

Geo 207: A Guided Tour of the Solar System
Fall 2008

Syllabus

Overview:

This course examines the major bodies of our solar system, emphasizing their surface features, internal structures, and atmospheres. Topics include the origin of the solar system, occurrence of liquid water, habitability of planets, and role of impacts in planetary evolution. Terrestrial and giant planets will be studied as well as satellites, comets, and asteroids. Recent discoveries from planetary missions are emphasized. The course is aimed primarily at non-science majors.

Schedule:

MWF 10-10:50 AM
Guyot Hall, Room 10

Professor:

Thomas S. Duffy
218 Guyot Hall
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8-6769
Office Hours: By appointment – any time!

Teaching Assistants:

Susannah Dorfman
B-85 Guyot Hall
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Office Hours: TBA

Jessica Hawthorne
308A Guyot Hall
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Office Hours: TBA

Textbook:

The course textbook is:

Astronomy Today: The Solar System, vol. 1, 6th edition, by Eric Chaisson and Steve McMillan

A collection of supplementary textbooks has been placed on reserve in the Geosciences library (reserve room). 2-3 copies of the class texts will also be on reserve. These can be charged out for up to 3 hours at Fine Hall Library circulation desk.

Precepts:

There will be a weekly precept that will focus on solving problems in a detailed step-by-step fashion. It is essential that you sign up **IMMEDIATELY** for a precept, as these begin the week of September 15. Attendance at precepts is required.

Homework:

There will be six problem sets over the course of the semester. They will be assigned approximately 1 week before they are due. These are essential practice for developing quantitative reasoning skills. Homework is due in lecture on the due date, and there will be a substantial penalty (25%) for late homework. The penalty increases to 50% if turned in after the solutions are posted (but you are forbidden from consulting the solutions before completing your assignment).

The course assumes knowledge of basic geometry and algebra at the high school level. High school level physics would be helpful but is not required.

Grading:

Exam I:	20%
Exam II	20%
Final Exam	30%
Problem sets	15%
Precepts	10%
Quizzes	5%

The exams will be closed book, a sheet of formulas and physical constants will be supplied. The exams will include a mixture of quantitative problems as well as short answers, essays, multiple choice, etc. The exams (including the final) are semi-cumulative. That is, the exams do not specifically cover earlier material, but you may need to draw on such material, especially the quantitative portions of the course, for problem solving, discussion, etc.

Occasional unannounced quizzes will be given in class. These are designed to test your comprehension of reading material and lectures. The lowest 2 quiz scores will be dropped in computing the final grade. The lowest score from the precepts will also be dropped when computing the final grade.

The dates for the hour (in-class) exams are:

Wednesday, October 15, 2007
Wednesday, November 19, 2007

Getting help:

Please feel free to contact Professor Duffy following the lecture or by making an appointment via e-mail. You are strongly encouraged to come by with any questions that may arise! The Teaching Assistant for your precept section can also be a valuable resource.