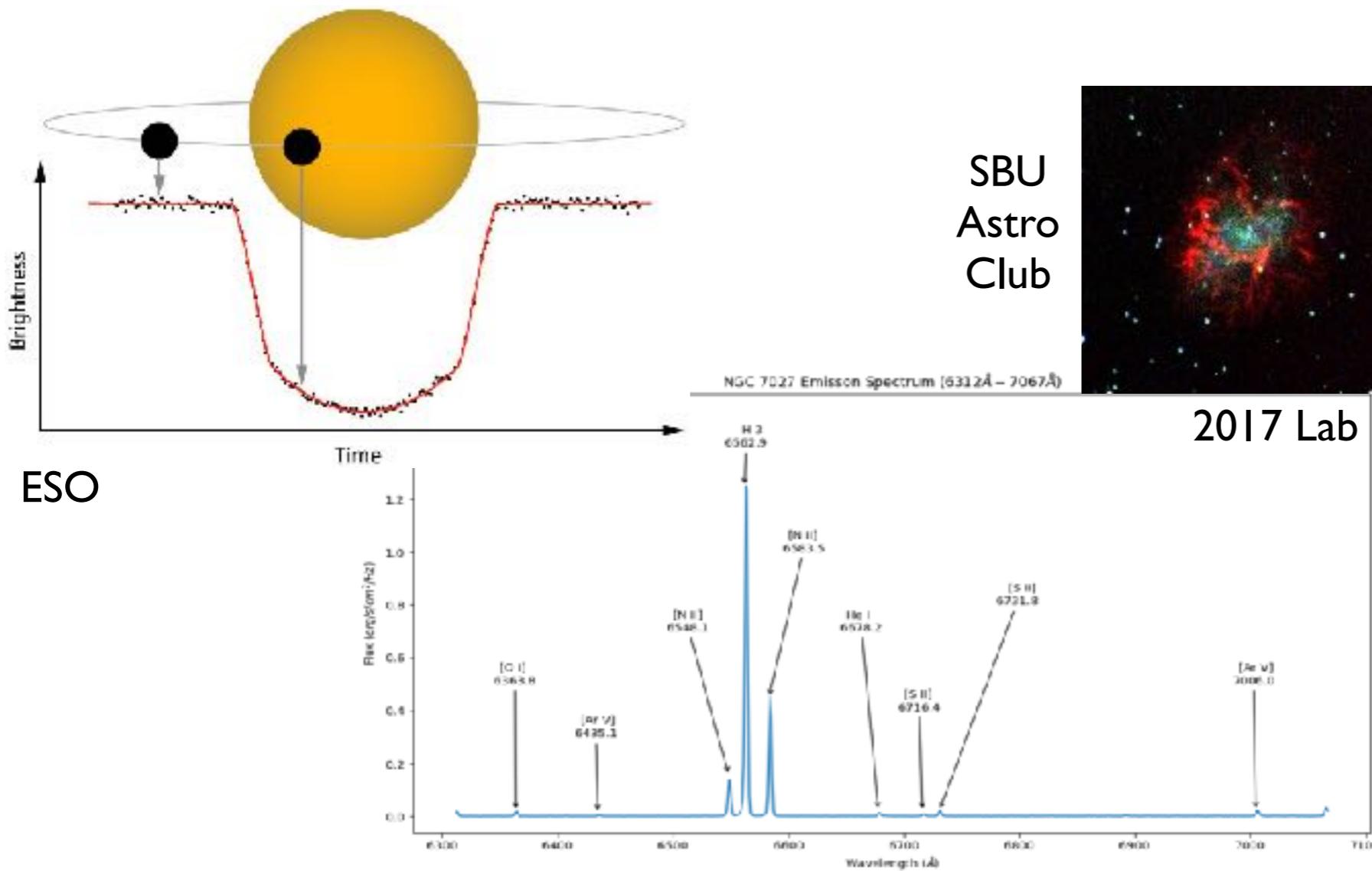


# PHY 517 / AST 443: Observational Techniques in Astronomy

Anja von der Linden

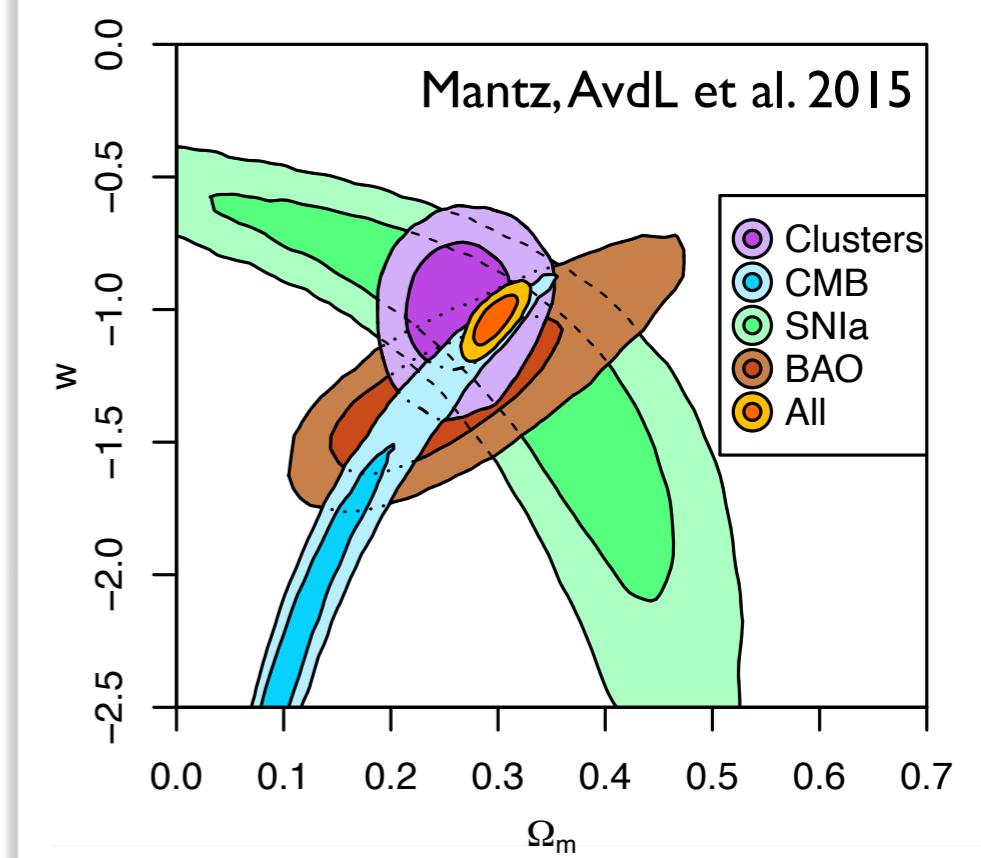


Fall 2025



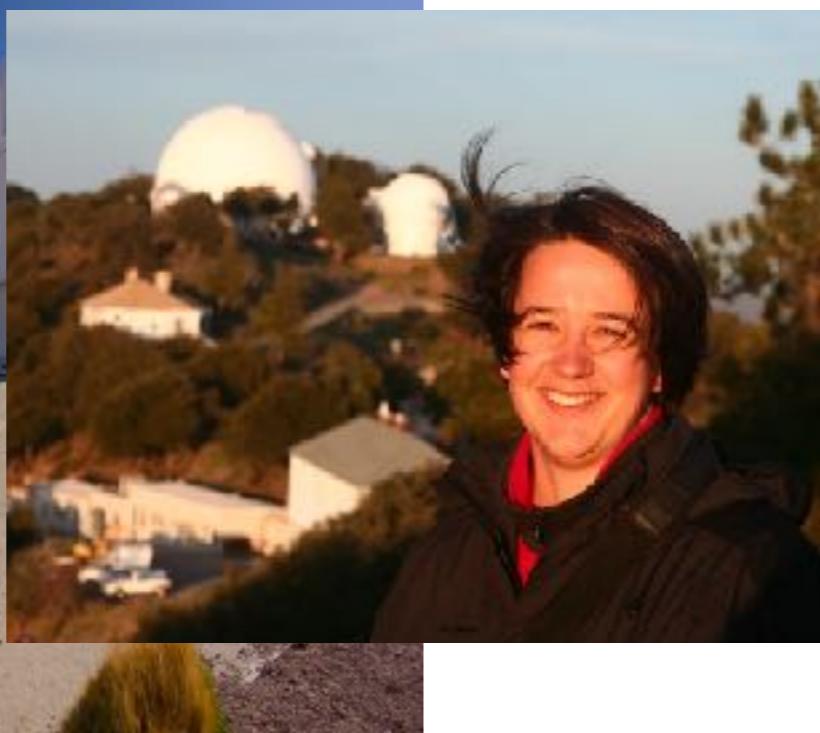
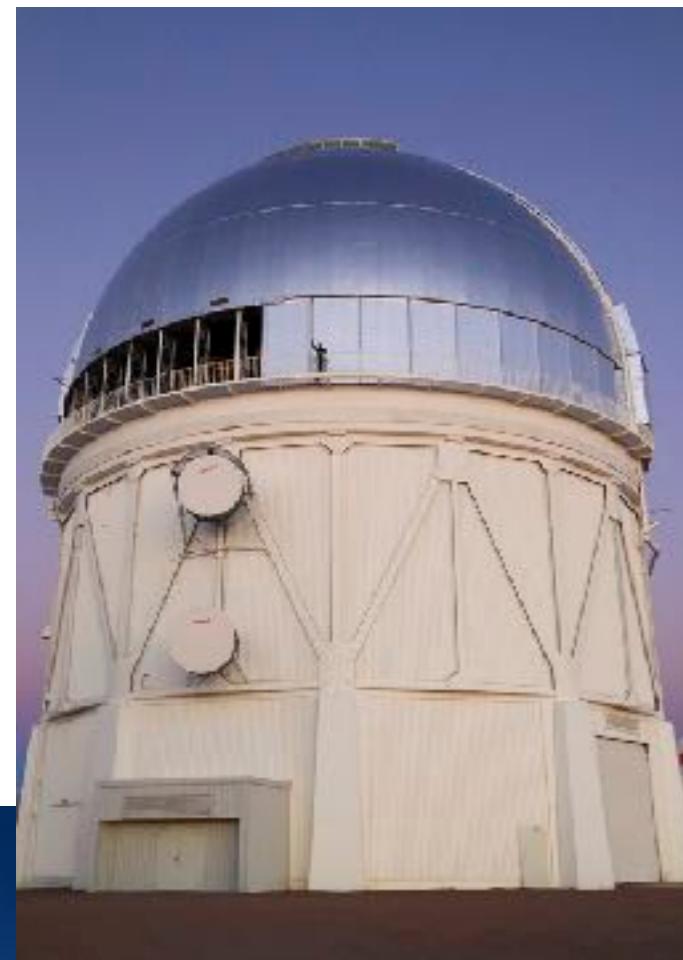
Hello!

I am an observational cosmologist with a focus on galaxy clusters and weak gravitational lensing



NASA

# Big telescopes!



# My Bio



T.Wolf



unknown

- undergrad: University of Bonn
- PhD: Max-Planck-Institute for Astrophysics, Garching
- post-docs: Stanford University  
Tycho Brahe Fellow, Stanford + Copenhagen
- since Dec. 2015: faculty at SBU



Stanford U



N.Amorisco

# How I got interested in astronomy



1990s:  
Bayer moved my  
Dad+family to  
SE Texas  
  
skies were dark,  
nights were  
warm, people  
were different



# IAYC

International  
Astronomical  
Youth  
Camp

## 59th International Astronomical Youth Camp 2025

1st - 21st August 2025  
Groepsaccommodatie Klonie  
Ellertshaar, Netherlands

Applications open until March 9th

[www.iayc.org](http://www.iayc.org) - [info@iayc.org](mailto:info@iayc.org)



# How I stayed interested in astronomy

International  
Astronomical Youth  
Camp:  
spend 3 weeks with  
~70 young people  
from all over the  
world

# What I currently work on: Rubin / LSST

- 8.4m (~6.7m effective) telescope
- 10 sq. deg. camera, with 3.2 billion pixels
- Cerro Pachon, Chile
