Astronomy 101-01 Introduction to Astronomy

General Education Category #3 (Natural Science)

CREDITS: 3 TERM: Spring 2011 TIME: 10:00-10:50 a.m. DAYS: MWF ROOM: Trafton C124

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. James Pierce; office: TN N151; phone: 389-1114; email: jpierce@mnsu.edu;

office hours: MWF 9,12 MW 2 T 10,1 web: http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/jpierce/

TEXT: Seeds & Backman: *Horizons–Exploring the Universe, 11th edition -- Custom Version, ISBN 1424073847* (also available through the MSSA's **Maverick Textbook Reserve Program** at the Library)

CONTENT:

Modern astronomy involves much more than just looking at stars and telling stories about how the various constellations were placed in the sky. **Astronomy 101** is a broad survey of astronomy, including such topics as seasons, moon phases, eclipses, telescopes, stellar evolution, galaxies, and cosmology. We will cover most of the material in the text – all or part of chapters 1-3, 5-6, 8-15 – along with supplementary planet material available on my web site; however, the tests will be based primarily on class notes, rather than on the fine print in the book. If you want to get a good grade, you should attend every class, take legible notes, and use the text to reinforce the lecture material. You will not be expected to perform lengthy mathematical calculations (but some familiarity with numbers and simple equations will prove useful). You will be expected to learn terminology and concepts and to follow the logical progression of ideas being presented. Exam questions will be designed to measure the degree to which you have fulfilled these expectations – thinking will be required on exams.

GRADING:

Grades will be determined by a point system, with points allocated as follows:

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40 - Hour Exam #1 (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 5) ≈ 5th week
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40 - Hour Exam #2 (Chapters 6, 8, 9, 10, 11) \approx 11th week

- Final Exam (Semi-comprehensive) Tuesday, May 3, 10:15 a.m.

20 - Unannounced Quizzes

40 - { 20 - Slide Quiz (at end of term – see my web site for details)

10 - Observations (details later)

0 - Extra Credit

180 Total Points

Exams will generally be composed of multiple choice and/or matching questions. Sample exam questions may be found in *Astronomy 101 Sample Questions by Dr. Pierce*, available on my web site, along with additional study aids. Quizzes will be of the short answer variety. On both exams and quizzes you will be expected to do your own work and keep your answers to yourself. Use of calculators, cell phones, or computers, and the wearing of headphones or hats during exams are prohibited. Test results will be announced at the next class meeting.

Final letter grades will be assigned on the basis of the total point distribution and the following percentages:

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A+ 90% A 85% A- 80% B+ 75% B 70% B- 65% C+ 60% C 55% C- 50% D+ 48% D 45% D- 43% F
P 55% NC
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You should try to make a good effort in each phase of the grading system. I will keep you informed of the point distribution and your current class rank throughout the term. If at any time you would like a personal assessment of your standing in the class, feel free to stop in and ask me.

REMARKS:

Students in **Astronomy 101** seldom have any previous background or coursework in astronomy – and none is required or expected. However, by the end of the term you *will* be expected to know a significant fraction of the material presented. You will probably feel the need to ask some questions in class; please do so, as questions are an important part of the learning process. To do well in this course you will have to work at it, by reading the text, attending class, taking good notes, asking questions, using the web study aids, and studying for the exams.

Every attempt will be made to accommodate qualified students with disabilities. If you are a student with a documented disability, please see me as early in the semester as possible to discuss the necessary accommodations, and/or contact the Disability Services Office at 507-389-2825 (V) or 1-800-627-3529 (MRS/TTY). This document is available in alternative format by calling 507-389-1114 (V) or 1-800-627-3529 (MRS/TTY).