



**Course Syllabus: Descriptive Astronomy,
PHYS 1533-X20 Section 23761
Spring 2026**

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Muatez Mohammed

Office: 219 D, McCoy Engineering Hall

Office phone: (940) 397-4182

Office Hours: (Zoom, by appointment): Mon & Wed 11:00 AM–12:00 PM;
Tue 4:00–5:00 PM; Thu 2:00–4:00 PM. Email to schedule.

Class and Time: Lecture/Zoom online Asynchronous Tuesday and
Thursday (lectures material will be available at 3pm) should
a lecture time require time change; I will inform you via
email or on D2L.

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Course Description

This course introduces the basic concepts of astronomy and explores the structure and evolution of the universe. Topics include planets, stars, galaxies, and cosmology. The course is designed as a general, non-mathematical introduction to astronomy.

Textbook & Materials (Required)

This course uses the open textbook “*Astronomy 2e*” by Fraknoi, Morrison, and Wolff. The instructor will specify which chapters to study.

You may also need “*Lecture-Tutorials for Introductory Astronomy*” (4th Ed.) by Prather et al., when instructed, It’s available as:

- Pearson eText: ISBN 9780137619641
- Paperback (MSU Bookstore): ISBN 9780135807026

Study Hours and Tutoring Assistance

Students seeking additional academic support are encouraged to utilize the tutoring services available through the university library. Tutoring is offered for physics courses, and assistance with astronomy tutoring can also be arranged upon request. The library maintains an updated list of qualified tutors.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

Spring, 1/20-5/16 2025

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

[Office of Student Conduct](#)

Grading

Table 1: Points allocated to each assignment.

Assignments	20
Labs	20
Exams	60
Total Points	100

Table 2: Total points for final grade.

Grade	Points
A	89 to 100
B	79 to 88
C	69 to 78
D	59 to 68
F	Less than 59

Assignments and Exams

Assignments will be posted on D2L (Dropbox) and must be submitted by the due dates. Each assignment is open for one week and must be completed in assigned groups. Group information will be on D2L, and all members must confirm that everyone contributed fairly.

Tests and the final exam must be completed individually, without collaboration. The final exam is mandatory; failure to take it will result in a 0/60, which will be included with other exam grades.

Expectations

Students should read the relevant chapters before reviewing the assignments or lectures.

Online Laboratory Policy

All labs will be completed through the Labs module on the course D2L page, where related lecture materials are also available. Students must check instructions and due dates regularly. Students may miss up to **two labs** without penalty. The **third lab** will reduce the final grade by one letter each. Exceptions require documentation, and absences must be reported via email within 24 hours. The lowest lab grade will be dropped at the end of the semester.

Important Note

- I do not follow the grade on D2L, because I will post the grade after each exam or assignment to let you know where you are in this class. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me about the details of your grade.
- Make sure to use your school email when contacting me. I do not respond to personal emails. Additionally, do not email me via D2L, please use my school email for any communication.
- Be aware that any cheating will result in being dropped from the class.
- Assignments and laboratory work must be completed in assigned groups. Individual submissions will not be accepted and will receive a grade of zero.

Late Work

Late work is unacceptable without a valid excuse. Please reach out to me to inform me so we can work together to avoid any loss of points.

Make Up Work/Test

There will be no make-up labs because the lowest lab grade will be dropped unless there is a valid excuse. If you miss an exam due to personal illness, emergency, or a school related activity, you will be allowed to take a make-up exam. It is your responsibility to schedule a make-up exam by contacting me via e-mail. You must contact me within 24 hours and schedule a time to make up the exam. You will be allowed to make-up only one exam. If you miss a second exam, you will earn a zero on the second exam missed unless you have a valid excuse. The final exam cannot be made-up.

Important Dates

Check date on [Academic Calendar](#):

- last day for term schedule changes.
- deadline to file for graduation.
- last day to drop with a grade of "W".
- deadline to file for graduation.

Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Attendance

Due to this course being asynchronous there will be no mandatory attendance.

Online Computer Requirements

Taking an online class requires you to have access to a computer (with Internet access) to complete and upload your assignments. It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer in this class. Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings. Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. There are many places to access your class. Our online classes can be accessed from any computer which is connected to the internet. Contact your instructor immediately upon having computer trouble. If you have technical difficulties in the course, there is also a student helpdesk available to you. The college cannot work directly on student computers due to both liability and resource limitations; however, they are able to help you get connected to our online services. For help, log into [D2L](#).

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. HOWEVER, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring

accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Student Wellness Center, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibits the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

College Policies

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes has prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [MSUReady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled “*Run. Hide. Fight.*” which may be electronically accessed via the University police department’s webpage: [“Run. Hide. Fight.”](#)

Grade Appeal Process

Update as needed. Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

***Notice:** Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Inclement Weather Policy

This course will continue as scheduled during inclement weather. Any updates or changes will be communicated via MSU email and D2L news announcements. Students are responsible for checking these communications regularly. University closure policies will be followed as applicable.

Course Schedule, Tentative Schedule for PHYS 1533-X20, Descriptive Astronomy, CRN 23761 Spring 2026

2-Weeks	Tuesday	Thursday	Tuesday	Thursday
Jan 20- Jan 29	Introduction: Syllabus, Course Policies. Chapter 1		Chapter 2	
Feb 3- Feb 12	Chapter 3,		Chapter 4, Assignment 1	
Feb 17- Feb 26	Test 1 Chapters 1,2,3,4	Chapter 5,		Chapter 6,
Mar 3- Mar 12	Chapter 6,	Chapter 7	Spring Break	Spring Break
Mar 17- Mar 26	Chapter 7	Chapter 8 Assignment 2		Test 2 Chapters 5,6,7,8
Mar 31- Apr 9	Chapter 9	Holiday Break	Chapter 9	Chapter 10
Apr 14- Apr 23	Chapter 10	Chapter 11		Chapter 12
Apr 28- May 7	Chapter 12	Chapter 13 Assignment 3		Study Day
May 12- May 14	Final Exam, (1:30-3:30) pm Ch. 9, 10, 11, 12,13			

The schedule may change slightly as the semester develops. However, students will be notified on D2L and directly via e-mail of any changes.