PHSC 10800 1 - Earth as a Planet: Exploring Our Place in the Universe - Instructor(s): Fred Ciesla

Project Title: **College Course Feedback - Autumn 2023**

Number Enrolled: **276**
Number of Responses: **120**

Report Comments

Opinions expressed in these evaluations are those of students enrolled in the specific course and do not represent the University.

Creation Date: **Friday, February 2, 2024**

What are the most important things that you learned in this course? Please reflect on the knowledge and skills you gained.

Comments
Tbh nothing. This class was awful.
About space in general
what causes seasons to occur
I learned about the scientific method in general and how it can be applied to different astronomical phenomenon.
It's fun to learn more about Earth
I learned about different concepts related to astronomy such as tides, the Earth and its interactions with other celestial bodies in our solar systems, stars, the planets, and the Moon.
Nothing. This class was a waste of time.
The most important things I learned form this course were (a) a survey introduction of important properties of the Earth and the rest of the planets and formations a part of our Solar System (e.g. the history of how the Sun formed, the impact of Jupiter's early planetary formation on the structure of our solar system), and (b) an introduction to many of the pressing questions in the field of astronomy and astrophysics today (e.g. does Europa, one of Jupiter's moons, have life?). Overall, the theme of the course is not how Earth stands out among the other planets in the Solar System and our Universe, but how the Earth is alike to all existing planets.
Solar system formation and evolution, moon and its phases, astronomers, eccentricity, composition of planets, blackbody curves, light.
I learned a lot about the formation of planets, the composition of different celestial objects, and how to calculate distance of planets from objects, the orbital periods, etc.
nothing important learned
literally nothing
Many aspects of the moon
N/A
Somewhat misleading course name. More of an astronomy course studying planetary and satellite bodies in the solar system.
how the solar system formed and how we can use different objects in our solar system to understand earth.
I learned that there were multiple factors behind things that we take for granted, or often don't think too much about, like moon phases.
the moon and its movement
Tides impact more than just the shoreline— they impact periods and semimajor axes too!
Important aspects of the moon and each planet in the solar system, planetary motion and geophysical evolution, formation of the earth
measuring earth and sun, moon phases and cycles, solar system; how planets formed
Learned about earth and planets
knowing more about the solar system we live in
Moon phases, how planets are formed, simple physics, etc.
I learned about the history of astronomy, the movement/geological history of the planets & the moon, and the formulas used to determine certain measurements relating to planetary bodies.
Despite what religion or spirituality may claim, the earth is not very special. It follows all the laws of the universe, just like everything else. What might be special are human beings.
Don't take this class if you hate drama and strict discipline
I learned about various topics such as ancient astronomy, the different phases of the moon, solar system formation, etc.
We learn about some of the basic planetary processes, the history of earth as a planet, the history of the solar system, and finally a tour of our solar system's most interesting objects (Titan, Jupiter, Io, Saturn, Venus, etc.)
I enjoyed learning about the phases of the moon and their causations.
Don't take this class man. Too stressfull for a physics core. THe class notes and the psets don't align and the moon journal was such an added stress.
learning important basic physics skills and increasing my efficiency when approaching certain multi step problems
Basic astronomy concepts and math tools used to study the solar system.
The Planetary system

Comments
I learned about the Solar System and the different phases of the Moon
planets
History of astronomy and details on different bodies in the solar system
The moon!!! Possible life on earth, all the planets and satellites of our system and their similarities
The Earth and its interactions with the solar system and the Moon. Also how scientists throughout history have come to understand the Earth and space.
The most important thing that I learned in this course is that all things in the universe interact with each other to create what we experience, either it be how we have a moon, or how seasons appear.
That Earth is a planet, and does not have a special place in the universe.
The history of how people have viewed the universe and the techniques they used to figure out what was out there, the planets and how they formed, the Moon and its relationship with Earth, and a review of highschool geometry
I cannot stress enough how wonderful Professor Cielsa is. He has incredible passion, enthusiasm, and knowledge for this field. He is a great person, and a great teacher. However, the school puts him in a very tough position through this course. A class with 200 students, with all assignments online, has its inherent flaws. When all assignments and quizzes are online and the lectures are in a big lecture hall, it is difficult to feel engaged in the course material. It is clear that a majority of students do not attend lecture. With that said, I cannot speak more highly of Professor Cielsa. The material is also very interesting if you are interested by our universe and solar system. However, it would be beneficial to find a way to make this class more engaging by either doing discussion sections or smaller classes.
Learned about the solar system
The various bodies in the solar system, how they formed and how they interact with one another. Learned a lot about the Moon
Earth in relation to other bodies in the solar system
The principle elements of the solar system
The different aspects of our galaxy seen from earth.
I learned about our earth as a planet, the Moon, and basic foundational astrophysics.
Interesting things about each planet in the solar system and how we can learn things about Earth from them.
We learned about the universe and how the Earth is a planet and not the center of the universe – very interesting
I learned how to track the moon as it goes through its various phases and the origins of our solar system.
Learned something about each of the planets in our solar system.
The planets
The Moon
The Earth is just a regular planet
Brief history of astronomy, sun and planet formation, satellites and orbits, and a brief overview of the planets in the galaxy
How it infer things about planets by using mathematical models, knowledge of earth, etc
I learned about how the earth displays characteristics typical of planets and about the extraordinary phenomena that occurs in our universe.
I learned how to appreciate the galaxy and the universe around us
Na
Learning about how we learned about our solar system.
We learned basic astronomy in a way that will allow us to follow and understand news about future space explorations.
Development of a critical scientific approach, and appreciation of the Earth as a body within our Solar System
I learned how the earth relates to other objects in our universe! I also learned about those objects themselves and how they compare. Finally, I learned about how we know these things, and how we might learn new things in the future.
I learned the most about the other planets in the solar system. I tried to learn math but it did not go very well.
Learned about different planets and why they are the way they are
I learned about the ways in which we have come to understand the other objects in our solar system and what they can teach us about our own planet. I also gained an appreciation for what can be observed about our solar system just by looking up at the sky and paying attention to its observable patterns.

Describe how aspects of this course (lectures, discussions, labs, assignments, etc.) contributed

to your learning.