- *Legacy Survey of Space and Time (LSST)*: 10-year survey of the entire southern sky
- Main Survey start: ~late 2025
- On Mgmt Team of LSST Dark Energy Science Collaboration (DESC); >1440 members



Rubin Obs.



Astronomy Magazine

# Science Drivers & Survey Design

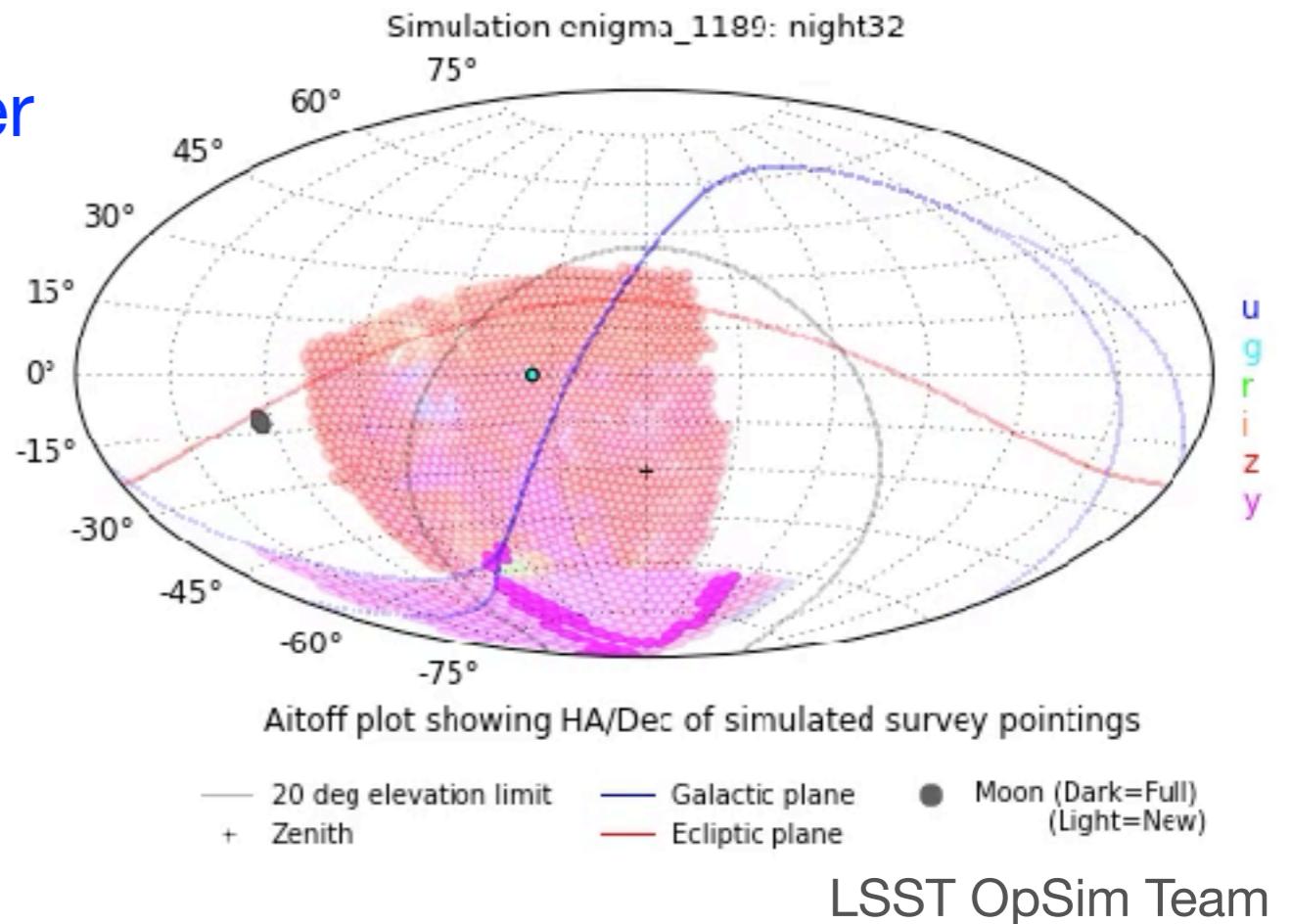
- explore the optical **transient sky**
- catalog the **Solar System** (asteroids, Near-Earth Objects)
- map **Milky Way** structure
- probe **dark energy** and **dark matter**

→ basic survey design:

- many brief (30s) visits
- image the entire visible sky every 3 nights
- 10-year survey
- weak-lensing-quality imaging
- 6 bands: ugrizY

- ~10 000 alerts per visit, public within 60 seconds of observation
- yearly data releases, public to US + Chile + int. partners via Rubin Science Platform
- strong Education & Public Outreach component

Year 0 Day 32.3925



# SBU Physics and Astronomy Faculty and Students Prepare to Measure the Universe

June 23, 2025 | 5 min read

## Newly Constructed Rubin Observatory in Chile Readyng 10-year Ultra-Wide, Ultra-Deep Movie of the Sky

Stony Brook University professors — along with post-doctoral, graduate and undergraduate students — from the Department of Physics and Astronomy are preparing to measure the Universe with the newly constructed National Science Foundation (NSF)-Department of Energy (DOE) [Vera C. Rubin Observatory](#) in Chile.

