

NSCI 111: Concepts in Physics and Astronomy

Fall 2008 Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:25–10:40 in Hum 226 Frank Toffoletto

<http://www.owl.net.rice.edu/~nsci111>

The required text for the course will be "*Physics Concepts and Connections*" by Art Hobson, 4th ed. (ISBN: 0131879464). The bookstore has copies. There is a 3rd edition. inexpensive second hand copies are available and you are welcome to use it instead.

Office Hours:

My office is in Room 362 Herman Brown Hall, office hours are: Tues. and Thurs. 10:45 to noon (i.e. right after class) and Wed: 8:30 to 11:45 am. I can be reached at extension 3641 (713-348-3641) or by email at toffo@rice.edu. I also encourage you to drop by if you have any questions or issues you would like to discuss with me.

The goals of NSCI 111 are to:

1. Obtain a sufficient familiarity with the current ideas shaping major research activity in physics and astronomy to be able to readily understand and discuss popular accounts of new scientific discoveries and theories.
2. Study the ideas of a few of the historical figures in physics and astronomy in order to understand the origin of contemporary research and thought.
3. Gain an understanding of the scientific method and its practical applications.
4. Obtain an appreciation of the size and age of the universe, mankind's position within it, and the probable course of new exploration within the next decade and throughout the next century.

BUT NOT to train you to become professional physicist or astronomer.

Class time will be devoted to lectures, discussion, demonstrations, and quizzes (see below).

Expectations:

What I expect from you:

- As with any college class, plan to do 2-3 hours of work a week per credit.
- Come to class (on time please!).
- Participate in class discussions (ask questions if you don't understand).
- It is important to the read the textbook (especially before class).

What you can expect from me:

- I will try to keep the course interesting.
- Answer questions
- Respond to all reasonable requests
- Be as fair as possible

Grading:

The total grade will be out of 100 points, as summarized in the following table:

Assessment	Number	Grade each	Total
Tests	3	15	45
Papers or assignments	2	15	30
Quizzes and in-class exercises			20
Class participation and attendance			5
Total			100

The papers, exams and quizzes are to be done on the honor system. There will be no final exam. A class curve will **not** be used to assign the final grade, the passing grade will be a 60 or higher.

Quizzes will be based on the assigned reading. There will be approximately 20-25 quizzes and in-class assignments, the lowest 3 grades you get will **not** be used for the final quiz grade.

Extra Credit: There may also be the occasional extra credit assignments given throughout the semester. It is possible, and it has happened, that you could receive a final grade greater than 100.

Late policy: The late policy for the papers and tests will be 10% off for each part of the day that it is late up to a maximum of 75% off. Athletes who miss a class due to an athletic event or travel on a day when an assignment is due must turn in the assignment by 5 PM of the next class day.

Honor Code

Students are encouraged to discuss the course material freely with other students, the instructor, and the teaching assistant. Sharing of the location of resource material such as useful web sites is permitted. However, presented material must have been prepared by the individual student. If you submit assignments that were prepared by someone else and represent these as your own work, or if you give your work to someone else to submit as their own, you will be in violation of the honor code. All tests and quizzes are pledged.

ADA disability accommodations

If you have a documented disability that will impact your work in this class, please contact me to discuss your needs. Additionally, you will need to register with the Disability Support Services Office in the Ley Student Center.

