

The phases of the Moon

Astronomy 101
Syracuse University, Fall 2021
Walter Freeman

September 21, 2021

You will need to print your prelabs on your own this week, or you can view them electronically and do them on your own paper.

Our department printers are both dead.

- Homework 3 is due Thursday to your TA's mailbox before class
- You will get your Quiz 1 grades on Thursday (I think)
- The answer key to Quiz 1 is posted on the course website

The upcoming quiz

Quiz 1+2 will be held a week from today at the end of class.

- Format:
 - 10 multiple choice questions on Unit 2
 - 10 multiple choice questions on Unit 1 (retake)

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 - A pencil
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- You should bring:
 - A pencil
 - Your SUID (you'll need the number)
- We will provide:
 - A blank map of the Earth with polar circles, tropical circles, and Equator labeled
 - A blank diagram of the Moon's orbit (for you to doodle on)
- The study guide on the website addresses both units

O Fortune, like the Moon you are
changeable, ever waxing and waning...



O Fortuna, velut Luna, statu variabilis,
semper crescis et decrescis...

O Fortune, like the Moon you are changeable,
ever waxing and waning; hateful life first
oppresses and then soothes as fancy takes it;
poverty and power, it melts them like ice.

O Fortuna, velut Luna, statu variabilis, semper
crescis aut decrescis; vita detestabilis nunc
obdurate et tunc curat ludo mentis aciem;
egestatem, potestatem, dissolvit ut glaciem.

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Fate, monstrous and empty, you whirling wheel,
you are malevolent: wellbeing is vain and always
fades to nothing. Shadowed and veiled you
plague me too; now through the game I bare my
back to your villainy.

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Sors immanis et inanis, rota tu volubilis, status
malus: vana salus, semper dissolubilis.
Obumbrata et velata michi quoque niteris; nunc
per ludum dorsum nudum fero tui sceleris.

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Fate is against me in health and virtue, driven on
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So at this hour without delay pluck the vibrating
strings: since Fate strikes down the strong,
everyone weep with me!

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Hac in hora sine mora corde pulsum tangite;
quod per sortem sternit fortem, mecum omnes
plangite!

From *Carmina Burana*, a 13th-century manuscript found in an abbey south of Munich. This manuscript contained poetry written in Latin and German by clergy in their off-duty hours, when they were decidedly not being holy!

Set to music by Carl Orff (1937).

Other movements talk about springtime, sexuality, satire of the corrupt, drunkenness, and more sexuality; the work both opens and closes with this movement.

We now understand the motion of the stars, and the combined effects of the Earth's axial tilt, rotation, and orbit have on the seasons.

Our goal in this first segment of the course was to understand the night sky. What's left?

- The Moon (today)
- The planets (Thursday)
- Oddities: comets, meteors, novas, eclipses... (Thursday)

The phases of the Moon

As in *O Fortuna*, the Moon has often been a symbol of change.

That change is regular, though: every 29.5 days, the pattern of phases repeats.

This is orderly enough that it is the basis of many calendars:

- Traditional Chinese calendar (what is today?)

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... but not the traditional calendars of Europe. (Why might that be?)

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The Moon differs from the stars in that it doesn't make its own light.

It orbits the Earth 400,000 km (1/500 AU!) away, once every 29 days or so, orbiting counterclockwise when looking down at the North Pole.

What consequences does this have?

Which is true?

A: The phases of the Moon happen because the Moon's motion around the Earth causes it to receive different amounts of light from the Sun, varying from completely lit (full moon) to not lit at all (new moon)

B: The phases of the Moon happen because half of the Moon is always lit by the Sun, but our perspective changes how much of that half we see

C: The phases of the Moon happen because the Earth blocks part of the light from the Sun, resulting in a shadow on the Moon's face

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E: The phases of the Moon happen because sometimes people eat the green cheese that it is made of

How does this work?

Half of the Moon is always sunlit, just like the Earth!

- Sometimes that half is pointed toward us: full moon!
- Sometimes that half is pointed away from us: new moon!

Some new words for the moon phases...

