

AST 3722: OBSERVATIONAL TECHNIQUES

Spring 2024

Instructor:	Dr. Triana Almeyda	Time:	T/Th 16:05–16:55, W 17:10-22:10
Email:	trianaa@ufl.edu	Place:	Rm 7, Bryant Space Science Center, Campus Teaching Observatory,
		Office Hours:	M 11:00–12:00, Th 14:00-15:00; BRT 314 or by appointment

TA:	Francisco Mendez	Office Hours:	T/Th 10:00–11:00; Undergrad Lounge, BRT
Email:	fmendez@ufl.edu		

Timing / Structure:

Currently, the plan is for this course to be taught mainly in person. Should COVID or some other situation encourage a change, we will use Zoom and other online tools.

On observing and lab nights, you will be expected to spend 5 hours in lab or at the observatory (17:10-22:10). Observing is weather-dependent! While the lab classes are officially Wednesday, if the weather is consistently bad on Wednesdays, you may have the opportunity to observe on other nights.

Course Pages:

1. <https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/500519>

Communication:

Communication will be via Canvas, Email, and possibly Zoom or Slack.

Office Hours:

Office hours will be available in person, or over Zoom if requested. You may also email if you require assistance or need to meet at a time not during the usual office hours. Please include the course number in your email subject line.

Materials: Access to a computer will be essential for this course. You will also need a notebook for taking notes during labs (any notebook type is fine). Having a phone or tablet, and a flash drive, in addition to a laptop may also be helpful. If any of this is an issue, please talk to the instructor or TA.

Main References:

No textbook is required for this class. For additional information, you are welcome to consult any outside references including:

- C.R. Kitchin, “Astronomical Techniques”, 7th edition,
<https://ui.adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/2013aste.book.....K/abstract> (link is to 6th ed)
- Bevington & Robinson, “Data Reduction and Error Analysis for the Physical Sciences”,
http://hosting.astro.cornell.edu/academics/courses/astro3310/Books/Bevington_opt.pdf

- Stuart Littlefair, “PHY241: Observational Astronomy”
<http://slittlefair.staff.shef.ac.uk/teaching/phy241/>
- Matt Craig and Lauren Chambers, *CCD Data Reduction Guide*,
<https://mwccraig.github.io/ccd-as-book/00-00-Preface.html>

Objectives: You will learn to:

- Operate an optical telescope and CMOS system
- Plan an observing run
- Process (“reduce”) CMOS data using python
- Perform astronomical photometric measurements

Course Outline:

Learning goals of the course:

1. Use python for astronomy
2. Plan an observation
3. Execute an observation
4. Reduce an imaging observation
5. Perform a photometric measurement
6. Understand a telescope

Ancillary goals:

1. Meet your peers in the astronomy track (network)
2. Write a scientific paper
3. Practice communication

Grading Policy:

- Class Assignments and participation, homework (40%)
- Labs and Observing Projects (60%)

More information on grades and grading policies is here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx> and here <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

As long as you turn in something for each lab, your lowest lab score will be dropped.

Letter grades are:

Letter	Minimum %
A	93
A-	90
B+	87
B	84
B-	80
C+	77
C	74
C-	70
D+	67
D	64
D-	60

I reserve the right to curve the class such that your scores improve if the final score distribution is lower than I expect. This can only help your grades; I will not apply a curve to reduce your score below the raw score.

Attendance

Attendance is required for both the lectures and the labs. Part of your grade for the semester is based upon class participation during the lectures, and the lectures cover material that will be important for the labs and observing projects. In general, making up a lab will require prior permission or an emergency situation. If you feel that you have a situation that may allow for a make-up, contact the professor immediately via email. If you are absent without being excused you will receive a zero for the lab.

Excused absences are consistent with university policies in the undergraduate catalog (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>) and require appropriate documentation.

Course Communication Policy:

- We will use Canvas and email for announcements and other digital communication, so you are expected to regularly check Canvas.
- Regular attendance is essential and expected.

Students Requiring Accommodations

Formally, students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the UF Disability Resource Center (352.392.8565) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodations. Students

with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester. You may also come talk to the instructor about accommodations that will help you achieve the learning objectives in this course.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

COVID policies

We will have face-to-face instructional sessions to accomplish the student learning objectives of this course. In response to COVID-19, the following policies and requirements are in place to maintain your learning environment and to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions.

