Setting up Your Computer for AST 200

Step 1. Install the Anaconda Python Distribution

Anaconda is the world's most widely-used data science platform for the Python programming language. It is a "package manager" for Python, i.e., it has (nearly) all of the software packages we will need in ASTR 200 built into it. It also makes updating existing programs and installing new ones much simpler.

The download and installation is fairly straightforward. The package is free and available for Windows, Mac, and Linux computers:

https://www.anaconda.com/download/

Step 2. Start python

The anaconda distribution will install an app called "Navigator" that will allow you to launch the python and jupyter notebook environment from the app just like any other program, however I recommend launching it from the command line. This involves opening the program "Terminal" on a Mac or "Command Prompt" on a PC. Once you have it open, simply type Jupyter Notebook to launch the environment. A web browser will open with a file navigator. Jupyter notebooks have an .ipynb suffix and can be opened through this file navigator. They will open in a separate tab and you can have many notebooks open at once from the same file navigator. If opening jupyter from the command line doesn't work for whatever reason, launch it using the Navigator app.

Step 3.[When needed] Install Packages

You may need additional python packages that were not installed by default with Anaconda during the semester. When this is the case, you simply type

conda install packagename

at a command prompt (see step 2)

Step 4. Install the GitHub Desktop App or SourceTree

There are several apps that will allow you to keep the course GitHub repository up to date with all of the course files. I recommend either the GitHub Desktop App or SourceTree (I prefer

SourceTree). Both are available for free online. Once installed, point the app you've chosen at the course GitHub Repository by giving it the url of the course' public GitHub repository: https://github.com/kfollette/ASTR200-Spring2019.git.

You can also always directly download Labs and Prelabs from the GitHub website and do not have to use SourceTree or the GitHub Desktop.