Comments
Nothing. The PSETS were incredibly difficult. No one went to the lectures. The discussion portion was fine, but didn't necessarily contribute to my learning. The weekly quizzes were so weirdly worded. The questions made no sense.
Lecrtures are very well designed and engaging, although many students would not attend. P–sets are appropriately challenging.
online quiz
I found the lectures to be helpful as well as the threads we were all put in for discussion.
Lectures are clear
The lectures contributed to most of my learning and the assignments (problem sets and moon journal) helped to understand the calculations and course material more in depth.
Homework had nothing to do with lectures, lectures were boring, discussion boards were stupid, the moon journal is a speculative exercise in what it would have been like to live during the Renaissance (but, we don't)
In–class lectures contributed the most to learning as it concerned this course. Professor Ciesla taught class content at a reasonable pace and in an understandable format. Additionally, I found the weekly open–notes quizzes to be a useful exercise; while primarily focusing on the content taught the week before the last week of instruction, these quizzes forced me to at least skim through all of the content taught up to that point in class —- a useful exercise which helped make finals preparation an easier process. Office Hours can also be helpful, although your discussions during Office Hours aren't likely to deviate much from anything not immediately pertinent to the upcoming Problem Set.
Lectures were most helpful because the professor went over and explained concepts from the notes.
The homework assignments helped me develop a sense of comprehension of the distance between different planetary objects
homeworks were unrepresentative of what is taught in class, the multiple choice "quizzes" end up being a large part of your grade
Lectures were entertaining and interesting. Homeworks were reasonable and satisfying to complete.
N/A
Ciesla's lectures are informative and engaging, but he makes the slides accessible on canvas which is helpful too.
lectures were the most helpful and the psets were a good way to practice what we learned in lecture.
lectures, moon journal
This course was mainly lecture, but the two most helpful aspects were the Q+A session the day before break, as well as the quiz walk–through videos.
This course only has lectures, which were great. The prof makes a big effort to have engaging slides, make jokes, and bring the energy every class and it really shows. I thought that he was one of the best lecturers I've had at uchicago. Psets were pretty much algebra manipulation – pretty easy for stem/econ majors but seemed challenging for humanities, math–wise.
great funny interesting lectures from a passionate awesome extremely nice and patient professor
Lectures were good
lecture
The moon journal lab and the homeworks/quizzes are definitely where I did most of my learning. The lectures were hard to reference after the fact unless you had taken extremely detailed notes during the class itself. I wish Freddy would've written some notes of his own that we could reference or even that the slides had the information from the class instead of just supplementary pictures.
I thought the lectures were interesting/informative, but I didn't necessarily think they were all that helpful in terms of the homework sets. They definitely helped with the theoretical aspects of the homework/gave helpful context but I never felt like there was enough demonstration or explanation of the actual math or equations we were expected to use on the homework. The Canvas discussion prompts that were included in the homework were tedious and aggravating and personally, I do not think they encouraged me to do any more valuable or different thinking than other aspects of the class. The same applies to the moon journal; I do not think that it taught me anything I didn't get anywhere else.
The lectures and slides were helpful and well–organized, and the homework forced us to apply the concepts to specific cases, which made it easier to study for quizzes.
The lectures were really engaging and fun.
Everything is disorganised in this class, especially the moon journal assignment. The teacher equally suspects every single student for academic integrity, and I sincerely recommend not taking this class for your well–being.
The homework's definitely were all helpful in completing the quizzes which was super nice. Also, his lectures made completing the homework's very easy.
This class is primarily lectures with assignments to do at home
Lectures were helpful but didn't necessarily relate to the material on the final exam, most of that material was through the

Comments
homeworks or the quizzes.
the homeworks allowed me to practice and apply the skills I learned through lectures
I have never written an evaluation as in–depth as I am about to; given the moon journal situation this quarter however, and my thoughts on how the class is, and has been run in previous, years, and its impact on the school with so many students taking it, I have a lot to share. Overall I feel like this class has been constructed in a way that has lost sight of what the true intention is, and instead just piles on a ton of busy–work type of assignments that do not do much in the way of reinforcing conceptual understanding. From the canvas groups to homeworks that are loaded with information that just break down into math steps, to quizzes we are supposed to take "individually" yet Professor Ciesla assigns them to be taken online at–home. This obviously just does not work; in this class or other classes, it is inevitable that people will get together to cheat on the quizzes. And the same goes for the final, for that matter. This is all to say that the course just throws a ton of little things our way and makes it incredibly easy to cheat on them. But this quarter the situation became overtly evident and the entire Moon Journal assignment came crashing down. This comes from a student who did the Moon Journal observations and took the quizzes independently, yet I felt at a disadvantage due to other students who either did the journal in the last night or grouped together to take the quizzes. And my contention here is not to make these quizzes in person or make the Moon Journal more air–tight...I think in general so many people cheat because that is how the class has been structured, and it is very conducive to doing so. Piling on assignments in the manner that they are felt unproductive to me and not helpful. If the objective of the class is to instill interest in the topic and equip students with foundational tools, the work could be much more concentrated and facilitate this type of learning. Smaller class size, a 'lab' that allowed students to look at planets through a telescope or observatory on campus, would be much more interesting. If smaller classes or more engaging work is not feasible, then offering the class at scale is just going to continue to run the way that it has. There is so much going on that I feel makes the class counterproductive –– I think throwing less volume of work (get rid of the canvas groups, cut homework down, get rid of quizzes) and focusing more on concepts could be a better use of class time and improve class results. Professor Ciesla is a kind instructor and very knowledgeable about the topic, and I feel like there is a lot to gain from the core concepts of this class, but something needs to change in order to deliver the messages more successfully and get students to invest in the class more. This is a tough task with it being a requirement to so many, but I don't think assigning a ton of different work is necessarily the answer. I feel like there is a way to have less cheating, less work, and better class outcomes.
Lectures are great but I think some of the problems in the assignments were quite challenging
The lectures were very helpful
lectures are great
Lectures are the key to success in the class
A lot of people didn’t come to the lectures, so maybe they weren’t necessary, but I went to all of them and found them really helpful. The slides are digestible with a lot of pictures, and Ciesla really cares about his students.
The lectures were interesting, but the slides and homeworks were most important in helping me understand the material.
Lectures were very lucid and engaging. Assignment problems were challenging but fun to do, and can help learn a lot. Though we never really talked about our homework during lectures and some explanations on the types of problems we will receive might have been helpful.
Ciesla's lectures were great. His homework was helpful but graded way too harshly—I lost two points for not literally writing "sin(angle)=opposite/hypotenuse" before writing it with values included. The moon journal was semi–helpful but took way too much time for what it was. We don't have grades back yet but prior course evals said it was graded super harshly.
Lectures are super helpful. If you listen carefully, you don't have to spend much time revising for quizzes or do the problem sets.
The lectures were the most helpful part of this course. There are no labs and no outside readings, so the best way to learn is by simply going to class. I also found office hours to be very helpful for the homework assignments.
The math was really difficult to me and the stress of the moon journal escapade wasn't good for my depression or anxiety at the end of the quarter.
The assignments were important to understanding the material. Especially the homework and quizzes.
Lectures were great! They were engaging and he explained everything well
Professor Ciesla's lectures were the most helpful
lecture and problem sets
Lectures were interesting. We had a quiz, a homework assignment, and discussion posts due every week which, although took some time, were very helpful in learning the content.
Lectures were really helpful when it came to quizzes and the final as most of the lecture slides would not be helpful if you were not there when the prof was lecturing. Assignments were alright and gave some useful practice with the equations.

