Astronomy 8210  
Fall 2018  
Syllabus

Course Logistics:

Class Time: Tuesdays from 3:30 pm to 4:45 pm (period 6)  
Room 322 in the Physics Building (the CSP Conference Room)

Instructor: Dr. Robin Shelton  
Room 306A in the Physics Building

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Content:

- This course is designed to give you practice reading, presenting, and discussing research articles about astronomy/astrophysics.
- Every student in the course will present one article during the semester. Occasionally faculty members in our department may also present articles. On the days when you don’t present an article, you will be part of the audience for other people’s presentations.
- You can chose an article of your liking from a peer reviewed journal for professional scientists. A good on-line database of articles is the Astrophysics Data System (ADS): http://adsabs.harvard.edu/abstract_service.html. An ADS search from a departmental computer should give you access to most of the relevant journals in the ADS database.
- Your presentation should be ~50 minutes long. This leaves time for questions and answers during and after your talk.
- Given the class enrollment, we will only need to meet for part of the semester. In order to figure out who will talk on which day, can you please pick a few dates from the list below and send them to me? Then I’ll set up the calendar using a “first come first serve” basis, such that the first person to send in a date gets his/her top choice and the 2nd person gets his/her choice of the remaining dates, etc.


- A week before your talk, send an e-mail to all astro people in the department, telling them that you will give a journal club talk, listing the date, and identifying the article.
- Journal club meetings run from 3:30 pm to 4:45 pm on Tuesdays. On the day when you give the journal club, please come 10 or 15 minutes early to hook up your laptop with the projection system. If you don’t have a laptop, come talk with me about that.
Tips for Preparing and Giving a Good Journal Club Presentation:

- The core of your talk should state the question that your article’s authors were trying to address and should explain how the authors’ measurements or calculations answered the question.
- Before getting to the core of your talk, set the stage with a substantial introduction that explains the context (i.e., the basic science issues that your talk pertains to), the type of observations or calculations being done, and how the research documented in your article relates to other important issues in astronomy.
- A good introduction should take 10 to 15 minutes.
- Include lots of images (pictures, plots, even cartoons) to make your talk more easily understood and more entertaining.
- Most people spend 1 to 4 minutes per slide, so a 50 minute talk would have 12 to 50 slides. But, your journal club article probably won’t have enough material for 50 slides. Using 12 to 25 slides would be more reasonable.
- An example journal club presentation is posted at https://www.physast.uga.edu/~rls/ASTR8210/example_astro_journal_club_talk.jpg.
- Practice your talk ahead of time at least twice, preferably the day before your journal club. This will help you to figure out how to fit your talk into the timeslot, help you to feel more comfortable, and enable you to gather your thoughts more easily during your presentation.
- Another activity that helps is to start to get a feel for the style of questions being asked of the speakers and to try to anticipate some questions that could be asked about your talk.

Revisions:

The syllabus may be revised in the future.