
Astronomy 311

Group Astronomy Presentation Guidelines

The astronomy presentation is a **group project to teach the class** about a **specific and detailed topic** you have researched within the material covered by ASTR 311. The project is worth **25%** of your final grade, so **spend an appropriate amount of time on research, organization and presentation**. **Do not** expect to throw it together at the last minute and receive a good grade. **Read this guide fully!**

NOTE: Presentation content is considered *examinable material* and **will** appear on the final.

Groups

Each group has 3 members and does **one presentation**. **All group members receive the same grade**, so please **monitor your group's progress** and **see me regarding any issues**.

Presentation Proposal

You must submit a ***few sentences*** (less than half a page) which *clearly* identify BOTH a ***single, specific topic*** for your presentation AND the ***specific presentation format/method*** you will use. **This proposal will be marked & returned to you**. If you later wish to *change ANY non-trivial* aspect of your proposal, you ***MUST*** speak with me FIRST.

Your choice of topic must fall within the scope of ASTR 311: that is, cosmology, relativity, quantum physics, or the search for extraterrestrial life. Look through books, web sites (start with the LINKS page on the course website) and the course notes - or talk to me - for ideas. Choose a topic we do ***NOT*** cover **in detail** in class. Make sure your choice is **specific** - e.g. don't simply select The Big Bang; instead focus on the Stellar Dark Ages, or do a detailed examination of the WMAP satellite results. Then consider *how* your group will present your topic **in order to best TEACH the class about it**. What tools or aids will you need to communicate your ideas? How will you interact with the class? Your imagination is the limit!

Astronomy Presentation Due Dates

The presentation *proposal* due date is specified in the ***Course Outline*** on the website.

The *presentations* are scheduled to occur *in class* near the end of term; specific slots are TBD.

Plagiarism and References

Plagiarism is a serious issue. It is defined as the “representation of someone else’s words or ideas as one’s own”. Please ensure that presentations are ***in your own style and in your own words***. **Reference** ALL pictures or content from external sources using footnotes or another standard form; define all terminology. More information follows later in this guide.

Marking Criteria

The presentation is marked on the following criteria (see rubric on website **):**

1. Content: detailed astronomical topic, accurate & up-to-date, understanding of topic
2. Presentation: organization, clarity, teaches/interacts with class, original/creative
3. References: full digital version of presentation with *complete* references

The presentation is worth 25% of your mark and is marked accordingly.

Content: it is important that you explore a specific topic *in detail*. Some overlap with class material is fine, but detail must be *significantly* more than our class notes & textbook - use *numerous* sources *in addition to* these. Aim for the **equivalent** content of a ***ten-page paper***.

You should *understand* the topic you are reporting on; this means you must express ideas in your *own* words, reflecting *your* understanding of your topic - ***do not*** simply copy ideas from books or the web. *Define* key concepts and terms *clearly* for the class, and avoid simply reciting ‘factoids’. Nothing is worse than listening to one undefined technical term/acronym after another, or a having a bunch of dates tossed at you without any context. Remember - ***you are supposed to be teaching others in the class about your topic***, so ensure that the level of your (submitted) presentation is appropriate!

Presentation: it is an important skill to be able to present information to others in a way that is clear, concise, and accessible. **Each group will have 20 minutes** (+ some time for questions) **to present a summary of their topic to the class. Keep to this time limit!**

How should you approach the in-class presentation? As you have (only) 20 minutes to present on your topic, treat it like an ‘executive summary’- you want to highlight and communicate only the *most important* details from your research (**you will need to submit a more complete, digital version of your presentation** - see below). You may use any aids you wish during your in-class presentation - posters, overheads, skits, music, Powerpoint, etc. (video

clips, if not your own, should be kept short). Speak to what drew you to that particular topic and share fundamental, surprising or crucial results from your research. Be creative! Make certain all group members participate *actively* and *equally*. Practice your presentation so you are **engaging with the class and not simply reading from your notes**. Speak clearly & loudly enough that those at the back of the class can hear you. Pay attention to *how* you communicate your research within this presentation; **do not** simply slap pictures and facts into your presentation, but think of *how* you arrange information in order to best **teach the class about your topic**. For example, if you use Powerpoint, consider elements such as slide background colour, font size & colour, arrangement and text (information) density. Have you included relevant, interesting and/or explanatory images? Have you defined terms and explained your topic clearly? You want to make a strong, positive visual impression *in addition* to having solid content. See me **well ahead of time** to try out required computer connections.

References/Submitted Version: your in-class presentation is a summary of a **more detailed and fully referenced version which will be posted on the class website**. The form that your submitted version takes will depend on your in-class presentation; it may simply be an extended Powerpoint or equivalent, a poster, a typed set of speaking notes, a video, etc. ***it is your responsibility to ensure any electronically submitted materials are in a (standard) format (eg. Word, Powerpoint, PDF, etc.)*** that I can access.

Your submitted version **must** include a **complete bibliography with all sources cited, including all factual information, images, movies, sounds, etc.** Use an *appropriate number* of varied references **in addition** to your notes and textbook; for most topics, **about a dozen factual sources is reasonable**. **Only about 3/4 of your references should be web-based** (excluding online journals). Many web sources are *not* edited or peer-reviewed; use *scientific* web sites, like those ending with *.edu*, *.gov*, or belonging to legitimate *astronomical* publications or sources (eg. Astronomy Today, Astronomy Picture of the Day, etc.). Wikipedia is **NOT** an appropriate peer reviewed scientific source, but may direct you to more appropriate sites. *Verify web based research with other types of sources*, eg. books or journals.

Only reference books, articles, web sites, etc. which were **actually used** in your submission (no ‘padding’). **List image and factual references separately** (eg. your bibliography page should have two separate sections). **Factual information and images MUST be cited in a standard format** (e.g. APA, MLA, footnotes) **WHERE THEY OCCUR in your slides, overheads, notes, etc., i.e. reference your content & images as if writing a formal research paper**. Please see: <http://libguides.viu.ca/citing>.

***Minimum* presentation requirements checklist**

General

- ☐ We have *thoroughly* read *both* the presentation instructions & the marking rubric
- ☐ We have spoken to the instructor regarding questions or concerns about our presentation
- ☐ We have notified the instructor about ***any*** (non-trivial) deviations from our proposal

Content

- ☐ Content & effort are *appropriate* for a presentation worth ***25% of our mark***
- ☐ Topic is ***sufficiently*** detailed/specific; expands ***substantially*** on class material
- ☐ We *understand* and have *clearly defined and explained* all technical terms/scientific content

Presentation

- ☐ Presentation is *clear, creative, accessible* and **teaches** the class about our topic
- ☐ Everyone participates (equally) in the presentation & we have *practiced* (no reading!)
- ☐ Our presentation uses the available time fully but stays within the 20 minute limit
- ☐ Computer based presentations have tested classroom connections, etc. *well ahead of time*

References/Submitted Presentation

- ☐ Submission is a “more complete” version of presentation
- ☐ Utilizes a sufficiently varied number of *reliable, acceptable* and *non-web* sources
- ☐ Separate factual & image bibliographies; items are cited **where they appear/are used**
- ☐ (Digital) submission is in a *standard* format (eg. PDF)