

# Course Syllabus

## ASTR 1115L-501, CRN 50283, Spring 2026

### Faculty Contact Information

**Name:** Dr. Amanda Truitt (she/her)

**Campus Email:** [artruitt@unm.edu](mailto:artruitt@unm.edu)

**Virtual Office Hours** ([JOIN ZOOM](#) passcode ASTRO): Thurs 11-11:30 am **or by appointment**

**\*BOOK A MEETING WITH ME\***

<https://cal.com/amanda-truitt-st4rryid/10min>

<https://cal.com/amanda-truitt-st4rryid/30min>

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Welcome to Astronomy 1115L, Introduction to Astronomy Lab!

My name is Dr. Amanda Truitt, and I will be the instructor/professor for this course. I have a Ph.D. in Astrophysics from Arizona State University, with a background in modeling stellar evolution based on the diverse chemical composition of stars and simulating the evolution of exoplanet habitable zones.

My preferred contact method is by email or messages through Canvas. Sometimes things get buried in my inbox, so it's generally helpful if you follow up with another message if you don't receive a response from me **within 24 hours** during the regular work week or **within 48 hours** if it's a weekend/holiday. Please feel free to contact me at any time with questions or concerns about the coursework or content! Although we will not be meeting at a set time for the class, I am happy to accommodate personal appointments.

### Required Textbook & Technology

**No textbook is required for this lab course**, but you may find the textbook information below helpful, if you'd like extra resources or support. All other course materials (including the lab assignments and any supplemental material) will be available directly through the Canvas shell.

**Textbook Title:** [Astronomy \(2e\)](#)

The second edition of the textbook has been updated according to recent discoveries and includes a significant amount of new art and images. The 1st edition of the textbook is only available to view online, the 2nd edition is available to download as a free PDF. You can use either first or second edition.

**Authors:** *Andrew Fraknoi, David Morrison, Sidney C. Wolff*

**Publisher:** *OpenStax (View for Free Online or Download a PDF)*

**Publication Date:** *October 13, 2016 (first edition) / March 9, 2022 (second edition/update)*

You will need a computer with internet access to participate in this course, with the ability to submit your work and access online activities. This may include online simulators required to complete certain lab

assignments. You will need to be able to open and edit word documents and/or PDF documents and scan them (or attach photos) back into Canvas for submission.

## Course Description

This course will include hands-on (virtual) lab exercises that will reinforce concepts covered in the lecture and may include additional components that introduce students to the night sky. Math will be required for most of the lab assignments. Lab assignments are designed to solidify and expand your quantitative and general understanding of astronomy.

**Pre-requisite (or co-requisite): ASTR 1115**

**Credit-hour statement:** This course meets New Mexico General Education Curriculum Area 3: Physical and Natural Sciences. This is a 1 credit-hour lab course delivered in an asynchronous/online modality over 16 weeks. The expectation is that each credit hour should correspond to a minimum of 3 hours of student engagement per week. Therefore, please plan to spend **AT LEAST 3 hours per week** on lab assignments!

## Major Topics & Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course, students will:

1	Discuss the night sky as seen from Earth, including coordinate systems, apparent daily and yearly motions of the sun, Moon, stars, and their resulting astronomical phenomena.
2	List and apply the steps of the scientific method.
3	Describe the scale of the Solar System, Galaxy, and the Universe.
4	Explain different telescope designs and how telescopes and spectra are used to extract information about Astronomical objects.
5	Describe the formation scenarios and properties of solar system objects.
6	Describe gravity, electromagnetism, and other physical processes that determine the appearance of the universe and its constituents.
7	Describe methods that planets are discovered around other stars and current results.
8	Describe the structure, energy generation, and activity of the sun.
9	Compare our sun to other stars and outline the evolution of stars of different masses and its end products, including black holes.
10	Describe the structure of the Milky Way and other galaxies and galaxy clusters.
11	Describe the origin, evolution, and expansion of the universe based on the Big Bang Theory and recent Astronomical observations.
12	Describe conditions for life, its origins, and possible locations in the universe.

## Additional Course Information

This course is online and asynchronous; we do NOT have a designated meeting time or place for this class. Because this course is asynchronous, the expectation for responses from me is that I will always try to

respond as soon as possible to any student messages, BUT questions that come in late at night, over a weekend, or otherwise outside of “normal” working hours are not guaranteed an immediate response.

Please note that you will still have required deadlines for assignments. I will post reminders via Canvas announcements, as well as relevant content and supplemental resources in the [Pages](#) section. You will NOT be responsible for reviewing all material provided but the information may provide context for your labs. [Modules](#) will also be assigned to help you keep track of due dates.

