homepage. The latter contains important information about the various academic, student and technical resources and services available at USD.

In terms of time commitment, the South Dakota Board of Regents (SDBOR) defines a credit hour as constituting one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction, and two hours of out of class student work. To that end, as this is a two credit-hour course, students should expect to invest around six (6) hours per week in the course.

As this an online course, and meant to be an asynchronous experience, we will not be meeting face-to-face, so the SDBOR engagement requirement will be reproduced by posting in the Discussions (discussion questions will be taken directly from the text—count on five to ten questions per week, from the Review Questions at the end of each chapter).
**IMPORTANT:** The instructor will provide regular updates during the week, so students should log into D2L to check for announcements and e-mails at least three times per week, *if not more frequently.*

Students are expected to have and maintain the appropriate technology required to complete the course. For more information about this, please see the “Technology Requirements” section—towards the end of this syllabus.

**TIP:** You can forward your D2L course mail to your preferred e-mail account (e.g. Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail, etc.).

To forward your D2L email, log into D2L. From your homepage, click on the "Notifications" link in the upper left-hand corner of the screen (it should be the third link down from the top). Click the link that says "Change your e-mail settings." The next screen will allow you to input your desired e-mail address.

**Instructor Expectations:**

The instructor will strive to provide every possible opportunity for detailed feedback and, unless otherwise stated, will respond to inquiries within one day on weekdays, or within two days on weekends. The instructor will endeavor to return feedback and suggestions, using standard rubric and grading criteria, within a reasonable amount of time—see the “Assessments” section below for more details.

Finally, the instructor will also abide by all policies set forth in this syllabus, and those by the CDE Online Orientation, the University of South Dakota, and the SDBOR.

**Course Objectives:**

This course is designed to provide an understanding of the process scientists use to discover information about our solar system, and the planets, and other objects within it. The goals of this course coincide with System General Education GOAL #6: *Students will understand the fundamental principles of the natural sciences and apply scientific methods of inquiry to investigate the natural world.*

**The overall goals for this course are:**

- To identify and explain the basic concepts, terminology, and theories related to astronomy.
- To identify how these concepts allow astronomers to interpret new discoveries.

**Assessments:**

Because the online nature of this course, it is important for students to receive regular feedback on their progress. To that end, there will be weekly participation requirements and assessments to assure that ample feedback is provided and that ample opportunity is provided to ask questions about the various course topics. **All assignment start and end date/times are listed in D2L using US central time (Vermillion, SD time).**

**IMPORTANT:** Late work will only be accepted — and/or make-up assessments will only be made available — under conditions such as a documented illness, family emergencies, etc., and will be provided solely at the discretion of the instructor. When possible, students should notify the instructor prior to missing any assessment.

**Graded Assessments: Quizzes**

Quizzes will be due on a weekly basis. Most weeks have one quiz scheduled, but a few weeks have two quizzes. The percentage earned on all quiz points will contribute 50 points of the 500 points available in the course. To give you more flexibility, I have changed the course to make all quizzes,
except for the week #1 quiz, available to you for two weeks before they are due. Quizzes may be taken using your course notes and textbook. You may take each quiz up to five times with your quiz grade being your highest score on the five attempts. The format for quizzes will be multiple-choice. You will receive immediate feedback on your score. The number of questions on each quiz will vary. Your total class score on quizzes will be based on the total number of quiz questions you answered correctly out of the total number of quiz questions given across all quizzes. There are 260 quiz questions. Example: if you answered 229 questions correctly, you would receive 229/260*50 = 44 points from the quizzes.

**Graded Assessments: Discussions**

The discussion forum for each topic will be open for two week with the exception of the first week’s discussion which will, by necessity, be open for one week. Each week’s discussion forum will close on Sunday at 11:59 PM. No late postings for discussion questions can be accepted. In the past, discussion topics were only open for one week. I expanded this to two weeks to give you greater flexibility to complete the assignments.

Discussions will contribute 50 points of the 500 total points available in this course. Each week the instructor will post five discussion questions for each topic/chapter covered. Questions are taken directly from the textbook. You will receive one point for a response to each discussion question. There will be a total of 70 discussion questions. You only need to answer 50 discussion topics to earn all 50 discussion points. You cannot earn more than 50 discussion points by answering additional discussion questions.

Students are expected to post at least one direct response to each question. To receive credit (1) a responses should be in your own words–don’t just regurgitate the textbook, but let your answers reflect that you have read and understood the textbook; and (2) a response should be grammatically correct and complete. You don’t need to write a book report length answer to receive credit for your answer to a discussion question. The link for the Discussions List is under the Communications Tab on the Course Home Menu Bar.

**TIP:** Although I will not require it, I strongly encourage students to communicate with each other through the discussions section, in other words, read and respond to your fellow classmate’s postings in order to create a strong learning environment.

Students can expect to receive feedback on posted discussion answers within three days of the weekly “Lock” date–Sunday night (by Wednesday evening of each week at the latest). Feedback will be in the form of either (1) a class-wide email that will say good job on the discussion questions and will highlight some of your good answers, or (2) a more personal D2L message describing criticisms or praise of your answers–or otherwise elaborating on your answers.

**Graded Assessments: Midterm Exams**

There will be two midterm exams. Each midterm exam will be worth 100 points. Each midterm will be administered via D2L by a University Proctor. Each midterm will contain 50 questions that will be similar in format to the questions answered on the quizzes. You may take each midterm up to two times with your midterm grade being your highest score on the two attempts. You will receive instantaneous feedback as you finish taking the exam. (Information about the exam proctors is available in the CDE Online Orientation Guide, in the “USD Getting Started” widget on the course homepage.)
IMPORTANT: All exams will be proctored. That means you will need to go to a specific place to take your exams in the presence of a University approved proctor. If any evidence is found to the contrary, you will receive a zero for the exam and will also risk being dropped from the course.