- Approved face coverings are expected at all times during class and within buildings. Following and enforcing these policies and requirements are all of our responsibility. Failure to do so will lead to a report to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.
- If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms (Click here for guidance from the CDC on symptoms of coronavirus), please use the UF Health screening system and follow the instructions on whether you are able to attend class. Click here for UF Health guidance on what to do if you have been exposed to or are experiencing Covid-19 symptoms.
- Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work. Find more information in the university attendance policies.

Online Teaching Policy

Our class sessions may be audio visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate orally in class are agreeing to have their voices recorded. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

Class Demeanor (in person)

Students are expected to arrive to class on time and behave in a manner that is respectful to the instructor and to fellow students. Please avoid the use of cell phones and limit activities that can be distracting to other students. Opinions held by other students should be respected in discussion, and conversations that do not contribute to the discussion should be held at minimum, if at all.

Materials and Supplies Fees

There are no additional fees for this course.

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, *‘We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity by abiding by the Student Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by Students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.”’* The Honor Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/>

[student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/](#)) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TA in this class.

Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Lab Report and Project Due Dates (subject to change) Submit via Canvas by 5:00 pm

1. Intro to the Campus Teaching Observatory (CTO): Jan. 26
2. Observing Plan: Feb. 2
3. CMOS Observations: Feb. 17
4. Imaging Lab: Mar. 8th
5. Photometry Lab: March 29
6. Observing Proposal: Apr. 12
7. Photometry Project Apr. 26
8. Optics lab: (1.5 weeks after bad weather)

Preliminary Schedule for Class & Lab Topics (subject to change)

- Week 1 (Jan 8): Introduction to Observational Astronomy // Introduction to Python
Lab: Canceled
- Week 2 (Jan 15): Planning Observations
Lab: Introduction to CTO // Python in the Lab
- Week 3 (Jan 22): Telescopes and Detectors
Lab: Introduction to CTO // Python in the Lab
- Week 4 (Jan 29): Astronomical Optics
Lab: Introduction to CTO // Python in the Lab
- Week 5 (Feb 5): Statistics and Error Analysis
Lab: CMOS Observations
- Week 6 (Feb 12): Atmosphere
Lab: CMOS Observations
- Week 8 (Feb 19): Magnitudes and Colors
Lab: CMOS Observations
- Week 8 (Feb 26): Photometry, Exposures, Filters, CMOS Image Acquisition, Calibration
Lab: CMOS Observations

- Week 9 (Mar 4): Photometry, Exposures, Filters, CMOS Image Acquisition, Calibration
Lab: Imaging, Alignment
- (Mar 11): Spring Break
- Week 10 (Mar 18): Image Alignment, Mosaicing, Astrometry
Lab: Imaging, Alignment
- Week 11 (Mar 25): Color Images
Lab: Imaging, Alignment
- Week 12 (Apr 1): Research, careers, observing proposals
Lab: Photometry
- Week 13 (Apr 8): Spectroscopy
Lab: Photometry
- Week 14 (Apr 15): More Telescopes and Detectors
Lab: Photometry
- Week 15 (Apr 22): Working week
Lab: Photometry
- Week 16 (Apr 29): Finals Week
Lab: None

General topics covered

- Python for astronomy: astropy, jupyter
- Visualization tools for astronomy
- Basics of Observational Astronomy: Coordinates and Time, Planning Observations, Atmospheric Effects, Sky Brightness
- Acquiring Astronomical Data: Basic Techniques, Calibration Images, Filters, Exposure times, Dithering
- Optics and Telescopes: Geometric Optics, Lens Equation, Telescope Designs, Practical Telescope Considerations
- Detectors: Types of Detectors, Fundamentals of Charge Coupled Devices, Read Noise, Dark Current, Exposure Times
- Photometry: Magnitude Systems, Photometric Calibration, Impacts of Atmosphere Spectroscopy: Science Applications, Dispersive Elements, Spectrograph Designs
- Data Analysis: Statistics and Error Analysis
- Photometry and Data Analysis: Tools in Python, astropy
- Presenting Astronomical Results: Color Images, Presentation Skills, Literature Searches
- Special Topics: TBD