Comments
Professors lecture were great
I think the moon journal was really useful in understanding how bodies rotate around each other and how we view the moon.
Lectures contained all of the class material. The homework assignments felt somewhat disconnected from lecture. There was some similar content, but much of the homework was essentially setting up/completing math problems.
Lectures were always top–notch. The earlier content of the course (historical astronomy) was a little boring but, the later content (planets of the solar system) was great! I was fascinated by the discussions on orbital resonance, especially in relation to tidal heating on Io. Homework was a good supplement to course material. The questions were well–designed and gave a more formal, mathematical extension of learned material. Weekly quizzes presented material in unconventional contexts/combinations. Sometimes this worked, other times they felt like very strange "gotcha" questions. Discussions were pointless busywork.
Lectures were helpful
Lectures were sometimes cool. The only problem is that I had no clue what I needed to know from the lectures. The homeworks were all basic algebra from equations from the lectures, but the quizzes and final were made up of a random assortment of facts from the lectures.
Lectures were really helpful to understanding the concepts, assignments were more geometry and trig applications of those concepts
The weekly homework’s were very helpful to understanding what was going on in class.
This was a very well balanced course where there was a lot of stuff to do but none of the individual assignments were too much to ask. Assessments, discussions, labs, assignments, and lectures were all incorporated well.
The lectures and hws
Na
Lectures were very interesting.
Lectures contributed a lot to my learning. I was sad that more students did not attend lecture regularly.
The course lectures were engaging and provided a broad scope of information about the Solar System.
The lectures were very helpful. I also really enjoyed the problem sets. Though I felt they were difficult, they had to do with the lecture material and helped me better understand the concepts. I really enjoyed the Moon Journal!
Lecture was ok. Sometimes helpful.
The professor is incredibly passionate in the lectures, I learned a lot by attending! Homework required more advanced math than I thought, but definitely doable and I learned a lot.
The core concepts were presented in lectures, along with explanations of the mathematical equations and physical rules used to derive information about our solar system, which were then practiced through the weekly assignments and quizzes.

Please respond to the following:

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This course challenged me intellectually.	4.14	4.00	2.11%	4.21%	11.58%	42.11%	40.00%
I understood the purpose of this course and what I was expected to gain from it.	4.31	5.00	5.21%	1.04%	6.25%	32.29%	55.21%
I understood the standards for success on assignments.	4.24	4.00	3.13%	3.13%	8.33%	37.50%	47.92%
Class time enhanced my ability to succeed in graded assignments.	3.99	4.00	7.22%	6.19%	12.37%	28.87%	45.36%
I received feedback on my performance that helped me improve my subsequent work.	3.88	4.00	5.21%	10.42%	14.58%	31.25%	38.54%
My work was evaluated fairly.	4.34	5.00	2.06%	2.06%	7.22%	37.11%	51.55%
I felt respected in this class.	4.49	5.00	2.13%	2.13%	4.26%	27.66%	63.83%
Overall, this was an excellent course.	4.23	5.00	3.16%	3.16%	13.68%	27.37%	52.63%

Additional comments about the course:

Comments
Very difficult. Heavy math and physics based. Probably one of the easier Physical Sciences though.
Professor Ciesla is great. This course is not as much of a slack–off course as one might anticipate, but is very very doable. You would probably learn a lot and be engaged in lectures if you pay it just a little attention.
It is a great and an interesting class but you need to read all the lecture materials regularly to be able to do the assignments.
I would avoid if you can, but obviously anybody taking this class is taking it for the core
I loved this course and it cultivated a newfound interest in the formation of our solar systm
would choose a different physical science core class
Great professor/lecturer. Interesting topic
N/A
Prof. C is a treasure! He explains everything so well no matter what background level you have in the information. His class is accessible to more than just graduate students in astronomy, which is what the core should be! He truly explains every topic with immense care and patience. He is greatly appreciated!
Professor Ciesla's passion for his subject and teaching it really enhanced my interest in learning.
This was a fantastic core course, particularly because of the professor. Learned about something I wouldn't have otherwise in an engaging and useful way.
i love fred ciesla; i dont know much about astronomy but he's really a guy who can convert people to his passion
Take this class.
Do not take this class. The homework assignments literally took me 20 hours a week and I never did well. This class destroyed my mental health and ruined my quarter. Professor Ciesla offered extremely unhelpful guidance as to how to account for the moon not being visible due to clouds. I felt like this was a class where I could put in the fullest extent of my effort and still get a bad grade. It was an extremely demoralizing and depressing experience. I can't believe I put in so much effort in to something that ultimately tanked my GPA that I have worked so hard for. Stay far away from this class.
Do the moon journal legitimately.
I did not feel any RESPECT in this class. This is almost the worst class I have ever taken here at uchicago.
N/A
Professor Ciesla is one of the kindest, most understanding, and incredible teachers who I can truly tell loves the subject and really wants to impart that love onto his students. Though I plan on majoring in comp sci, his teaching and passion in doing so allowed me to gain a new beautiful appreciation for astronomy and science overall.
Moongate. This should be an easy class, psets are lowkey rough and the moon journal is a pain. I would take this over natural hazards but not over global warming
A great option for non–physics majors to learn about the universe
I know that Ciesla is going to get a lot of hate this year because of the moon journal cheating situation, but I absolutely loved him. He cares so much about his students and genuinely wants people to find the beauty in our universe. I really enjoyed the moon journal and have a newfound appreciation for the sky. The class was harder than expected, but I think it’s very valuable to take. Just expect to have to work, not just slack off.
I thoroughly enjoyed this course, especially for non–science majors. Not only is the material really interesting (because space is cool and understanding how we learn about space is also cool) but Professor Ciesla is a great lecturer who really cares about the class and the topics he is teaching.
It does not need to be this difficult to get an A in a core class if you actually understand the material.
I love Professor Ciesla – I felt that he really had a lot of passion in this topic, and he was very invested in presenting this material to us. On the other hand, Prof Ciesla was also very reasonable in his expectations and does not expect us to memorize difficult statistics or do challenging mathematics. I think this class brought me back to childhood days in which the sky – representation of the unknown bigger world – was a source of wonder for me.
There is a good deal of math, but Prof Ciesla is such a wonderful person and a fun lecturer.
Coming into this class, there is a precedent that minimal effort is required for success in the class. This precedent is set by previous students of the class. This should be changed. Professor Cielsa is great and I wish that all students would get to know him and attend all the lectures.
This class has math in it, but most of it is plugging values into equations or basic trigonometry like SOHCAHTOA. I don't like math much but it was manageable, the main thing is to be careful because there are usually a lot of steps and large values so it can be easy to make a small mistake somewhere and mess everything up. Overall Prof Ciesla is pretty understanding and there are many opportunities for an easy A (discussion posts, quizzes, etc)