## Tips for Success in Online Astronomy

My goal in grading is to reward two things: (1) the effort you put into this class, and (2) your understanding and demonstrated knowledge of course content. For those students who simply need to pass this class, I have good news: *my goal* is to pass every student who stays engaged with the course material through the end of the semester, and the course structure is designed to achieve this.

**But what about those who want to get an A or a B in this class?** Here's what I recommend:

- First, realize that this *online* class requires more self-discipline, integrity, and a level of comfort with technology, than face-to-face classes do. Set aside a time to regularly work on assignments and be proactive in contacting me if you have problems with Canvas, etc.
- Second, make sure your line of communication is open! Course announcements are made directly through Canvas. Please check your notification settings to make sure you receive course announcements.
- Finally, use all course/Canvas resources. I am also available to help and answer questions!

## Course Grading

The grade you receive in this course will be based on your individual mastery of the material, not on your standing relative to your peers (I do not curve the course grades). You may always respectfully ask me to reconsider your grade on any individual assignment, as it's always possible I've overlooked something.

An “A” represents excellent work that exceeds basic requirements. A “B” is good work that meets basic requirements. A “C” represents work that is below the basic requirements but passing. A “D” represents insufficient mastery to satisfy core degree requirements or prerequisites. An “F” is failing and does not meet the minimum requirements.

Please do not ask me to round your grade up! **End of semester grade bumps are a violation of academic integrity.** I will not respond to such requests, and I do not offer any extra credit in this course.

### COURSE GRADES

A (90% or higher)	B (80-89.99%)	C (70-79.99%)	D (60-69.99%)	F (59.99% or lower)
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## Course Evaluation

Grading in this course will be based ONLY on points you earn from **Lab Assignments**.

**Virtual Lab Activities** (14 x 25 pts) \_\_\_\_\_ 350 points (100% of total grade)

**Grades are calculated out of maximum possible points and converted to a %.**

## Coursework Expectations

**LABS:** These are data-based exercises that incorporate basic mathematics to align with concepts discussed in the *Astronomy* textbook. There will be 14 lab assignments, and you will have a week to work on each of them. I am available to help with these assignments if you are struggling with the concepts. There is UNM tutoring available for math and astronomy.

(**Tutoring information** is available at the end of this syllabus) For these quantitative assignments, you are encouraged to use a scientific calculator, though Google calculator should be sufficient for the level of mathematics presented here. Astronomy is fundamentally based on physics and mathematics, so you will need to be able to convert units, perform multiplication/division, rearrange equations to solve for a variable, consider exponents in equations, and use scientific notation. If you don't feel comfortable with basic algebra and manipulating equations and units for different quantities, please reach out to me.

Generally speaking, I don't mind if students work with each other (or with a tutor) to complete the lab assignments, but if I notice any identical lab submissions (where it is clear you have copied each other directly without showing your work or putting your answers in your own words) I reserve the right to give each of you a zero. Please be aware that you will also receive a zero if it is obvious that you have stolen your lab answers from an online "resource" such as Chegg, Course Hero, etc. I make small changes to the labs each semester so it's likely I will notice answers that have been copied from older versions.

## Late Work Policy

Extension requests for assignments should be **clearly communicated** to me ahead of time whenever possible. Requests made after the due date are not guaranteed an extension but may be considered.

**LABS:** I will almost always grant an extension on lab assignments with no point penalty if you request accommodations **ahead of time**. I understand that there is a lot going on in the world and coursework will not always be your priority! However, if communication with me has not been established about an extension IN ADVANCE, I do reserve the right to decline the request. Because assignments will remain OPEN for you to submit throughout the entire semester, I will only allow for extensions that are requested ahead of time, or for documented emergencies that are communicated to me **as soon as possible** after the due date passes. For late lab submissions that are not otherwise granted an extension, **there will be an automatic PER DAY late penalty of 1% off from the total assignment score applied.**

## IN THIS CLASS

### You have the RIGHT to be treated with respect and professionalism

- *You have the RESPONSIBILITY to interact in a respectful and constructive manner.*

### You have the RIGHT to clarity about course objectives, assignments, and grades

- *You have the RESPONSIBILITY to read the syllabus, comply with course guidelines, ask questions if anything is unclear. Please keep up with email & announcements.*

### You have the RIGHT to consistent grading of work, applied to all students

- *You have the RESPONSIBILITY to complete assignments, use available resources to improve the quality of your work as necessary, and respond civilly to evaluation or feedback of your work.*

## You have the RIGHT to flexibility during times of crisis, which you have communicated to me

- You have the *RESPONSIBILITY* to participate, complete assignments, and contact me if you will miss work or need accommodations. Please keep me informed about emergency circumstances.