# First Look!



5 pages in  
NYT

# Course TAs

Béla Arwen <[bela.arwen@stonybrook.edu](mailto:bela.arwen@stonybrook.edu)>

Paras Sharma  
<[paras.sharma@stonybrook.edu](mailto:paras.sharma@stonybrook.edu)>

# Course Purpose

- graduate-level class (PHY 517), cross-listed for advanced undergraduates (AST 443) planning to go to grad school for astronomy
- purpose: teach you the basics of how to be an observational astronomer
- this is the *only* class at SBU with this purpose: we have a lot to cover

# Course Objectives

- introduction to observational astronomy
- design, take, analyze and interpret astronomical observations
- report your work in a scientific paper
- same concepts as needed for these:

A. Cooper



Keck 10m telescopes

NASA



Hubble Space Telescope

# Mt Stony Brook Observatory

- roof-top dome + telescope (14-inch) + CCD camera + spectrograph



SBU Astronomy Club

# How to be an observational astronomer

1. come up with an interesting idea / hypothesis
2. search for and analyze archival observations
3. write a **telescope proposal**
4. plan and execute your **observations**
5. analyze your **data**
6. write a **journal paper**
7. present your work at conferences

# We'll deviate a bit ...

1. conduct and analyze **observations**
2. lab report → **journal paper**
3. write a **telescope proposal**
4. serve on a Time Allocation Committee (TAC)
5. **present your work in class**

# Lab 1 - CCD cameras

- measure properties of our CCD cameras
- understand the role of calibration data
- familiarize yourself with the equipment
- take a pretty picture

We have a new camera, and are still in the process of integrating it into the lab.



SBU Astro Club

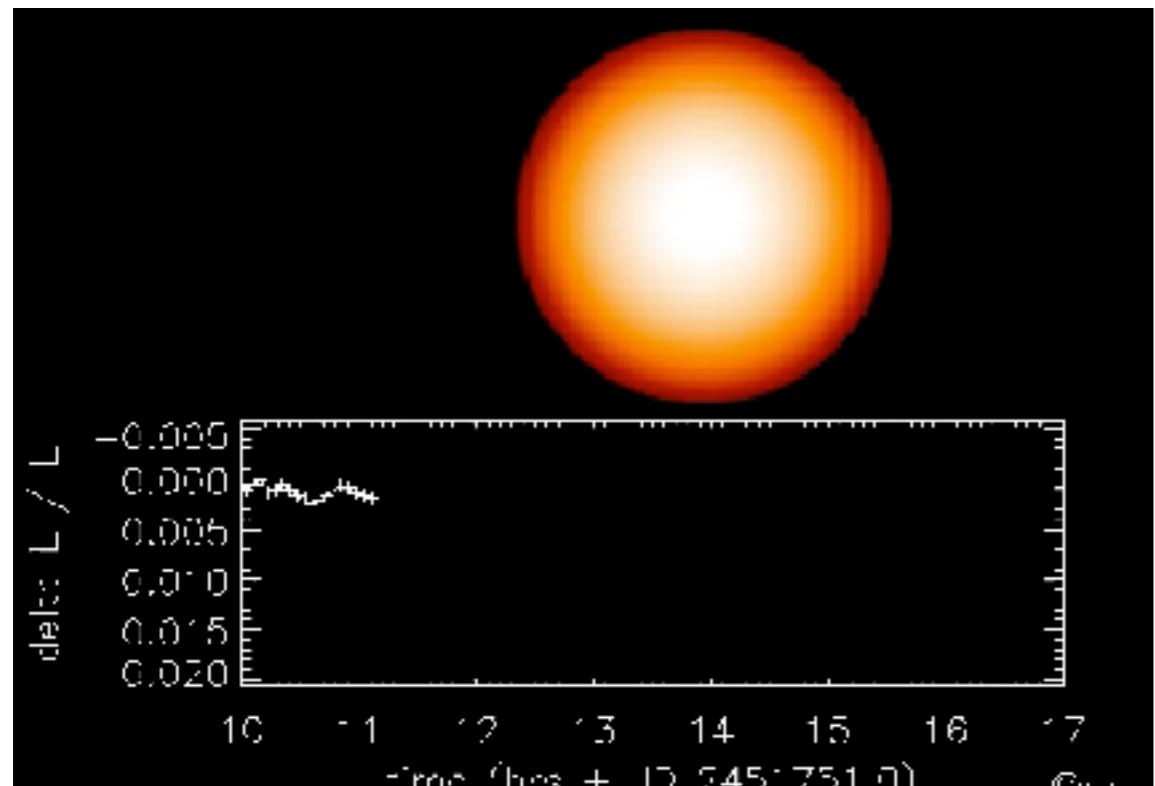
# Lab 2: photometry *or* spectroscopy

Two options:

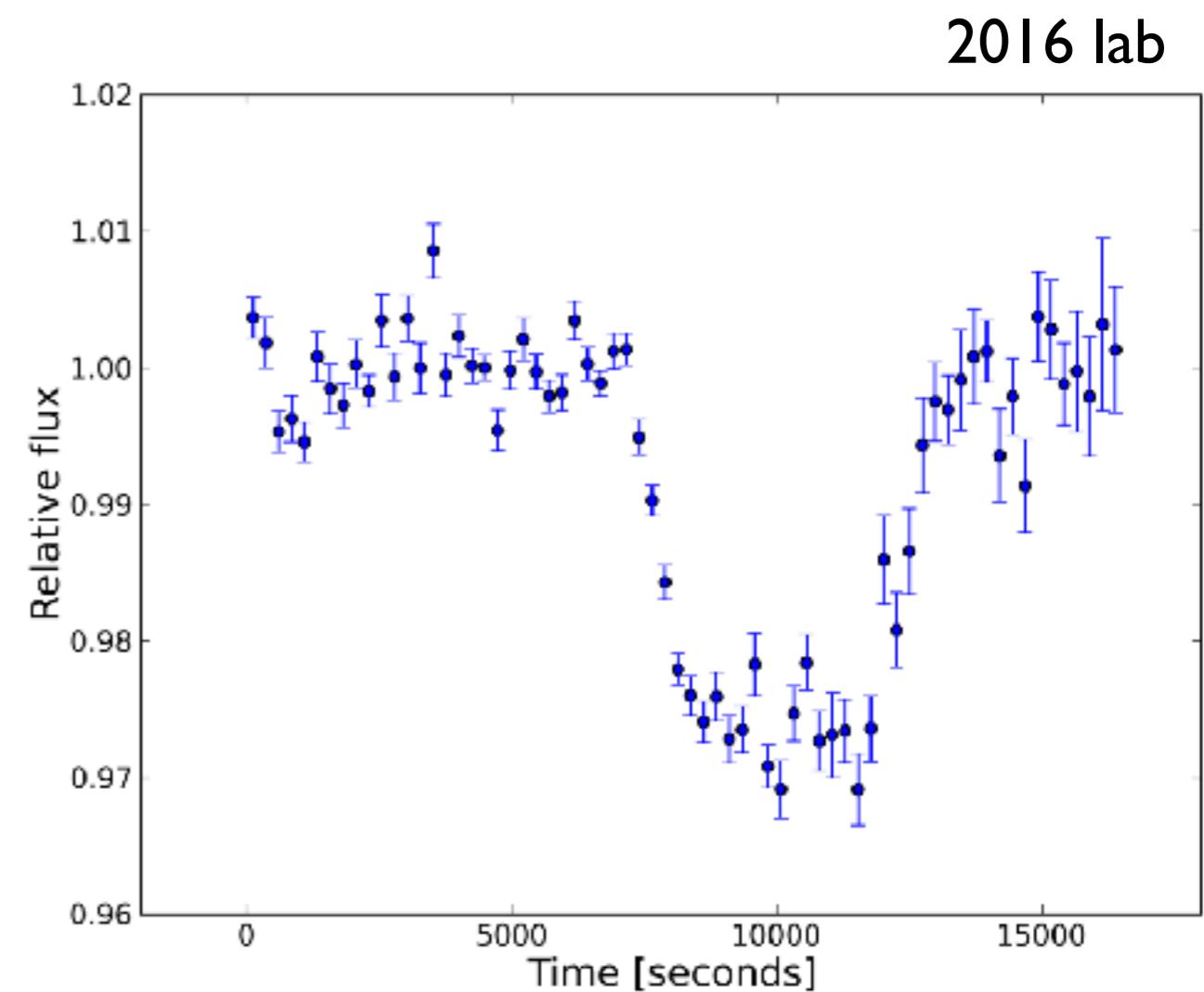
- detect an exoplanet transit via time-series photometry
- take spectra of stars with a range of temperatures