Comments
I took this class during Moongate scandal. Sooo idk, I think Ciesla is becoming stricter with having the class be a real class, and not allowing for the cutting corners anymore.
Professor is very commited!
Prof. Ciesla was such a kind professor and it seemed like he really wanted the best for his students. He was very flexible if you had issues meeting deadlines for some reason and was also really helpful in answering questions when I came to his office hours. I know there were issues with the moon journals this quarter, but I think he did a great job handling it fairly.
Professor Ciesla is amazing teacher and great person. Very passionate about his class.
Don't do anything shady on your moon journal Lol
Of course everyone is probably thinking about the Moon Journal drama. Realistically, I did not cheat, was not flagged for cheating, and did not know if I was going to get reported if I accidentally wrote something that the TAs were flagged for. I would say that Ciesla is generally a pretty chill guy, but he cares so much but in the wrong ways. Instead of waiting for grading to be done, he had the entire class wait breathlessly, stressing and anxious over a freaking Moon Journal, until halfway through finals week. Realistically, it was a cool class and interesting, but for a class where the teacher talks about so many things that are not needed for the final or quizzes, it can be such a slog because you do not know what you need to note and not to note.
Take this phy sci. Professor Ciesla cares a lot about teaching. Start your moon journal early
I really enjoyed the professor and thought it was a good course
Na
This was such a great class! I admit that I took it because I thought it would be easy, but I loved learning about the solar system, especially The Moon, Io, and Enceladus. It was not overly easy. Professor Ciesla is very passionate about what he studies and wants students to understand astronomy even if it's at a basic level. I feel bad that so many people were hating on him because they cheated on the Moon Journal. Prof Ciesla is so nice, and I was sad to see that so many students could not even be bothered to go outside and look for the Moon. :(
The course was really interesting and rewarding, but definitely required some effort from the student, so I recommend it for people who have the time to really get engaged with it!

I would recommend this course to:

	No	Yes
Highly-motivated and well-prepared students	11.34%	88.66%
Anyone interested in the topic	13.40%	86.60%

Thinking about your time in the class, what aspect of the instructor's teaching contributed most to your learning?

Comments
The professor explained and taught very well and clearly.
Mr. Ciesla is a nice guy, but office hours weren't super helpful for PSETS. The best thing to do for PSETS is work with friends. Everything is online, which is amazing. That is the only good thing about this class.
Great lecture mainly
professor is approachable
Instructor is an excellent and engaging lecturer. He understood his students and made sure we were interested.
The instructor was great at breaking down the concepts so that they were easy to understand.
The instructor was enthusiastic
Professor Ciesla was very engaging during lectures and overall really good at explaining the material.
N/A
The instructor's reasonable teaching pace and willingness to answer questions throughout class time (despite being in a large auditorium) contributed the most to my learning in this course. Additionally, the professor hosted a review session the Friday before Thanksgiving Break which I found particularly useful in terms of digesting and synthesizing all of the content taught in the class (at that point, we had gone through 90–95% of the content of the course).
Professor Ciesla's teaching style is pretty engaging and humorous. I liked how he used models to visually demonstrate certain concepts in class.
Professor Ciesla's enthusiasm and deep passion for the subject helped me engage with the material and topics a lot more than I

Comments
thought.
He is very passionate about the topic and he seems to care about teaching it with energy.
N/A
Lectures/available slides
lectures were engaging and Professor Ciesla is clearly very passionate and knowledgable about the subject which greatly contributed to my ability to learn.
He seemed passionate about the things he talked about and often had stories to accompany the topic of the lecture.
very engaging and fun instructor
Opening up time to ask questions during lecture.
Super energetic, willing to answer questions, very available outside of class, and makes visually engaging lectures with animations and clear diagrams with explanations. Great prof.
being nice and patient and explain things clearly and have wonderful office hours where we can ask questions
Very enthusiastic professor
Jessica was wonderful! She was very in tune with our interests and adapted well to the energy we gave her. I think she was dealt a tough hand with the timing, location, etc. this quarter, but she maintained enthusiasm and care throughout the class.
lecture
His enthusiasm
Professor Ciesla is incredibly nice and you can tell how much he enjoys the content and how much he tries. His lectures were the only part of the class I thought was worthwhile.
The lecture slides and quiz reviews were most useful.
I liked his lectures. He was always high energy and excited to teach.
Nothing other than anxiety and depression! I know a couple of students who need psychiatric treatments because of this class
He was able to explain very complex topics in a way that I feel like the majority of the class (including myself) understood well.
The professor's love and knowledge for the subject helps to understand the significance of knowing about the Solar System.
His personal experiences that he shared that related to certain topics, whether that be the moon journal or current events in the world.
his explanations
The professor is very passionate about the topic and I really learned a lot.
Ciesla's enthusiasm!
Prof. Ciesla is super passionate about the topics! He is also very kind and willing to help
He was incredibly kind and considerate.
Ciesla is amazing and he deserves better than the class he had this year. His lectures are passionate and he showed mercy and care for his students even when they don't earn it (ask older students if they heard about MoonGate)
Professor Ciesla is caring and wants all of his students to understand what he is teaching, no matter their level or major. Definitely his empathy and passion.
The lectures were really interesting. Professor Ciesla seemed genuinely excited about the topics he was teaching, which made me as a student want to learn them.
Professor Ciesla was very approachable and helpful in answering all kinds of questions. His lectures were fun and he made the course more accessible than it originally seemed.
Lectures! Ciesla was great at this.
The instructor is very passionate about his craft and is respectable
The lectures were definitely the most useful.
Dr. Ciesla's lectures were very interesting and informative; the quiz walkthroughs were also helpful for studying for the final
Fred was super understanding about all the moon journal things, he is a professor that actually cares about his students and genuinely wants them to succeed.
As I stated before, Professor Cielsa is a wonderful professor. He is just put into a tough spot by having to teach such a large, online focused course.
Professor Ciesla is such a wholesome and sweet person!!!!!!!!!! He deserves the world
The lectures were excellent and he always cleared up my confusion on homework assignments during office hours