## You have the RIGHT to my availability for meetings and timely responses to messages

- You have the *RESPONSIBILITY* to keep scheduled appointments or cancel as soon as you know you can't make it. Please include your preferred contact information in your messages.

## We use the Canvas Discussion feature to facilitate class conversations, guided by [Netiquette](#)

- Show respect and be courteous. Refrain from inappropriate language.
- Learn about, understand, and support your classmates.
- Do not make sexist, racist, homophobic, or other insensitive comments.
- Value the diversity among your classmates.
- Encourage others to develop and share their ideas.
- Challenge others constructively with the intent of expanding discussion.
- Be open to being challenged on your ideas.
- Do not demean or embarrass others.
- Consider your comments before you post them.

## Course Calendar

The course is divided into **Modules** which are listed in the course calendar outline, below.

Modules will be made available at the beginning of each week (Mondays), with lab assignments due at the end of the week (Sundays). **Due dates are implemented for uniform pacing that will ensure you move through all the material in a timely manner by the end of the course.** Topic/Textbook chapters are provided as a guide for supporting conceptual understanding. For those who are concurrently enrolled in ASTR 1115, these topics/chapters will align weekly. Please visit the [UNM Registrar Page](#) for details on important **Semester Deadline Dates**. This affects fees, refunds, registration changes, withdraw records, and grades. Midterm/Finals Week and breaks are noted.

### Course Calendar (Spring 2026 Semester)

Date	Topic/Recommended Associated Textbook Chapters	Assignments/Due Dates
Jan 19-25	<b>Getting Started Module</b> & Syllabus Quiz Chapter 1 (Science & The Universe, A Brief Tour)	<b>Module 1: Introduction</b> Lab 1 due on Sun. January 25th
Jan 26-Feb 1	Chapter 2 (The Birth of Astronomy)	<b>Module 2: Astronomy Basics</b> Lab 2 due Sunday, February 1st
Feb 2-8	Chapters 3 and 4 (Orbits; Earth, Moon and Sky)	<b>Module 3: Earth, Moon &amp; Sky</b> Lab 3 due Sunday, February 8th

Feb 9 -15	Chapters 5 and 6 (Radiation, Spectra; Astronomical Tools)	<b>Module 4: The Study of Light</b> Lab 4 due Sunday, February 15th
Feb 16-22	Chapters 7 and 8 (Intro to Solar System; Earth as a Planet)	<b>Module 5: The Solar System</b> Lab 5 due Sunday, February 22nd
Feb. 23-Mar. 1	Chapters 9 and 10 (Cratered Worlds; Earth-like Planets)	<b>Module 6: Terrestrials</b> Lab 6 due Sunday, March 1st
March 2-8	Chapters 11 and 12 (Giant Planets; Moons and Rings)	<b>Module 7: Giants &amp; Moons</b> Lab 7 due Sunday, March 8th
March 9-15	<b>Midterm Exam in ASTR 1115</b>	<b>No Lab Due (optionally: catch up on any late/missing lab)</b>
March 16-22	SPRING BREAK	<b>No Lab Due (optionally: catch up on any late/missing lab)</b>
March 23-29	Chapters 15 and 16 (The Sun and Nuclear Fusion)	<b>Module 8: The Sun &amp; Other Stars</b> Lab 8 due Sunday, March 29th
Mar. 30-Apr. 5	Chapters 17, 18, 19 (Stellar Characteristics; Distances)	<b>Module 9: Stellar Classification</b> Lab 9 due Sunday, April 5th
April 6-12	Chapter 21 (The Birth of Stars and Exoplanets)	<b>Module 10: Exoplanets</b> Lab 10 due Sunday, April 12th
April 13-19	Chapters 22, 23, 24 (Star Death, Black Holes, Spacetime)	<b>Module 11: Dead &amp; Dying Stars</b> Lab 11 due Sunday, April 19th
April 20-26	Chapters 25 and 26 (The Milky Way; Galaxies)	<b>Module 12: Galaxies, Part 1</b> Lab 12 due Sunday, April 26th
Apr. 27-May 3	Chapters 27 and 28 (Distribution & Evolution of Galaxies)	<b>Module 13: Galaxies, Part 2</b> Lab 13 due Sunday, May 3rd
May 4-10	Chapters 29 and 30 (Big Bang; Life in the Universe)	<b>Module 14: Cosmology &amp; Life</b> Lab 14 due Sunday, May 10th
May 11-16	<b>Final Exam in ASTR 1115</b>	<b>No Lab Due</b> Submit late work by SATURDAY, May 16th for grading consideration

## General Course Policies

The remainder of the course policies are outlined below. I will always remind you of anything that is of particular importance, either in course announcements or in assignment instructions.

**Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) Policy: Moderately Permissive Use**

The use of GAI tools/programs (ChatGPT, Grammarly, etc.) to complete work for this course is generally permitted for early work-phase activities such as brainstorming, narrowing a topic, refining a research question, drafting an outline, and checking grammar. However, you may not use it to compose or generate wholesale something I have asked you to produce, such as, but not limited to a draft (rough or final) of a paper, a discussion post or response, or sources of information. Any use of GAI must be explicitly disclosed.

**Attendance:** This is an online and asynchronous class and face-to-face class attendance is not required. However, please be aware that students who miss assignments due in the few weeks of class may be dropped from class as "no show." Instructor also reserves the right to drop a student they miss an excessive number of assignments without communication.

**Schedule/Assignments/Rubrics Subject to Change:** Any changes will be announced through Canvas, and all efforts will be made to accommodate students. Instructor reserves the right to deduct additional points beyond what is outlined in grading rubrics if an assignment is clearly plagiarized, written with AI, or contains inappropriate language/images, etc.

**Honor Code Pledge:** You must complete the honor code pledge to participate in this class. Students who do not maintain their honor code pledge may be removed from the course entirely.

**Responsible Learning and Academic Honesty:** Cheating and plagiarism are often driven by lack of time, desperation, or lack of knowledge about how to identify a source. Please communicate with me and ask for help, even at the last minute, rather than risk committing academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty involves claiming that work created by another source is your own original work. It is a [Student Code of Conduct](#) violation that can lead to a disciplinary procedure.

When you use a resource in ALL work submitted for this class, document and distinguish clearly between your original work and the material taken from the resource. If you use any sources other than those provided in the course, please clearly cite them. Allowing another student to copy your own work also constitutes academic dishonesty.

## **Student Accessibility**

**Confidentiality:** I will never discuss a student's disability status with, or in front of, others. I will always be mindful of engaging a student about accommodations or disability to avoid revealing the student as someone with a disability. I will always speak with students privately about accommodation needs.

**Preferred Name and Pronouns:** Class rosters are provided to the instructor with a student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by your claimed name and/or (a)gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early so that I may make changes to my records. You may also edit your Canvas user profile to [indicate preferred pronouns](#)[Links to an external site.](#).

**Accommodations:** UNM is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for students with documented disabilities. As your instructor, it is my objective to facilitate an inclusive classroom setting, in which students have full access and opportunity to participate. To engage in a confidential conversation about the process for requesting reasonable accommodations for this class and/or program, contact [Accessibility Resource Center](#) at [arcsrvs@unm.edu](mailto:arcsrvs@unm.edu) or 505-277-3506.

**UAP 2720 and 2740:** Our classroom and university should foster mutual respect, kindness, and support. If you have concerns about discrimination, harassment, or violence, please seek [support](#) and [report](#) incidents. Find confidential services at [LoboRESPECT Advocacy Center](#), the [Women’s Resource Center](#), and the [LGBTQ Resource Center](#). UNM prohibits discrimination based on sex (including gender, sex stereotyping, gender expression, and gender identity). All instructors are “responsible employees” who must [communicate reports](#) of sexual harassment, sexual misconduct and sexual violence to [Compliance Ethics and Equal Opportunity](#). For more information, please see [UAP 2720](#) and [UAP 2740](#).

**Citizenship and/or Immigration Status:** All students are welcome in this class regardless of citizenship, residency, or immigration status. I will respect your privacy if you choose to disclose your status. UNM as an institution has made a core commitment to the success of all our students, including members of our undocumented community.

### **Additional Student Support**

[Student Health and Counseling](#) (SHAC) at (505) 277-3136

[PASOS Resource Center](#) (505) 925-8546, or email [pasos@unm.edu](mailto:pasos@unm.edu): on-campus center that serves as a “one-stop” for all non-academic needs of UNM-Valencia students.

**Tutoring:** UNM-Valencia Learning Commons Tutoring is available to you in math, science, writing, and other subjects through the Learning Commons: Learning and STEM Centers and Writing Center. In-person tutoring is in these centers in the LRC. Making use of tutoring is a great way to set yourself up to learn deeply and well in your courses. Schedule an appointment: [Learning Commons Bookings](#)

If you are making an email appointment with the Writing Center, email your draft to [tutor@unm.edu](mailto:tutor@unm.edu) after you fill out the form above. If you have difficulty with the scheduling link above, would like an appointment in a subject not listed at that link, or have a question, email [tutor@unm.edu](mailto:tutor@unm.edu). You’ll get answers during business hours Monday through Friday. Resources to support study skills and time management are available through Student Learning Assistance at the Center for Teaching and Learning in Zimmerman Library or online.