# Lab 2a - optical imaging; time-series

- detect an exoplanet transit

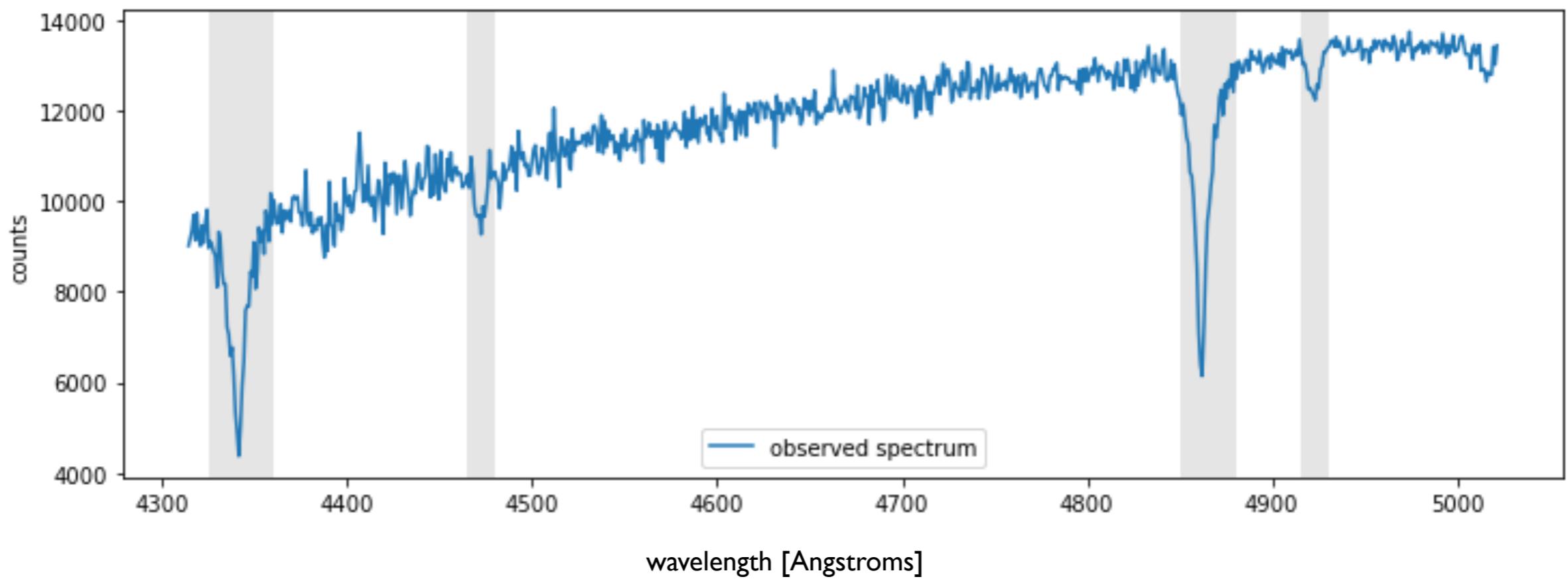


Deeg & Garrido 2000



# Lab 2b - optical spectroscopy

- compare spectra of stars with range of temperatures



# Lab 3 - your proposal

- come up with your own project idea, write a telescope proposal for the Mt. Stony Brook telescope
- has to be the opposite of what you choose for Lab 2 (imaging vs. spectroscopy)
- we will hold a Time Allocation Committee - just like real astronomers!
- each lab team will conduct their top-ranked project

# Data analysis

astronomy ~100 years ago:



astronomy today:



Mt. Wilson archive

# Data analysis

- CCD cameras and digital image processing were revolutionary for astronomy
- first CCD cameras used on telescopes ~1980
- the Sloan Digital Sky Survey (SDSS), designed in the 90s, was one of the first “Big Data” projects; today we are preparing for the Rubin Observatory’s Legacy Survey of Space and Time (LSST), ~20 TB per night, every night for 10 years
- *research in astronomy requires programming, and statistical analysis of large datasets*

- we will use several common astronomy software packages:
  - Source Extractor
  - ds9
  - ~~pyraf / iraf~~
  - astrometry.net
  - FTOOLS
- most astronomy research is done on Unix / Linux. bash provides an integrated scripting language
- python is becoming ubiquitous in astronomy as higher-level programming language
- however, this is not a class on programming. we will provide basic instructions and help, but you will have to figure out many things on your own (use google, ChatGPT, etc.)

# Computing Resources

- all necessary software is installed on the machines in the Astro Computing Lab
- you can work in the Lab, and/or you can **ssh** into these machines from your laptop
- you will receive a username and password (valid for all computers in the lab); please change your password - make it complex!
- **keep your password safe!** our computers are under constant attack
- **back up your data!** e.g. google drive. minimum: your raw data, scripts to analyze the data, data that you used for final plots

# Class structure

## Class times:

- Mon + Wed 3:30-6:20pm
- ~6 lectures in the beginning
- other sessions: tutorials / data analysis help sessions
- Proposal deadline: Oct. 15
- Time Allocation Committee: Oct. 22
- Final Presentations: Dec. 3+8

# Class structure

## Data taking:

- scheduled **separately from class time**
- Lab 1: mostly day-time; one evening for pretty pictures
- Lab 2 - observational labs: **evenings / nights**; you need good weather → schedule target night + 2 back-up nights for each lab
- Lab 3 - observational lab (presumably night-time), details depend on your project

*It is essential that you get your data - you will need to be flexible about scheduling night-time observations!*

# Course webpage: [https://github.com/anjavdl/PHY517\\_AST443](https://github.com/anjavdl/PHY517_AST443)

Code Issues 5 Pull requests Discussions Actions Projects Wiki Security Insights Settings

## Home

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### General Information

Class time and place: MoWe 3:30 - 6:20pm, ESS 450

Credits: 3 (PHY 517) or 4 (AST 443)

Instructor: Anja von der Linden (anja.vonderlinden 'at' stony brook.edu, ESS 453)

Office hours: TBD or by appointment

TAs:

- Paras Sharma (paras.sharma 'at' stonybrook.edu), office hours TBD, ESS 457A or by appointment
- Ivy Huang (ivy.m.huang 'at' stonybrook.edu), office hours TBD, ESS 457A or by appointment

Suggested texts:

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- Practical Statistics for Astronomers, J.V. Wall & C.R. Jenkins (Cambridge University Press, 2008)

Prerequisites: AST203 (Astronomy), PHY277 (Computation for Physics and Astronomy), WRT102 (Intermediate Writing Workshop)

Class times will be scheduled either as lectures, tutorials, or data analysis help sessions, i.e. the possibility to work on the data analysis in the presence of the instructor / the TAs. In addition, the labs need to be scheduled with the TAs. Lab 1 is to be completed during day-time, independent of the weather. For Labs 2 and 3, expect to schedule 3 night-time observing sessions each - you need to be flexible for the weather!

