WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY *Department of Physics & Astronomy*

Spring 2025 PHYS 491 Syllabus

***GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION***

Advisor: Dr. Kevin Covey Email: [coveyk@wwu.edu](mailto:coveyk@wwu.edu) Office: CF 385A

Website: <https://github.com/kevincovey/Spring2025_PHYS491>

***MENTORING PHILOSOPHY***

It is my goal to help my students get where they want to be. Students have their own unique strengths and weaknesses and their own unique career goals. I ask students to set their own goals for their research and development, and I lay out steps students should take to meet those goals. I do not push or pull my students to do what I think is best.

I value open and honest communication. I try to set clear expectations for all students, and I routinely check in with my students to let them know how they are performing. Above all, I see students as whole people, and I try to help students holistically manage research while balancing other aspects of their busy lives. I understand that research may not be a student’s first priority, and I respect students’ ability to manage their own time.

This group is meant to be a collaborative, welcoming group. The knowledge of all group members is a resource for you. You should feel free to seek advice (research, coding, applications, etc.) from other group members. You should freely talk with other group members about my advising style, especially if aspects are bothering you. Other group members should be supportive and offer advice.

***RESEARCH MATERIALS***

You will be given access to a github repository that we will share. In this repository, I will place:

* This syllabus
* Links to the paper(s) we will read this quarter
* Code and data sets shared by the authors of the papers we will read through
* A schedule for course readings

At the end of this quarter, I will ask you to complete a reflection of the scientific knowledge, research skills, and professional skills you have gained this quarter, and how they relate to your future goals. After you submit the reflection, I will write up a brief note with my own observations of your progress, identifying areas where you have excelled, areas where you could potentially grow further, and thoughts on next steps that might help you advance towards your goals. I will send you a copy of these observations, and invite you to have a one-on-one end-of-quarter meeting to discuss them.

***EXPECTATIONS***

The sections below lay out my expectations for maintaining progress in this reading group. Over the course of the quarter, I expect you will:

* Attend scheduled meetings of the reading group meetings
* In advance of each meeting, spend at least 2 hours of preparation time completing the assigned reading and/or mentoring activity.
* If possible, attend relevant departmental seminars or student presentations during scholars week.
* Treat group members, me, and the office staff with respect. Respectful conduct is outlined in our Department’s Code of Conduct, a copy of which is in the group folder

**Definition of preparation time:** All time that you spend actively reading and trying to understand the assigned reading, including googling unfamiliar vocabulary, looking up related work on NASA’s Astrophysics Data Service, taking notes, thinking about questions to ask during the reading meeting, or preparing to lead discussion is preparation time. Similarly, all time you spend actively reading and completing mentoring activities is preparation time as well.

There is no room in my research group for any form of discrimination, bullying, or microaggression. This includes but is not limited to race, sexual orientation, gender, religions, culture, language, age, and differing abilities (visible or otherwise). This also covers belittling and code shaming. As part of my group, you will actively work to ensure everyone is given the full opportunity to take part in research.

***MEETINGS***

We will hold reading group meetings most weeks: see the schedule on github for the specific dates & times we plan to meet.

**If at all possible, please let me know at least 24 hours in advance if you will need to miss a scheduled meeting.** This will help me plan our time together more effectively.