- New moon: nothing visible
 - Crescent: less than half visible
 - Half moon: half of the moon's surface is visible
 - Gibbous: more than half visible
 - Full moon: all visible
-
- Waxing: Tomorrow the Moon will be lit more than today
 - Waning: Tomorrow the Moon will be lit less than today

How does this work?

Note that:

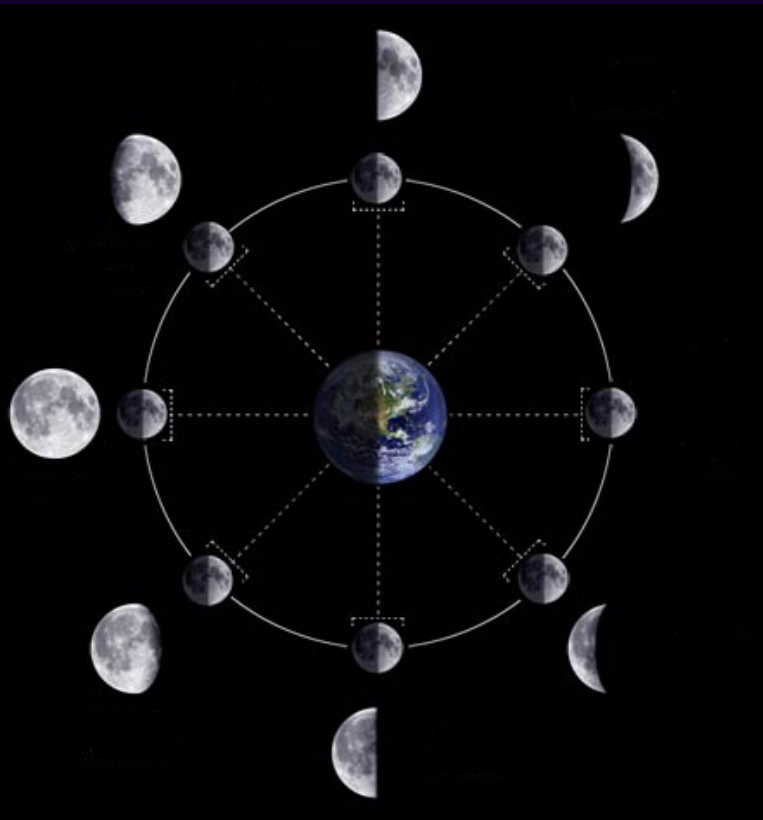
- Half of the Moon is always sunlit (facing toward the Sun)
- Half of the Moon is always visible from Earth (facing toward the Earth)
- The Moon orbits the Earth counterclockwise as seen from above the North Pole once a month
- The Earth rotates counterclockwise as seen from the North Pole (from west to east) once a day

To figure out the phase of the Moon:

- Draw the Earth, lunar orbit, Moon, and direction of sunlight
- Figure out which half of the Moon is lit and label it
- Figure out which half of the Moon we can see, and determine what it looks like

To know when it rises and sets:

- Figure out which half of the Earth is lit and label it, to tell you night/day
- Remember how the horizon works (I'll demonstrate)
- This will tell you what time of day the Moon rises and sets



You can figure all of this out by drawing pictures.

Do this on inclass problems, tutorials, exams...

When the full moon is high in the sky, it is closest to:

A: 6AM

B: Noon

C: 6PM

D: Midnight

What time of day does a full moon rise?

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A past test question

In *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo and Sam traveled with Sméagol to Mordor. During part of their journey, they needed to hide from the Nazgûl, so they could only travel during absolute darkness – when neither the Sun nor the Moon were visible in the sky.

If the Moon was waxing gibbous, during what part of the day could they travel?

A: For a short time after sunset

B: For a short time before sunrise

C: During the first half of the night

D: During the last half of the night?

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When the waxing half moon is just rising over the horizon, it is closest to:

A: 6AM

B: Noon

C: 6PM

D: Midnight

As seen from Syracuse, which part of a waning crescent moon will be lit?

A: The right part

B: The left part

C: It depends on the time of day