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# Schedule Spring 2025

arjavdi edited this page 2 days ago · 4 revisions

Edit New page

Date	Topics	Slides	Tutorials	Homework
Jan 27	Intro, Coordinate Systems	Lecture 0, Lecture 1		HW1, due Jan 29
Jan 29	Time, Magnitudes, Atmosphere, Telescopes	Lecture 2		HW2, due Feb 5
Feb 3	CCDs, FITS files	Lecture 3	<a href="#">Tu1</a> , <a href="#">Python1</a> , <a href="#">Python2</a>	
Feb 5	Statistics 1	Lecture 4	<a href="#">Tu4</a>	HW3, due Feb 12
Feb 10	Statistics 2	Lecture 5		HW4, due Feb 12
Feb 12	Data Analysis Help Session		<a href="#">Tu5</a>	HW5, due Feb 19
Feb 17	Spectroscopy	Lecture 6	<a href="#">Tu6</a>	HW6, due Feb 24
Feb 19	Data Analysis Help Session			
Feb 24	Data Analysis Help Session			
Feb 26	Data Analysis Help Session			
Mar 3	Instructions: Proposal Writing	Lecture 7, <a href="#">wiki link</a>		

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Lecture notes, etc. will be linked from schedule

# Observing Equipment

anjavdl edited this page 9 hours ago · [11 revisions](#)

## Mt. Stony Brook 14-inch telescope

Our Department operates the Mt. Stony Brook observatory, housing a 14-inch Meade LX200-ACF telescope on a Mesu-200 German Equatorial Mount. This will be the workhorse telescope for the imaging and spectroscopic components of the course.

[Step-by-step instructions](#)

[Telescope manual](#)

[Mesu mount Set-Up Instructions](#)

[SiTech Controller Manual](#)

The mount has GoTo functionality through the software [Cartes du Ciel](#).

## CCD camera for imaging

Imaging observations with the 14-inch telescope will be taken with the SBIG STL-1001E CCD camera. The CCD camera is mounted on the back end of the telescope and is controlled through a laptop computer. A set of standard broad-band BVRI and a narrow-band H-alpha filters are available.

[STL-1001E spec sheet](#)

[CCDSoft step-by-step instructions](#)

[Operations manual](#)

[CCDSoft manual](#)

## Spectrographs

We have two DADOS spectrographs; one has the low-resolution grating (200 l/mm) installed, the other the high-resolution grating (900 l/mm).

[Step-by-step instructions](#)

[Spectrograph manual](#)

[Tutorial by B. Koch](#)

# Manuals etc. for all observing equipment

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# Observing Calendar

Anja von der Linden edited this page on Aug 15, 2017 · 2 revisions

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# Observing Calendar

Can be found [here](#).

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## Computing

- Computing Resources
- Astro Software Overview

## CCD Lab

anjavdl edited this page on Jan 26, 2021 · [2 revisions](#)

# Lab Instructions

Edit

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### Experiment Description:

[https://github.com/anjavdl/PHY517\\_AST443/blob/master/ccd\\_lab/ccd\\_lab.pdf](https://github.com/anjavdl/PHY517_AST443/blob/master/ccd_lab/ccd_lab.pdf)

### Equipment Quick-Start Instructions:

[Telescope](#)

[CCDSof](#)

[Spectrograph](#)

### Preparation:

Schedule your data acquisition with the TAs. The lab takes about 3-4h. Make sure to read and understand all of the instructions linked above before the lab! You will be quizzed on the concepts that the lab conveys. Moreover, good preparation will allow you to complete the lab faster. *If you are not adequately prepared, you will have to reschedule the lab, and will receive a grade penalty.*

+ Add a custom footer

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## Computing Resources

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### The Astro Student Computing Lab

Data analysis sessions and tutorials will take place in the Astro Computing Lab in ESS. You will receive an envelope with your username and password to these computers at the beginning of the course. The machines should have all needed astronomy software installed (except python, which for which you can find installation instructions [here](#)). In addition, `kirk` is the central server. Note that this machine is not physically accessible. You can also choose to use your own laptop to do so instead (see instructions below). There are enough computers so that every group can use one, but not enough for all students, so please bring your laptop if you have one.

The computers in the Astro Computing Lab all run Linux, with which you should be familiar from PHY 277. If you are a bit rusty on your Linux command line skills, you may find a "cheat sheet" such as [this one](#) useful.

#### Your log-in

You will receive either an e-mail, or a sheet of paper with your username and initial password. Do not give this paper to anybody else, or leave it lying around. With this account, you can log into any computer in the computing lab, directly or remotely (remote access is described below). Your first action should be to change your password (see below).

#### When using the astro lab computers in person

The fastest (and recommended) desktop manager on our systems is `MATE`. To select it, click on the settings wheel on the screen where you enter your password. Please make sure to log out when you are done! Do not just leave the computer with the screen locked.

**Do not restart the computer!**

#### Set-up, home and data directories

The first time that you log into a specific machine in the lab (e.g. `spock`), it will set up basic configuration files in your account's home directory on that machine, `/home/<username>`. This will make subsequent log-ins to the same machine faster. **Everything else in /home/username will be deleted every night.**

#### Changing your password

The first time that you log in, your account should always be unpassworded. To do so, log into `kirk` and run the following command:

# Astro Computing Cluster Instructions

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Specific software descriptions

# Home

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## General Information

Class time and place: MoWe 3:30 - 6:20pm, ESS 450

Credits: 3 (PHY 517) or 4 (AST 443)

Instructor: Anja von der Linden ([anja.vonderlinden 'at' stonybrook.edu](mailto:anja.vonderlinden@stonybrook.edu), ESS 453)

Office hours: TBD or by appointment

TAs:

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PHY517 / AST443 Spr...

Threads More Channels

# computing\_other  
# general  
# latex  
# lectures  
# python  
# random

+ Add channels

HE Direct messages

Slackbot  
anja.vonderlinden you  
Ko Kedarsh Kaushik  
Ko Kedarsh Kaushik, Radhakri...  
R Radhakrishnan Srinivasan  
+ Add teammates

+

#random ★  
Add a topic

R K 3 + Add i

# Outside of class, we will use slack for communication - look for an invitation in your e-mail inbox

You've found the #random channel

This channel is for... well, everything else. It's a place for team jokes, spur-of-the-moment ideas, and funny GIFs. Go wild!

Edit description

Wednesday, January 27th

anja.vonderlinden 8:23 PM  
Joined #random along with 2 others.