Comments
Professor Ciesla was very passionate about his work, which made us much more engaged. He also cared a lot about the well–being of his students.
The instructor was very passionate about the topics, and available for questions in office hours.
Honestly lectures had nothing to do with psets. But lectures did have to do with weekly quizzes, which were literally astronomy and philosopher trivia which was google–able. Ciesla is very passionate about his work and wants to share the joy with his students... didn't quite go to plan this year with moon journal scandal, though
the lectures
You can tell Professor Ciesla has a genuine passion for the topic and all he wants is to be able to help students become passionate about it as well. This aspect made the course much more enjoyable!
Prof. Ciesla is an amazing lecturer. Knowing that he is not talking to a class full of future physicists or astronomers, he found ways to keep the class interesting and fun. He is also just truly a kind and understanding person. Especially with everything that went on with the moon journal, he was great. I found myself looking forward to lecture and appreciative of things that I learned in the course.
I think going to lectures is very effective for enriching your understanding of the topics related to the course. The PowerPoint alone won't always help you.
His crystal–clear lecturing, his obvious and infectious love for the material, and his responsiveness to student needs and concerns.
He knew a lot about the moon
He was very passionate and interesting stories about astronomers were cool. All of my notes about them were useless even though we talked about them for >50% of class
His explanations of concepts in the lectures
I thought that the professor was very helpful, especially during office hours. I appreciated how much he valued his work and the topic
His enthusiasm for the topic kept me engaged.
Great life lessons
Na
Prof Ciesla's lectures contributed a lot to my learning. He explains things clearly and in a way that makes sense to non–science majors.
The instructor's clear enthusiasm and passion for the subject really shone through in his lectures
I liked how he was always open to questions, and how he gave us context for how we knew the different things behind the objects we were studying.
Definitely the lectures!
What I found most helpful were the explanations given in lecture about the material being presented, how it was figured out in the first place, and how astronomers use it now to send missions to various objects to learn more about our solar system. The explanations given in response to student questions were especially helpful.

What could the instructor modify to help you learn more?

Comments
Make the class time more related to HW and assignments given.
Make the PSets easier and the quiz questions more clear.
Slides were provided, p–sets were set with detailed instructions.
n/a
none
Nothing. Prof. Ciesla is excellent!
Correlation between lectures and homework.
I often find that at the end of the class, the professor feels the need to slightly rush through the rest of the content he has planned out to discuss before we head off for our next classes. If instead the last 5 minutes of class were dedicated mostly to questions we had concerning content taught during that class, I believe that would improve my learning in this course.
Many of his lecture notes are diagrams and images that he later explains verbally in class. It would be helpful if he could include those explanations in the notes. Also, homework sets were challenging because the wording was sometimes confusing. Additionally, some of the TAs weren't very helpful in explaining concepts or walking through homework problems because many of them don't have a background in astronomy.
Maybe a few practice problems in class

Comments
the instructor is nice, but the slides really need more text
Nothing
N/A
The lectures were interesting at times but hardly correlated with the homework. He would vaguely talk about the topics in class that were on the homework, but the lectures definitely did not prepare me for the homework at all. I almost always had to learn the topic entirely on my own to be successful on the homework.
–
Maybe hold office hours that are dedicated to more than just homework, such as themes from class? Maybe one day of office hours can be for homework questions, and the other day can be for conceptual questions?
Nothing I can think of, psets felt tedious with length, and moon journal assignment was decent but hard to measure anything objectively as a student. I don't think there's a great way to change it but the assignments were fine
not much honestly hes wonderful
It would be helpful if he could record lecture and post them so that we would have access during finals to review.
n/a
Actual notes on what we're supposed to be learning! Or slides with more information for us to review! It's really hard to study just based on having to have written down what he says out loud
I think that Professor Ciesla is an objectively good, engaging professor who was somehow deeply misled in his thinking about what helps students learn and either doesn't realize it or is unwilling to adjust his teaching philosophy. I feel like he thinks assignments like the Canvas discussion posts and the moon journal are "active" or "fun" and that will make students get more out of them; this is completely off base. Neither of those were difficult, but they were busywork that took an unreasonable amount of time in comparison to how much I learned from them. For example, being asked to make a meme is not a valuable use of time. In regard to the moon journal, I really think he needs to rethink this assignment. The questions/analyses we're expected to do at the end of the journal actually did help me/taught me a lot but I don't think actually observing the moon is a valuable part of the assignment? If you aren't spatially/visually minded, can't draw, don't have the time to go searching for the moon whenever, or don't have easy access to a space that's free of buildings, etc. blocking your view or is safe to be out in at night, an assignment that's supposed to be "easy" becomes difficult even if you understand the concepts.
Maybe practice exams for the final?
try to understand your student needs better, especially when this class is designed for non–stem majors! We are not scientists.
I felt like the whole course was organized very well.
Showing the class schedule more often so that students are more easily grounded in the reasoning for that day's lesson. This cohesion was clear at the beginning and end of the course, but near the middle many were confused at why a certain subject came next.
Have discussion groups of some sort, not just lectures
nothing
More focus on concepts in class and less about history. The math on the homework felt incredibly different than in class lectures.
n/a
I think we could do more practice for the quizzes because I often find it hard to connect what we learned in class to the content on the quizzes.
Not much.
TBH, all of the material was helpful in some way and clearly super thoughtfully put–together. My main gripe with the class is that it was so much effort to stay afloat all the assignments, and the assignments themselves were not easy to get good grades on.
I feel like the slides could contain more information. There is a lot of information that was spoken during lecture but could not be reflected on the slides – so if you miss class, it is hard to self–study just from the slides alone.
n/a :)
The issues with this course seem to be out of the professors hands.
I think there was a gap between the lectures and homework assignments/quizzes, where the hw and quizzes were more difficult. If we could have more examples like the hw that would help
Gear lectures more towards psets, since that's what most of the work in this class revolves around. Also, the discussion board component of HW was unneccessary and tedious in my opinion.
Nothing. Prof. Ciesla is an amazing lecturer, mentor, and professor. Thank you!
Nothing!
n/a

