ASTRONOMY 201
Our Home in the Universe
Fall 2004 – 3 credits
MWF 10:10 Space Sciences 105
http://www.astro.cornell.edu/courses/astro201

Lecturer  James Lloyd  230 Space Sci  jpl@astro.cornell.edu  255-4083
          Office Hours
          MW after class
          Th 2-3:30 or by appt

T.A.  Amelie Saintonge  516 Space Sci  amelie@astro.cornell.edu  255-6438

Office Hours
MW after class
Th 2-3:30 or by appt

Course Description

A general discussion of our relation to the physical universe and a survey of the fundamental issues of modern astrophysics. Three themes will be covered over the course of the semester: (1) the basic properties of our universe and how we come to know about it, (2) an up to date description of topics in modern cosmology and astrophysics, and (3) an excursion into the exciting and exotic: exploding stars, black holes, space travel. The course is designed for non-scientists who are intrigued about astronomy, cosmology and how the universe works and who like to write.

Textbook

The textbook is ”Discovering the Cosmos” by Robert C. Bless. There will be regular reading assignments from the text.

Writing Assignments (50%)

This course is being taught under the John S. Knight Writing in the Majors Program. Most assignments will be in the form of writing short papers or essays. The emphasis will be on verbal, not mathematical, description of scientific subjects. NOTE: this does not mean non-quantitative, only that the language you use need not be mathematics. No formal writing instruction will be given in class, but you are encouraged to make use of the Writing Workshop tutorial service (see http://www.arts.cornell.edu/knight_institute/). Assignments will include three papers, about 1500 words each, and a term paper of up to 3000 words. One of the short papers will be graded twice - a second time after revision. Note that this is not a freshman writing seminar and will not count as such.

Grading Policies

Late assignments are strongly discouraged. Assignments will be due on Friday in class, and late assignments will be penalized. However, this penalty will be applied as a cap, not as a deduction. For example, the paper is due on Friday, but you have a pile-up of work and need extra time - you can submit the paper on Monday, but will receive a grade no higher than a B+. If your paper is graded as a B+ or lower, then there is effectively no penalty. The caps will be set as B+ on Monday, B- on Tuesday, C on Friday and D any later. This system is designed to allow for some flexibility to account for the inevitable sick days, clashes etc. It is also intended
to encourage you to cut your losses and catch up quickly if you find yourself in this situation. Exceptions will only be considered for circumstances that are substantially disruptive (more than a week of your time as a guide).

**Academic Integrity**

Appropriate representation of one's own work and intellectual work is central to an academic community. The Cornell code of academic integrity is available at: [http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html](http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html). You are encouraged to discuss your work as widely as possible, but all submitted work that is not your own must be appropriately acknowledged.

**Homework (10%)**

Reading, research, and/or thinking homework will be assigned roughly on a weekly basis. You will be expected to turn in all homework assignments. Individually, the homeworks will be graded on a all-or-nothing basis. Late homework will receive no credit. Two homeworks will be dropped without a grade penalty, however extra homeworks (including late submissions) may be considered for extra credit, particularly in cases of borderline grades. There will be no exceptions to this policy.

**Mid-Term Exam (20%)**

There will be 15 minute oral one-to-one mid-term exams in the week of 4-8 October.

**Journal (10%)**

You will be expected to compile a journal that illustrates and documents your wider experience and thinking about astronomy and what you are learning in this class. Suggestions might include: your own observations of the sun, stars and planets (there are some good suggestions of projects to try on p 59-60 of the textbook); articles from the popular press; wider research on subjects of your interest. The journal will be turned in twice: October 1 and with the term paper. Note that the journal is due before the mid-term exam, and may serve as the basis for some of the exam questions. Also be aware that past records indicate that weather does not usually permit observations of astronomical objects late in the semester, so start early!

**Participation (10%)**

This class is expected to be interactive, and active participation will be assessed. Note that visits to office hours are considered active participation (so long as the content is not administrative).

**Enrollment**

If you are not officially enrolled, do not worry. Keep coming to class and do the homework.