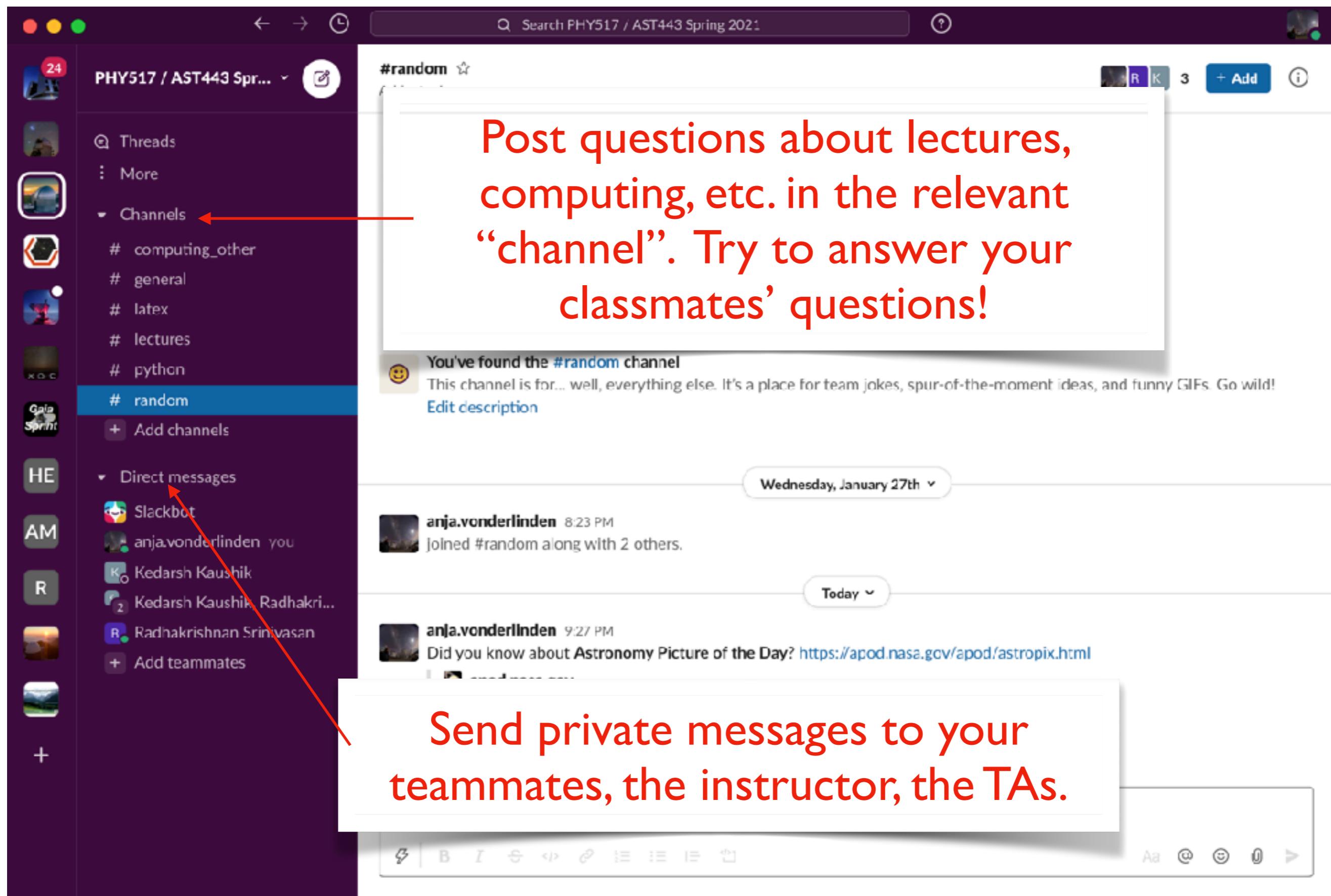
Today

anja.vonderlinden 9:27 PM  
Did you know about Astronomy Picture of the Day? <https://apod.nasa.gov/apod/astropix.html>

apod.nasa.gov  
Astronomy Picture of the Day  
A different astronomy and space science related image is featured each day, along with a brief explanation.

# Best way to keep track of slack: install the App on your computer

Aa @ ⌂ ⌂ >



# Brightspace

- “official” announcements will be sent via Brightspace
  - ➡ *make sure that you receive e-mail notifications*
- submit your homeworks, lab reports, and proposals on Brightspace
- grades will also be posted to Brightspace

# Team work

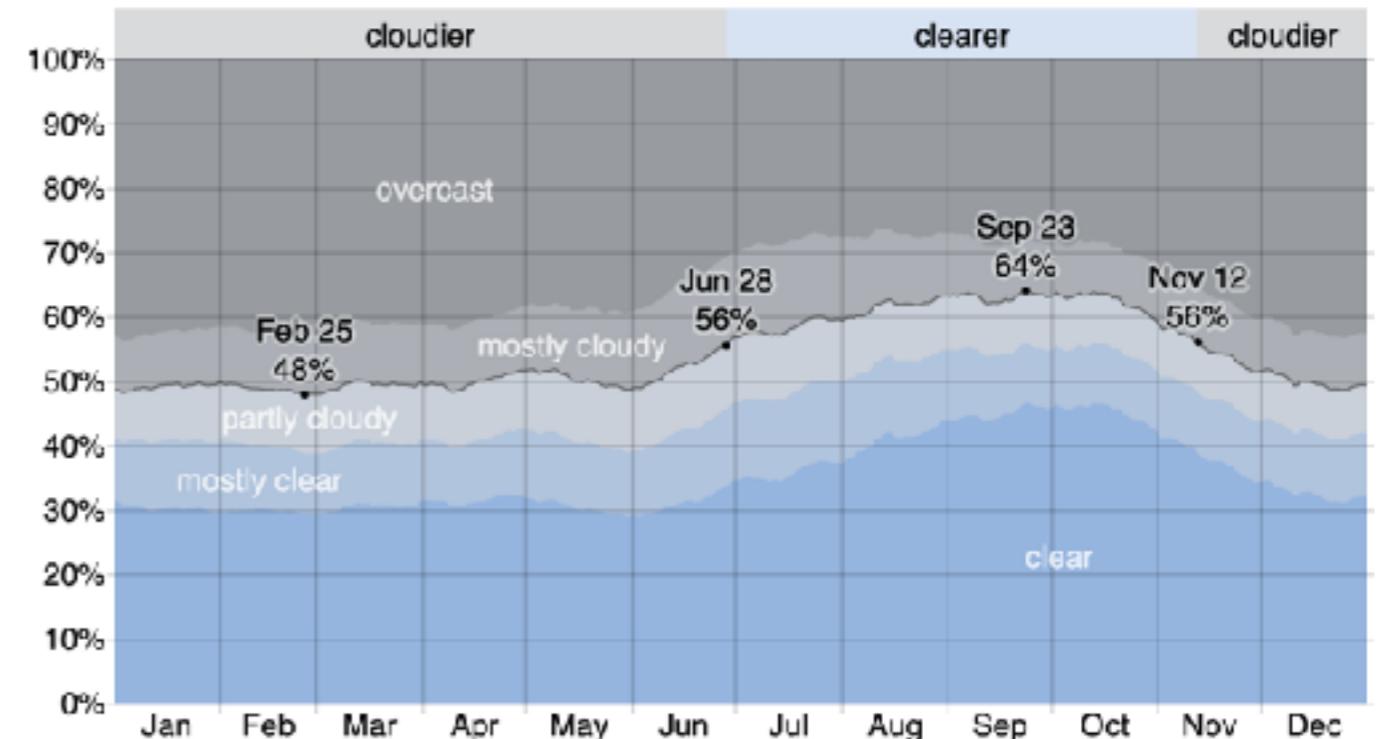
- observational astronomy is done in teams
- for the labs, you will observe in **teams of 2 or 3**
- you are highly encouraged (and expected) to work together on the data analysis
- everybody has to submit individual lab reports (however, proof-reading each other's reports is encouraged)
- I will assign teams based on these criteria:
  - the preferences you submitted
  - weeknight availability
  - programming background (at least 1 person familiar with python)

