

Dear Future Astronomy Student,

You have signed up for the UW astronomy 101 course offered at Shorecrest. I would like to welcome you and let you know more about the course. I want to make sure that you understand the nature of the astronomy class. This is not a typical lab course like other science courses. It is based on lecture, simulation activities, and discussion. This is driven by the students' willingness to contribute to the class. The course can be as interesting as you want it to be, but does require you to invest significant time learning the material (i.e., reading the text!).

The Astronomy class is actually the University of Washington's Astronomy 101 course taught as part of the UW College in the High School Program. This means you will be taking a college level course with an online college level textbook. It also means that you will have the option to register for college credit if you wish. Whether you register or not, you will still be taking a course where the curriculum is driven by the UW Astronomy Department.

You will be required to read 20 textbook chapters and answer questions that are partially fact based, application/thought based, and research based. There are additional assignments that require you to research and come up with your own conclusions. Some course assignments will require access to the Internet. Tests will be of the same level that UW students would take in Astronomy 101. Finally, the class produces an evening for the community called Astronomy Night, which requires significant out of class work. This occurs in the spring and attendance is mandatory for all astronomy students.

Recommended Summer Activity:

You are required (for credit) to attend an evening star viewing independent of class time. **Do this over the summer so you have a better chance of getting it done! There are opportunities at the UW Theodor Jacobsen Observatory, and at Greenlake and Paramount Parks through the Seattle Astronomical Society. Contact me for links to locations or search online.** While I will allow you the entire fall semester to complete this, the weather changes significantly and the opportunities are fewer as we get closer to December. As a result, students that procrastinate on this usually fail to complete it. After you do the observing, write a description of what you saw and the date, time, location of the observation. Put this in a safe place and turn it in on the first day of class this fall.

All of this is not meant to scare you, but to make sure you are informed and not surprised as the course progresses. To help you along, you will get a study guide that will prepare you for each test. The Astronomy course, while it is not as hard or rigorous as chemistry or physics, it is harder and more rigorous than 9th grade IPS and biology, and does require students to read the text. You will actually learn a good deal of physics as we go since it is central to astronomy. Math is also important although the level is about Algebra 1. Basically, the more work you put in, the richer your experience will be, and the more you will learn.

Astronomy is a huge area of study with some fascinating ideas and concepts. I believe that you will find it to be interesting and mind-blowing. Things change everyday and new discoveries are made all the time. Prepare to have your mind stretched by some of the concepts. If you have any questions please feel free to see me before school is out or email me over the summer. I look forward to meeting you in the fall.

Sincerely,

Vince Santo Pietro
Astronomy Teacher
Shorecrest High School