

# The Cosmos: A Survey of Modern Astronomy — Narrative Evaluations

**Chen Li**

I am very glad that Chen stuck it out after considering dropping the course. She is enthusiastic and she is also a good exam-taker.

Her reading questions showed less thoroughness than would be ideal. It is fine to not understand some sections of the textbook since we get together in large part to discuss what people do not understand, but I'd also like to see more thorough understanding and perceptive questions, especially since that would have been good for the others in our small class. Chen got 41 / 45 on the three exams with an especially good score on the 2nd one.

Chen's special project was original and well-timed. She went for the May 26 lunar eclipse. Neither of us had any experience with photographing that kind of target, you don't get long to make decisions while the eclipse was happening, and our camera settings couldn't handle the large contrast. It was a lovely pre-dawn event and a good idea, but our photos were poor. We compensated by trying a second project, which was to photograph the very thin waxing crescent in the next lunar cycle. She forgot that the work was happening and I did all the photography for that image. We worked together on the data analysis.

It was a pleasure having Chen in the class. I'm glad that it turned out to be valuable and enjoyable for her. It was clear that at the end a good amount of enthusiasm had built up.

## Alice Owen

Alice's systematic interest in the course really helped carry the mood and the discussions in our small class. One-way this showed up was in her midterm review sessions which demonstrated a very strong grasp of what our textbook (and I) was trying to communicate.

Her interest outside of class was also strong. Although only tangentially related to the class, being a GL member that was frequently assigned to the dome allowed us to have good discussions about astronomy and what can be done at the dome.

Her special project with Declan turned out to be striking. The writeup is very good, but since they had a joint project, I'd have liked to see them go even a little further than the others. Their plan is to produce a poster during Term 1. Some things we could add are a constellation map, some more facts about the nebula (such as its current diameter and temperature, the rate at which the gas is expanding, and its peak apparent and absolute luminosity).

Alice's interest and thoroughness showed up directly in her midterm scores (which were consistently high), and in her overall course percentage (she has the top percentage by a fair amount). It was a great pleasure for me and I am confident for everyone to have Alice in the class.

## Lucia Pizarro

Lucia is a responsible, good-natured, and a consistent participant in the class. Her responsibility and consistency showed up especially nicely in her special project. She was the first to submit it, seek comments on the submission, and re-distribute a final version. She was also thorough about seeking extra help when the homework didn't make sense.

In the syllabus, I weighted each of the three exams at 15% of the course total. Her scores were 7/15, 10/15, and 12/15. So that is a total of 29/45 on that contribution to the course score. It is very positive to see such an increasing trend, but the low total caused a big (16%) hit to her overall course percentage.

I wish we could have worked together even more, especially before the first exam to help get better scores. I'd actually recommend doing another science course just to continue developing the facility with reasoning with algebra and getting more consistently to correct answers.

It was a pleasure having Lucia in the class. I hope it was valuable and enjoyable.

## Declan Rexer

Declan had very interesting questions for the class to contemplate, virtually every class and for both terms, and this shows an unmatched thoroughness in doing the reading, perceptiveness, and very welcome enthusiasm.

His special project with Alice turned out to be striking. The writeup is very good, but since they had a joint project, I'd have liked to see them go even a little further than the others who were working alone. Their plan is to produce a poster during Term 1. Some things they could add are a constellation map that shows where the Veil Nebula is, perhaps a map that shows where it is in our galaxy(?), and some more facts about the nebula (such as its current diameter and temperature, the rate at which the gas is expanding, and its peak apparent and absolute luminosity).

Declan makes more mistakes on homework and exams than someone with his level of understanding should. His overall exam score (sum of the three midterms) was 38.5 / 45 with the last one being 11.5 / 15. So his overall course percentage took a substantial hit. I'd recommend figuring out ways to work more neatly — recopy if necessary! — work on 8 1/2 x 11 paper — work in pencil — or whatever he thinks will help him to get to more consistently correct answers. Those are just the things that work for me. Whatever strategies he picks, a focus on correctness will pay off over time.

It was a great pleasure for me and I am confident for everyone to have Declan in the class.