# (Night-time) observing

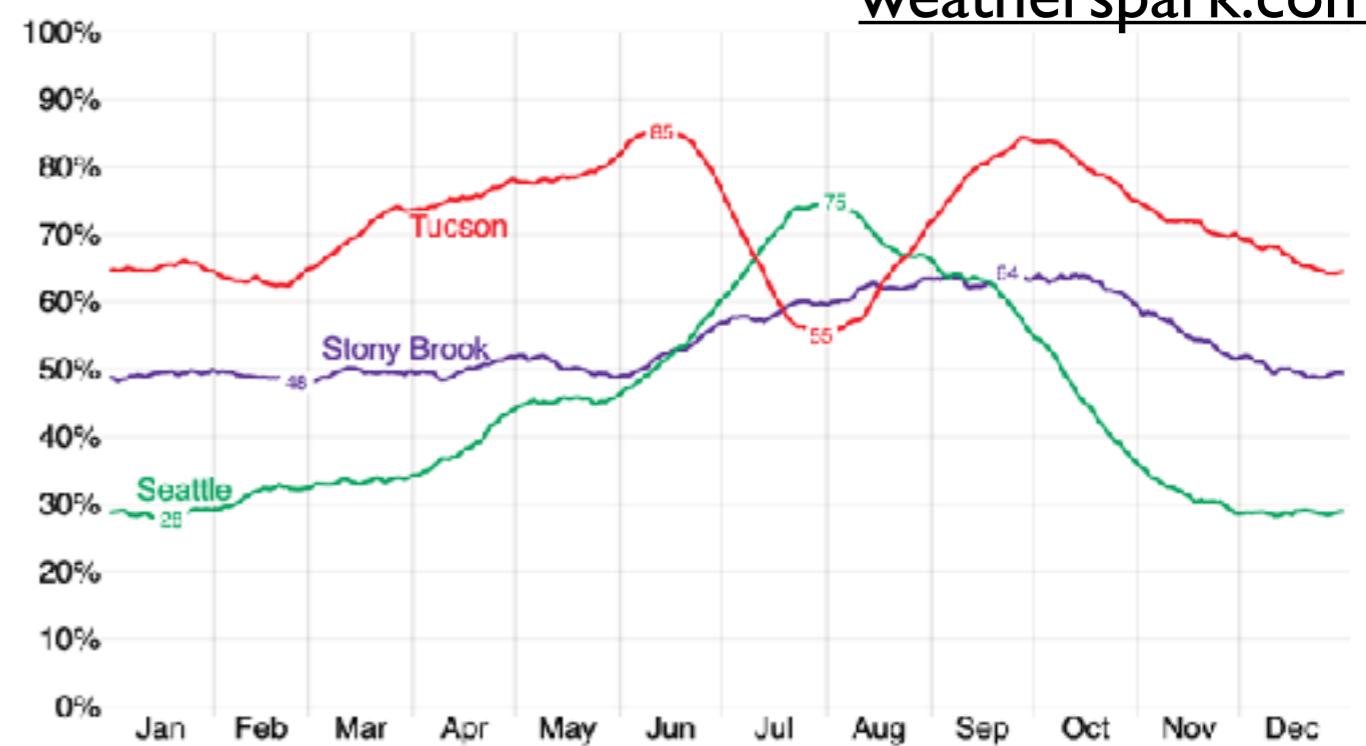
- a TA or instructor must be present (or in the building)
- please plan your observations to be done by ~ 1-2 am
- familiarize yourself with the instructions: **you will be quizzed at the beginning**
- bring:
  - WARM clothes!
  - a red flash-light / rear bike-light
  - a USB key to take your data home
  - all materials needed for the lab: instructions (printed!), finding charts (printed!), your notebook etc.
  - cookies / chocolate

# Weather

- biggest problem: clouds are really, really hard to predict!!!
- if there is a chance that you can get your data, you need to take that chance
- often, cannot decide to cancel until the afternoon
- sometimes, we will make the wrong decision...



[weatherspark.com](http://weatherspark.com)



# Weather

anjavdl edited this page on Mar 6, 2021 · 4 revisions

[Edit](#)[New Page](#)

## Current conditions:

GOES-East loop: [https://www.star.nesdis.noaa.gov/goes/sector\\_band.php?sat=G16&sector=ne&band=GEOCOLOR&length=24](https://www.star.nesdis.noaa.gov/goes/sector_band.php?sat=G16&sector=ne&band=GEOCOLOR&length=24)

Radar + clouds animation from weather.com: <https://weather.com/weather/radar/interactive/l/USNY1412:1:US?layer=radarclouds&animation=true&zoom=7>

Webcam: <http://wx.somassbu.org/DATA/HSC/WX-HSC.php>

## Forecasts:

Calsky: <https://www.calsky.com/cs.cgi?obs=72599379422991&Meteo=>

Clear Dark Sky for Mt. Stony Brook: <http://www.cleardarksky.com/c/MtStnyBrkObNYkey.html?1>

Windy: <https://www.windy.com/40.926/-73.141?clouds,40.451,-73.141,7,m:eNnad7g>

4 models: ECMWF, GFS, NEMS, NAM  
~~-----~~

Ventusky: <https://www.ventusky.com/?p=40.92;-73.15;6&l=clouds>

4 models: GFS, ICON, GEM, HRRR  
~~-----~~

+ Add a custom footer

**Long-term forecast models: ECMWF, GFS**

**Short-term forecast models: NAM, HRRR**

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### General Information

- Syllabus
- Schedule w/ links to slides, HW, etc.
- Grading
- Academic Policies

### Labs and Write-Ups

- Guidelines
- How to write a decent lab report
- Observing Equipment
- Observing Calendar
- Lab 1: CCDs
- Lab 2: Exoplanet transit
- Lab 3: Spectroscopy
- Lab 4: Your own proposal
- Discontinued: Radio Interferometry
- Astronomical Data Archives
- Weather
- End-of-night report

# End-of-night report

- when observing, it is imperative that you let the daytime crew (i.e me) know how the observations went ASAP
- fill out the end-of-night report (linked from wiki) at the end of your observations
- if there were problems, describe them in detail

How much time was lost due to clouds? \*

- 0%
- <25%
- 25-50%
- 50-75%
- >75%

How much time was lost due to technical issues? \*

- 0%
- <25%
- 25-50%
- 50-75%
- >75%

Describe any technical issues you encountered.

Your answer

Other comments

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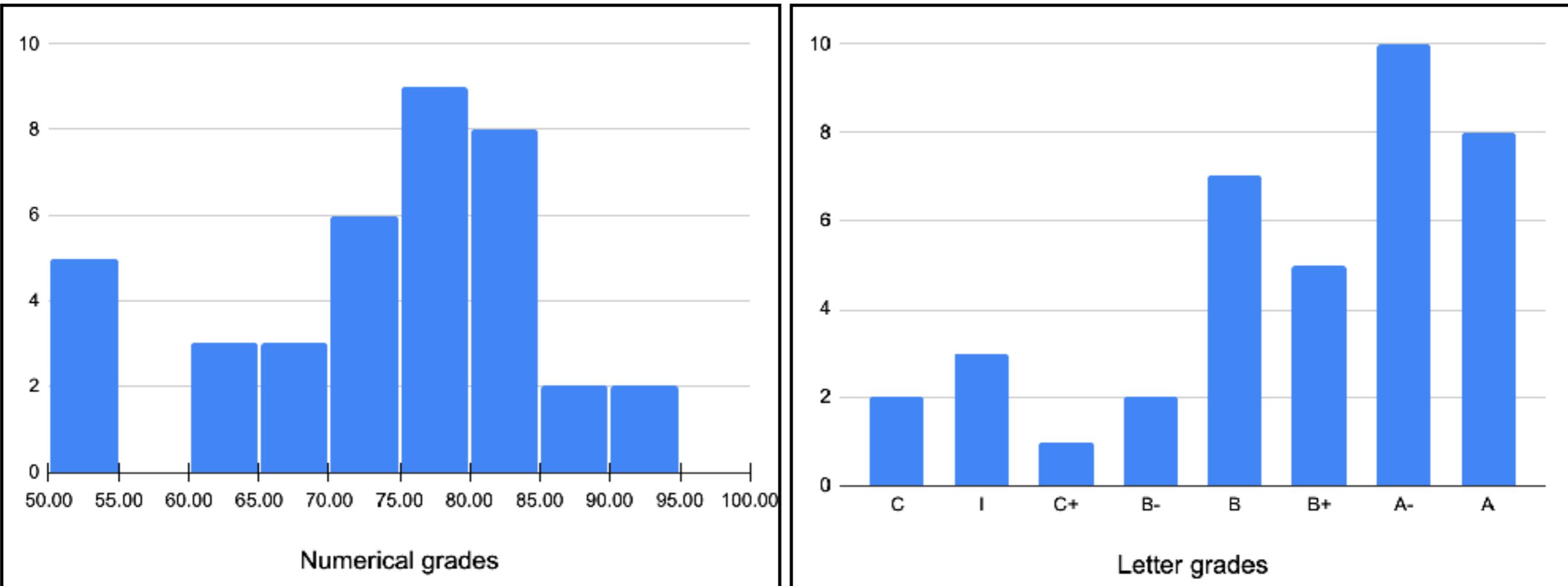
# Note

- you are responsible for your own transportation home after observing
- please do not ask the TAs for a ride home! they have to be here way more nights than you, and are also taking classes
- if you live on campus, you can request a walk escort / ride home: <https://www.stonybrook.edu/campus-safety/#view-residential-safety>

# Grading

- 20% lab 1 - lab report as jupyter notebook
- 20% lab 2 - lab report as journal paper
- 20% lab 3 - lab report as journal paper
- 20% homeworks + participation in discussions
- 10% project proposal + evaluation of peer proposals
- 10% final presentation

# Grading



(Undergraduate grades only)

# Blind Grading

- Lab reports, proposals and homeworks will be graded blindly.
- Put only your SBU ID as author name, and the SBU IDs of your lab-mates as co-authors.
- Submit your homework as **one single PDF file**, named **123456789\_HWx.pdf**, where you replace **123456789** with **your SBU ID**, and **x** with the homework number.
- Similarly, submit your lab reports named **123456789\_Labx\_w\_123456788\_123456787.pdf**, where you replace **123456789** with **your SBU ID**, **12345678[78]** with those of your lab partners, and **x** with the Lab number.