Comments
Eliminate discussions.
Maybe just a bit more instruction about the moon
SPECIFY what will be on QUIZZES AND EXAMS.
N/a
It was all good
Creating some more labs to engage in non–moon related things.
Na
I think it would be great if the Prof could encourage more people to attend class and discourage cheating.
I think the quizzes were very difficult and was at a loss for how to prepare for them more. They got better with time, but I think we could take time in class to think about the concepts how we were expected to think about them on the quizzes.
Teach the math on the hw.
Nothing, this was a great course for non–STEM majors and it was really enjoyable (apart from the freakout and tensions during the moon journal scandal)
I think more time could have been spent on explaining more difficult concepts and having enough time to cover all the parts of the solar system than on re–explaining relatively simple concepts for the sake of reviewing the previous class's material.
Some sort of recorded lectures or text–based slides would be nice. I often felt unprepared for quizzes, so knowing the exact information that the professor wants us to know would be good. Even if the slides wouldn't be posted to Canvas anymore, having more in writing to refer to would be good.

The Instructor . . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Organized the course clearly.	4.51	5.00	1.11%	0.00%	7.78%	28.89%	62.22%	0.00%
Presented lectures that enhanced your understanding.	4.48	5.00	2.20%	2.20%	4.40%	27.47%	63.74%	0.00%
Facilitated discussions that were engaging and useful.	4.21	5.00	2.15%	5.38%	13.98%	17.20%	49.46%	11.83%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the course.	4.33	5.00	4.30%	3.23%	8.60%	22.58%	61.29%	0.00%
Challenged you to learn.	4.36	5.00	2.17%	1.09%	9.78%	32.61%	54.35%	0.00%
Helped you gain significant learning from the course content.	4.34	5.00	3.26%	2.17%	10.87%	25.00%	58.70%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.58	5.00	1.09%	0.00%	5.43%	26.09%	65.22%	2.17%
Motivated you to think independently.	4.39	5.00	1.09%	2.17%	13.04%	23.91%	59.78%	0.00%
Worked to create an inclusive and welcoming learning environment.	4.53	5.00	2.15%	0.00%	5.38%	26.88%	64.52%	1.08%
Overall, this instructor made a significant contribution to your learning.	4.36	5.00	3.26%	3.26%	9.78%	21.74%	61.96%	0.00%

Please include the name of the TA/CA/Intern you are evaluating. What aspects of the TA's teaching contributed most to your learning? What could the TA modify to help you learn more? Please include any additional feedback for the TA/CA/Intern.

Comments
provide clearer feedbacks on homework
Ke Shao. He is very knowledgeable and helpful. In addition to helping during OH he also responds to the emails promptly.
Alya Al–Kibbi and Raechel Hearth are wonderful! Alya is great at explaining concepts. Raechel is very patient and always ready to help.
N/A
I didn't interact too much with my TA, but the times I emailed Alya with questions on the homework, she was always helpful.
racheal
Madison Brady. She was very helpful during office hours. Even though she didn't go to the lectures, she knew the best conceptual ways to understand and approach all the homework questions, and made sure that I wasn't just copying down answers, but that I truly understood the logic behind her explanations.
Fiona was so wonderful! Her lecture was really engaging and she was super great to speak with outside of class. Her feedback was useful, as well.
a lot of TAs but I don't really have any contact with them besides receiving announcements from them
Yuke Zheng
n/a
I'm not sure if TAs had answer keys to the homework, but they were not helpful in office hours and led me in the wrong direction when I went. It was easier to just work alone or email Ciesla, which couldn't have been fun for him.
Rachelle Spezzano
The TAs were very helpful especially with the homework that was often challenging
Raechel Hearth. She's amazing!
Raechel and Chris were the TAs I had office hours with every week. They was truly so helpful in aiding the group of us that went each week to go over our assignments. Thank you!!!! I always felt confident that I could go to office hours and walk out with a strong understanding of the concepts we covered.
Menna
All the TA's were awful.
Menna Jones
Fernanda was very helpful with the canvas reminders she sent and great in office hours
Na
Na
NA
Alya

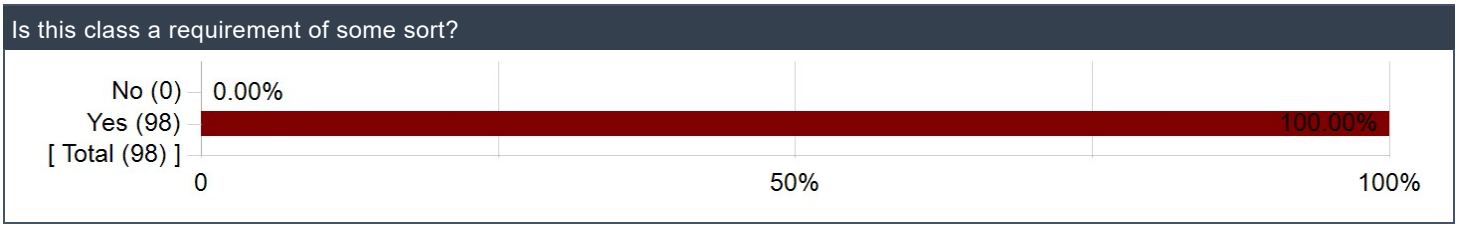
The TA/CA or Intern. . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Facilitated discussions that supported your learning.	4.14	5.00	6.06%	0.00%	15.15%	18.18%	45.45%	15.15%
Gave you useful feedback on your work.	4.13	4.00	6.06%	0.00%	12.12%	30.30%	42.42%	9.09%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the class.	4.14	5.00	6.06%	0.00%	15.15%	18.18%	45.45%	15.15%
Challenged you to learn.	4.07	4.50	6.06%	0.00%	18.18%	18.18%	42.42%	15.15%
Helped you succeed in the class.	4.10	5.00	5.88%	0.00%	20.59%	14.71%	47.06%	11.76%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.29	5.00	2.94%	2.94%	14.71%	14.71%	55.88%	8.82%
Overall, this individual made a significant contribution to your learning.	4.13	5.00	6.25%	0.00%	18.75%	18.75%	50.00%	6.25%