Graded Assessments: Final Exam

The final exam will be comprehensive and worth 200 points. The final exam will be administered via D2L by a University Proctor. The final contains 100 questions—50 of which will cover material from the first two exams, and the other 50 will cover new material covered not included on the previous exam. The format will be multiple-choice and will be similar to the questions on quizzes. You may take the final exam only once. You will receive instantaneous feedback as you finish taking the final. In terms of topics, here is how the points will breakdown (associated book chapters are in parentheses):

Grading:

Course grade points will be assigned as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Type</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
<th>Grade Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Midterm I</td>
<td>100 points</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covers chapters: (1, 2, 3, and S1) with 50 questions. Each question is worth 2 points.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Midterm II</td>
<td>100 points</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covers chapters: (4, 5, 6, 7, and 8) with 50 questions. Each question is worth 2 points.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Final Exam</td>
<td>200 points</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covers chapters: (9, 10, 11, 12, and 13) with 50 questions + 25 questions from each of the two previous exams = 100 total final exam questions. Each question is worth 2 points.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Quizzes</td>
<td>50 points</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are 14 total quizzes with a combined 260 total questions. The gradebook uses a weighted average in computing your score on quizzes so that each question will be worth 0.1923 points.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Discussions</td>
<td>50 points</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are 70 total discussion topics. Each topic’s response is worth 1 point. Once you have responded to 50 discussion topics, you will have earned all 50 available discussion points.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 500 points, 100%

Your grade will be calculated using straight percentages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Points Earned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90-100%</td>
<td>450 – 500 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80-89%</td>
<td>400 – 449 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-79%</td>
<td>350 – 399 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-69%</td>
<td>300 – 349 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>up to 59%</td>
<td>Less than 300 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There will be no individual extra credit available.

IMPORTANT: You can check your current grade at any time during the semester by clicking on the Assessments ➜ Grades link. You will also be able to check the grades for any assessment, as well as feedback on those assessments, using this link as well. Please contact your instructor if you have any questions on your progress.

Course Schedule:

The chapter reading list, including dates, is in the “USD Getting Started” widget on the course homepage. Please see the “Assessments” tab on course homepage for the quiz schedule, and due dates.
**Technology Requirements:**
The University of South Dakota has established minimum technology requirements for participation in online courses. These are outlined under the “Technology Support and Requirements” section in the CDE Online Orientation document in the “USD Getting Started” widget on the course homepage.

**Desire2Learn (D2L):**
D2L will be used to facilitate all aspects of this course. In D2L, you will be able to:
- Communicate with your classmates in the instructor via discussions and course mail.
- Access course notes and other supplementary course materials.
- Participate in virtual office hours.
- View and complete self-assessment quizzes and exams.
- Access all required course materials.
- Access your course progress and grades.

To access D2L, please visit the following URL:

**Student Resources:**
The University of South Dakota provides a number of useful services to students:

**CDE Online Orientation Guide**
The CDE Online Orientation Guide (see link in the “USD Getting Started” widget on the course homepage) contains very important information related to services provided by the University of South Dakota as well as the University policies. In it, you will find such information as:
- Academics support services such as the library, writing center, proctor and testing information, book purchasing, etc.
- Student support services such as advising and enrollment information, financial aid, student life, counseling, etc.
- Technology support services like technology requirements, ITS Help Desk contact information, discounts on computers and software, etc.

**USD Portal**
The USD Portal is a one-stop shop for a majority of the services offered to any student taking a USD course–like this course. You can log into uPortal on the D2L course homepage, in the “USD Resources” widget. The following are also in this widget:
- WebAdvisor
- I.D. Weeks Library

**The USD Writing Center:**
The USD Writing Center can be found under the “Academics” tab in the portal (or on the “USD Resources” widget). It was established to provide writing assistance to students in order to help them become better writers. It is available on campus during regular business hours, and online in the evenings.
**Academic Integrity:**

The University of South Dakota considers plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty inimical to the objectives of higher education. The University supports the imposition of penalties on students who have been adjudicated to have engaged in academic dishonesty, as defined in the “Conduct” section of the University of South Dakota Student Handbook, and South Dakota Board of Regents policy 2-33 [www.sdbor.edu/policy/Documents/2-33.pdf](http://www.sdbor.edu/policy/Documents/2-33.pdf).

No credit can be given for a dishonest assignment. A student found to have engaged in any form of academic dishonesty may, at the discretion of the instructor, be:

- a) Given a zero for the assignment
- b) Allowed to rewrite and submit the assignment for credit
- c) Assigned a reduced grade for the course
- d) Dropped from the course
- e) Failed in the course

**Freedom in Learning:**

Under Board of Regents and University policy student academic performance may be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not on opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic standards. Students should be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment in matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled. Students who believe that an academic evaluation reflects prejudiced or capricious consideration of student opinions or conduct unrelated to academic standards, should contact the Department of Music at (605) 677-5724 to initiate a review of the evaluation.

**Diversity and Inclusive Excellence:**

The University of South Dakota strives to foster a globally inclusive learning environment where opportunities are provided for diversity to be recognized and respected.

**Disability Services:**

Any student who feels s/he may need academic accommodations or access accommodations based on the impact of a documented disability should contact and register with Disability Services during the first week of class. Disability Services is the official office to assist students through the process of disability verification and coordination of appropriate and reasonable accommodations. Students currently registered with Disability Services must obtain a new accommodation memo each semester.

For information contact:

Ernetta L. Fox, Director
Disability Services
Room 119 Service Center
(605) 677-6389
[http://www.usd.edu/ds/dservices@usd.edu](http://www.usd.edu/ds/dservices@usd.edu)