# Attendance

- Attendance is mandatory
- Absences can be **excused** e.g. when you are sick
  - let me know beforehand
  - will arrange zoom call-in as fitting
- **Unexcused** absence from lecture, tutorial or data analysis session: 1 grade point (out of 100) penalty on final grade
- You can miss 2 non-consecutive data analysis sessions without penalty (**but need to let me know**)
- **Unexcused** absence from Time Allocation Committee / final presentation: forfeit of participation points
- **Unexcused absence from your scheduled observations:** 50% penalty on lab report grade

# Scientific Writing

- Writing is ~50% of the job of a scientist!
- Labs 2 and 3, proposal: in style of scientific papers
- make sure you know how to write a scientific article!
- read scientific papers to see examples
- guidelines on wiki

# Significant digits

Code output with way  
too many digits:

$$99.123456789 \\ \pm 0.004556789$$

Round the uncertainty  
to one (or two) digits:

$$0.00455679 \rightarrow 0.005$$

The location of this  
digit tells you the  
location of the last  
significant digit:

$$99.123 \\ \pm 0.005$$

Voila:

$$99.123 \pm 0.005$$

# Lab Reports

- every lab comes with weekly deadlines to show us your progress / hand in your report
- e.g. Lab 1: report due 4 weeks after observations
- late penalty: for every day the data analysis check-in / the report is late, the final grade is multiplied by 0.95
- Example:
  - Initial grade of 80%
  - One day late:  $0.80 \times 0.95 = 0.76$
  - Two days late:  $0.80 \times (0.95)^2 = 0.72$
  - Three days late:  $0.80 \times (0.95)^3 = 0.69$
  - One week late:  $0.80 \times (0.95)^7 = 0.56$
  - Two weeks late:  $0.80 \times (0.95)^{14} = 0.39$

# Delay Days

- Occasionally it's just really hard to meet a deadline...
- Everybody gets 7 “delay days” at the beginning of the course
- You can trade in delay days to avoid late penalties (for lab reports and data analysis check-ins, NOT proposals / presentations)
- For data analysis check-ins, delay days have to be used as a group (everybody “spends” a delay day)
- For lab reports, delay days can be used individually

# Keeping track

For each group, we will set up a google sheet to track your lab dates, deadlines and delay dates

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	Lab	Observations	Deadlines		Observer	SBU ID	Delay Days	Class absences
2								
3	Lab 0	2018-09-06	2018-09-13				1	3
4			2018-09-20				0	2
5			2018-09-27				0	1
6								
7	Lab 1	2018-10-01	2018-10-18					
8		2018-10-09	2018-10-25					
9		2018-10-11	2018-11-01					
10			2018-11-08					
11								
12	Lab 2	2018-11-01	2018-11-15					
13		2018-11-06	2018-11-22					
14		2018-11-08	2018-11-29					
15			2018-12-06					
16								
17	Lab 3	2018-10-24	2018-11-21					
18		2018-11-12	2018-11-28					
19		2018-11-14	2018-12-05					
20			2018-12-12					

# Plagiarism

- Any incidence of plagiarism will automatically result in a final grade of “Q” (Academic Dishonesty).
- Examples of plagiarism specific to this course:
  - Copying parts of somebody else's lab report verbatim
  - Copying parts of somebody else's lab report, slightly modifying each sentence
  - Copying somebody else's observing proposal
  - ...

# Plagiarism

- The first “Q” grade means:
  - You lose your scholarship
  - Class penalty ranges from an “F” for the assignment to an “F” in class
  - You have to enroll in a special class (the “Q” class), otherwise the “Q” will become an “F”
- Full policy available at [https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/academic\\_integrity/policies\\_procedures/index.php](https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/academic_integrity/policies_procedures/index.php) and [https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/academic\\_integrity/students/faq.php](https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/academic_integrity/students/faq.php)

# ChatGPT

- Yes, you may use it.
- No, I'm not joking!
- ChatGPT (and other AI tools) are tools - you should learn how to use them
- Example usage:
  - python questions
  - proofread your lab report
  - ...
- Be aware: ChatGPT gets many things wrong!!
- In your report, you have to describe how you used it.  
(Write a paragraph in the acknowledgements.)
- Also: you cannot cite ChatGPT as a reference; track down the original work.

# “This class sounds tough...”

- This course was, by far, the best laboratory I have ever taken at Stony Brook. It is one of the best courses I have taken period. In only one semester, I was able to meaningfully participate in the scientific process in a way that was engaging, rigorous, educational, and purposeful. I learned about python, astronomical equipment, the astronomical bodies I studied, how to write research proposals, how to write scientific papers etc. The list goes on and on.
- This course offers immense value to students with a desire to pursue academic research in the field of Astronomy. This course was difficult, time consuming, and the instructor has very high expectations of her students, which are merited. If we want to pursue research, fundamental skills must be developed. It was nice to be challenged, and I feel strongly that this course helped me improve as a student.
- It gave a sneak peek into the life of an astronomer.
- This is an extremely valuable class for astronomy students interested in going into research. It's really impressive that we were able to use legitimate equipment, targets, and techniques that real observers would use. It's rare that an undergraduate class would give this much real-world experience.
- I learned a lot in this course. The student is responsible to figure out how to do most everything in this class especially when analyzing data from lab experiments and this really prepares students to go into graduate school and into research as an astronomer. I improved my skills in coding, LaTeX, and writing scientific papers in this course. The TAs were very helpful during lab experiments.
- I appreciated that each report covered an area of astronomy very well. Putting in the effort, you can learn the relevant softwares/computing techniques used throughout the course associated to each topic. I also gained much deeper understandings of astronomy techniques, such as how an exoplanet light curve is constructed from just a series of images.
- I learned hands on observational astronomy techniques, I improved my writing skills and I also strengthened my coding skills. What makes this course so valuable is that the experiences I had in class will provide me with useful skills in my career.
- This course gave me a nice insight into the observational world of Astronomy. This was the first time i have been able to get hands on experience with observations.

# Speaking of workload

- There's a lot of work to be done... 3 labs + reports, proposals + evaluations, final presentations
- It is unavoidable that **you will be working on more than one assignment at a time**
- The weekly analysis check-ins are meant to help you by dividing the work into manageable chunks
- Start scheduling your observations as early as possible to avoid too much work pile-up!
- By spacing out what needs to be done. At one point, we had to hand in a fully finished lab report, a data analysis check in of another lab, and had to observe for the third lab all in the same week. This class is extremely labor intensive and you will end up doing most of the things last minute because of other classwork.



Avoiding this situation is  
your responsibility!

# Again...

- this is NOT an “easy” class to avoid the physics lab!
  - you will have to work hard
  - you will have to figure out things on your own
  - this class will challenge you
- 
- ... for many of you, it will be the closest thing to actual research that you have encountered so far

# Undergrad Writing Requirement

From undergrad bulletin:

E. Upper-Division Writing Requirement:

Students are certified as satisfying the upper-division writing requirement by registering for the 0-credit [AST 459](#) and completing writing projects within their major. All students majoring in Astronomy/ Planetary Sciences must submit two papers (term papers or independent research papers) to the Astronomy coordinator for Department evaluation by the end of the junior year. If this evaluation is satisfactory, the student will have fulfilled the upper- division writing requirement. Papers should be written in the form of a journal article. All papers must consist of an abstract, introduction, main content, and references. References should be cited throughout the text. Any figures should be numbered and have an appropriate caption. If you are using a lab report for the basis of this requirement, you should expand upon the introduction and describe the connection to topical scientific research.

---

Juniors: you can use one of the lab reports as your undergrad writing requirement, but you have to put some work into it.

The topic of the WR needs to be original, meaning that Labs 1+2 are not eligible. You're welcome to discuss with me whether your Lab 3 is suitable.

PHY writing requirement will be treated the same as AST.