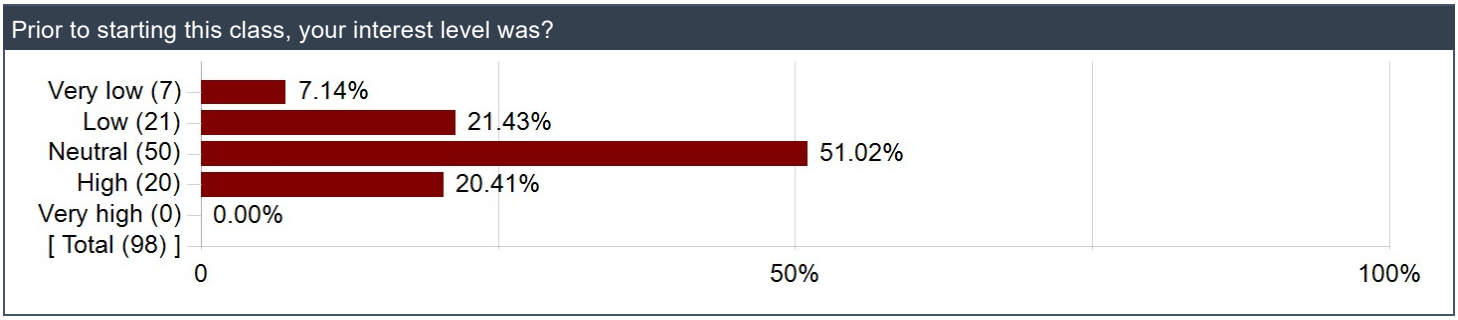
How much did the following elements of the course contribute to your learning gains?

	Mean	Median	No Gain	A Little Gain	Moderate Gain	Good Gain	Great Gain	N/A
Laboratory Experience	4.33	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%
Field Trips	N/A	N/A	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Library Sessions	N/A	N/A	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Review Sessions	4.67	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	50.00%	25.00%
Writing Seminars	N/A	N/A	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%

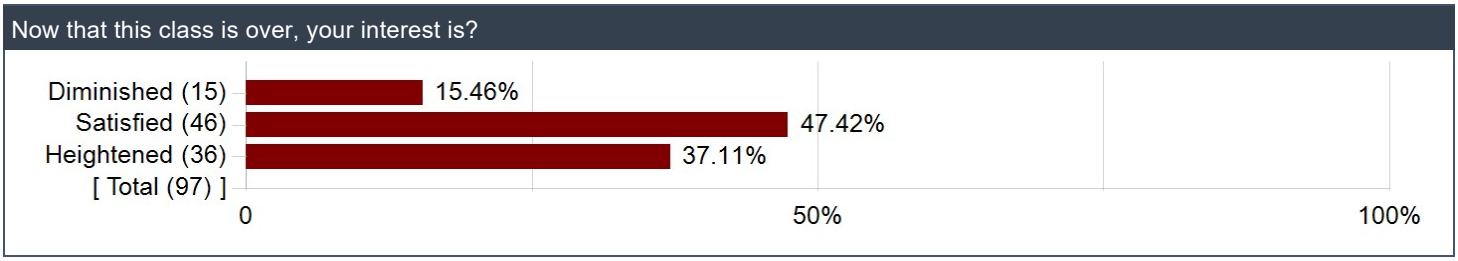
Is this class a requirement of some sort?



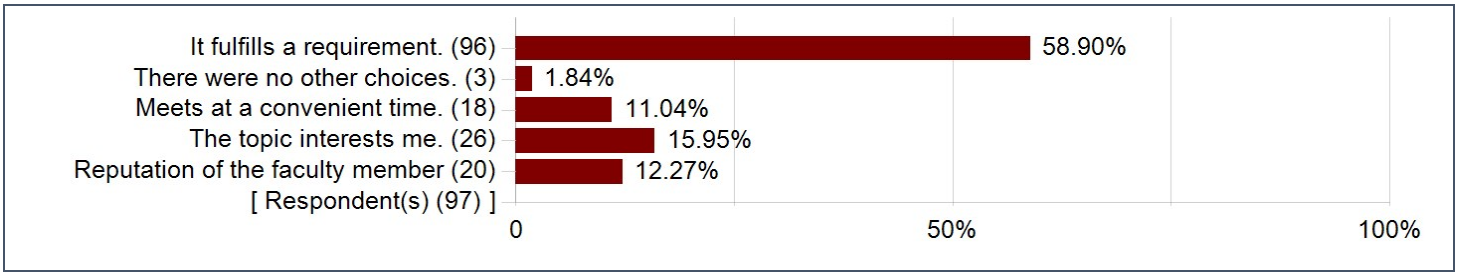
Prior to starting this class, your interest level was?



Now that this class is over, your interest is?



Why did you choose to take this course? (Select all that apply)



How many hours per week outside of attending required sessions did you spend on this course?

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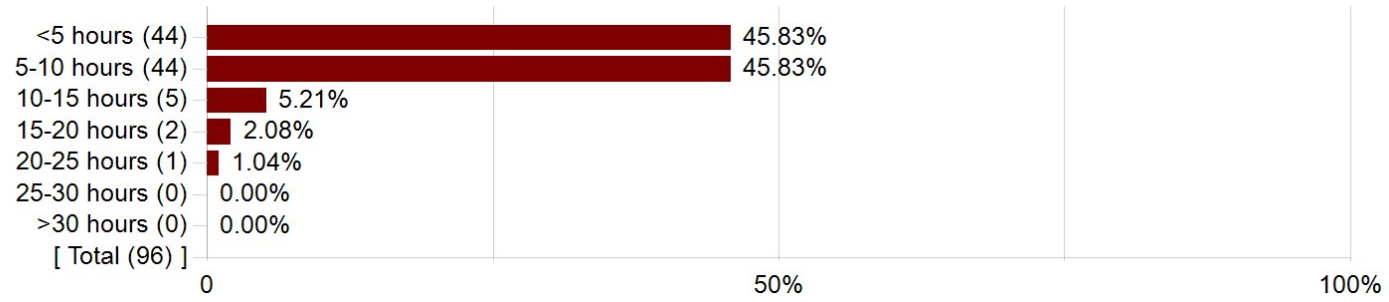

What proportion of classes did you attend?

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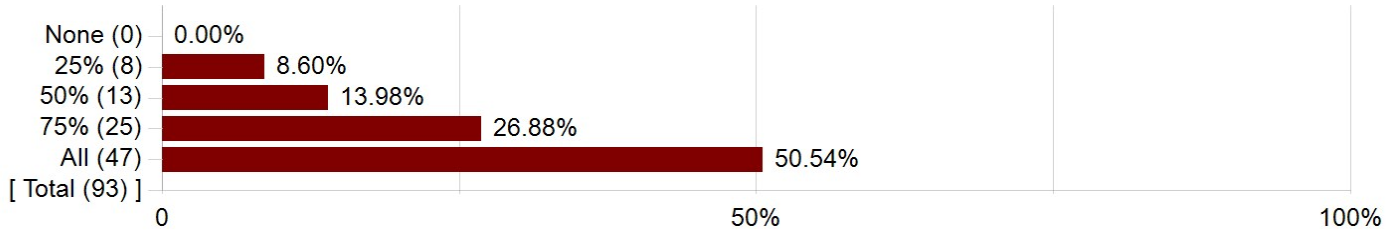

Please comment on the level of difficulty of the course relative to your background and experience.

Comments
The problem sets are way too long
Easy class, HW can be challenging.
Pretty difficult. But apparently one of easier science core classes.
I have taken global warming before, and some of the contents overlap
If you go through the class material regularly the course is not difficult.
it's a real throwback to high school trig
Having some background in trigonometry, geometry, and algebra is necessary. The Problem Sets of this course can be challenging for 2nd–year Humanities/non–STEM majors who haven't taken a mathematics course in 1–2 quarters. Otherwise, the more theoretical and conceptual content is not too challenging for anybody to grasp.
Not horribly difficult. Many students don't attend class in person. I am a little concerned for the final though because the only material for us to use to prep are these mini weekly quizzes and lecture notes.
I did not know anything other than basic knowledge of the planets and other solar system aspects. However, basic trigonometry and algebra skills are needed for this course
Stopped attending class after realizing how useless the lectures are. Make sure you do well on the quizzes as they are very difficult and a large part of your grade. Otherwise a very easy class.
Very reasonable. Basic math.
N/A
Not difficult and no previous experience
The p–sets involved a lot of math, so comfortability doing algebraic equations is recommended. The p–sets expect you to understand how to do these equations and the lectures aren't helpful if someone doesn't have a good understanding of algebra.
hard :(
easy

Comments
I had only taken one core ASTRO class before this, and this class was easy to grasp and understand using my background information.
Mid–level difficulty. More maths than expected
Econ major as a senior, I didn't find this class very hard. Pretty much just basic dimensional analysis and geometry required as math skills
no background is needed; you do want to know trigonometry but he also explains if you ask
Take this class. Pretty accessible PHSC required course and Fred is a very engaging professor.
the quizzes and homework are only easy since they are open–book
The homework feels hard at first, but it's not. Go to office hours once or twice and you'll get the idea
Extremely difficult. Practically impossible. I have no experience in the subject but I put in the maximum amount of effort reasonably possible to do well.
I think Professor Ciesla does not have an accurate understanding of how difficult the class is. I wouldn't say it's unreasonably difficult but he talked a lot about how he thought about/made it accessible for non math/science people, and I don't think that's the case. It's certainly doable and fair, but it would be way more accessible if there was more explicit instruction on the math. I have an incredibly minimal background in math and am a historically poor science student and I wish I hadn't taken this class.
Not very difficult aside from the Moon journal being tedious.
not very difficult– background in geometry and algebra
It is a perfect intro level class.
I've never studied astronomy or planetary science in college, but this class was extremely beginner friendly and spurred me to love the subject
It was hard. I believe lectures did not completely align to the material on quizzes or the final exam, so it made it difficult to succeed on those.
good introductory class for astronomy concepts
As long as you put in time and efforts to learn, you will be fine
easy
Can get tricky if you aren't paying attention in lectures
I am a philosophy major and did not struggle with the math or content any more than anyone else did
The course is fairly easy given its meant to be for non–science majors. But it becomes easier if you are interested in the material.
Manageable for non–STEM majors. Assignments required more attention–to–detail rather than math skills.
wasn't difficult, but you're not guaranteed an A just for doing the work unlike other core classes
the level is not hard but be careful on your moon journal.
I am pretty bad at physics, though I took algebra in highschool, and it took me around 4–5 hours to do pset every week. I feel like you can survive in this class with good grasp of high–school math.
This class challenged my ability to visualize things—especially at the scale of the universe; I also felt confused by the math at times
It could be challenging particularly on the homework but it was manageable
Not hard! Some geometry/algebra, but nothing too crazy
Pretty difficult, professor was nice
Class was easy until Moongate, and most of the class got screwed for cutting corners. Honestly understand what Ciesla was trying to do– he's passionate about the earth and wanted us to engage with the class in a genuine way, and most didn't. So I think the class might become harder in the future to combat this stuff.
doable
This class was very beginner friendly. I think Professor Ciesla does not expect you to come in as a vet physicist with an already comprehensive understanding of everything. I would recommend to anybody who is even remotely interested in astrophysics or needs to fulfill their core requirement!
I had no experience and was fine in the course. The assignments are math heavy, but its only trig, geometry, and algebra (with the occasional log) so it's manageable.
It is not a hard class if you are good in math (basic trig and algebra), but it can get challenging if you miss too many lectures.
Not too hard, difficulties were unforeseen, but present nonetheless
It was very difficult but not because I did not know anything. It was difficult because the homework was just random equations he assigned, none of which would end up being tested for on the final. For the quizzes and final, I had no clue what to study for because he did not specify if the astronomers would be on the final and quizzes, so even though they were a HUGE proportion of

Comments
class, there was not a single question on the final about them.
If you go to lecture and understand the assignments, it is a reasonable difficulty
It was easier because I had a background in all the mathematical elements
Not too bad
Na
It was not a difficult class as long as you complete the work expected of you.
This course is not particularly difficult, but it requires you to put in effort (if you don't cheat) and I would strongly recommend attending lecture. Anyone who is interested should take this class.
It was more difficult than I thought it would be. The quizzes and the final were very difficult, but I thought everything else was good.
Not very hard. Easier if you know trig well.
Definitely doable if you go to all the lectures and take good notes!!
I found some of the math–based parts of this course difficult, as I learned geometry and algebra in high school but without much of a focus on applications to physical science, which itself was not well taught at my high school. I had to seek the guidance of the professor or a TA for every homework assignment to explain how to think about astronomical scenarios in a mathematical sense.