Welcome to Astronomy 100!
This is an orientation letter to get you started with the course and to give you a guide to how this online course functions. This is **not** the course syllabus! That is found at the Blackboard class website (see below).
You are required to read the following to know how to properly enroll in the class and to know what is expected.
This class is full. Read the following to be sure you want to be enrolled in this course (note that online courses are **not** easier than traditional classroom courses).

**To succeed in the course, you must:**
- Be computer literate, internet savvy, and have access to a good high-speed connection throughout the semester. **Technical difficulties do not constitute excuses for missed assignments.** Figure out all of your computer issues ASAP and have a back-up plan. Computers are also available on campus in the library.
- Have a current valid email account which you regularly check. This should be your CoC student email account.
- Examine thoroughly BOTH course websites:
  1) The *Astroportal*. Register at the publisher’s website: [http://courses.bfwpub.com/slater.php](http://courses.bfwpub.com/slater.php), (Mac users **must use Firefox**) or you can link to that site from the Blackboard website. Once there, setup an account (be sure to keep track of your login and password!). To register you will need the access code that you will purchase at the same publisher’s site (see *Registering* below). You **must register by the end of Wednesday June 11th** or you will be **dropped from the course**. Registering allows you to use the AstroPortal (see below). At this website you will find your Assignment Schedule detailing which topics to study, HW to do, links to follow, and videos and animations to analyze, discussion boards to participate in, quizzes to take, and other weekly assignments and goodies. Pay attention to the due dates each week (in general complete a chapter’s material every week).
  2) **Blackboard**: You will need to log in to the Blackboard website for this course ([http://bb9.canyons.edu](http://bb9.canyons.edu)).
    - To access Blackboard for the first time, click on User Login. Your user name is your 7 digit student ID number, and your password is Student (change the password when logged in). Lectures are posted on the Blackboard course site and course email is sent through Blackboard.
- Read the **Course Syllabus** (found at the Blackboard course webpages) for a fuller description of what this course entails, what is required, learn about assignments, projects, and field trips, and how your grade will be determined.
- **You must log in to the Astroportal** complete the Course Survey and the Introduce Yourself by their due dates, or you will be **dropped from the course**

This document can be found at my courses webpage at [http://bb9.canyons.edu](http://bb9.canyons.edu)
Registering for the AstroPortal

AstroPortal is the publisher’s website wherein is found the electronic version of the full textbook, called the eBook, containing many animations, videos, tutorials, and much more. And, it is where you complete the required weekly reading quizzes and assignments. Most of the course takes place on the AstroPortal.

You need to purchase access to the AstroPortal for Investigating Astronomy, A Conceptual View of the Universe, 1st ed., by Slater and Freedman.

To obtain access to the AstroPortal,

1) go to this website: http://courses.bfwpub.com/slater.php

2) Select “Purchase” from the “New to AstroPortal?” choices. See the image at right.

3) From the next screen select our course, General Astronomy by David Michaels at the College of Canyons in CA. See the image below.

4) Select Next and proceed with the remaining screens to make your purchase of access to the AstroPortal.

Some Preliminary Advice about Studying

This is a short-term course; it moves VERY quickly. DO NOT procrastinate on your studying! Starting the entire week’s reading on the day it is due is NOT a good idea, if you want to be successful in this course (note that I can also see when and for how long you are spending working on the AstroPortal).

You should keep a notebook for this class with reading notes, drawings, and quiz questions, questions you have, and your explanations of concepts. It is very important that you practice writing down all of your work in a logical and organized manner. The exams will be based on the quality and correctness of your answers. Incomplete answers will not receive full credit, nor will answers where you have written everything possible that may or may not be associated with the questions. Thus, practice writing good explanations of core concepts in your notebook, as you study each week. To find out more about how to study for the Exams, read the Study Guide found on the course website.

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Each Week
Check the Assignments page, at the AstroPortal, to find out what is that you need to read for that week. You can either read the chapter in the printed text or using the eBook online at the AstroPortal.

- When starting a new chapter, first, browse the chapter to get an overview of the material by reading the introduction, summary, and studying the drawings and pictures.
- Then identify the corresponding section of the Study Guide and write the vocabulary in your notebook, leaving space to fill in for your definitions.
- Carefully read the chapter, defining the vocabulary in your notebook as you proceed, paying attention to how scientists have figured out what is being written about, how the objects describe operate or behave, and how concepts in each chapter and previous chapters relate.
- **Take notes** on important concepts in a notebook (you can also do so in the eBook) and write your own written explanation of the important concepts. It also may be good practice to redraw significant drawings and photos.
- Study the lecture notes (posted on the course Blackboard site).
- Look at each chapter’s *Animations and Interactive Exercises*, at the AstroPortal. There are plenty of Resources to be found for each chapter, play with these each week so that you feel you are gaining knowledge but do not overwhelm yourself with all of these resources. The majority of your time should be spent simply reading the chapter and lecture notes.
- Each week you are required to complete the corresponding chapter’s LearningCurve. This is “a *formative assessment* activity that uses a *game-like interface* to guide students through a series of questions *catered to their individual level of understanding*” (from the textbook’s website). It is a valuable study aide and displays which categories of concepts you understand well and which you need to review - good preparation for the quizzes and exams!
- Plan to spend about **12-18 hours studying** each week - this is a condensed course

Discussion Boards and Blogs
These are found at the course AstroPortal site (see above) and are used for student interaction, students questions, posting thoughts on various articles and assignments, and final project essays. Details are explained for each assignment.

On the Discussion Boards you will participate in the discussions using complete sentences, following Netiquette (http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html), and post thoughtful responses (not quick reactions). Grading will be based on participation and quality of responses.

Complete the assignments in the time allotted, do not race to post nor race to complete an assignment, but always give yourself enough time to post something of quality, only such a contribution is what a college student should try to achieve.

This document can be found at my courses webpage at http://bb9.canyons.edu
Taking Online Quizzes
Once you have completed studying a chapter and completed its corresponding activities, you should then take the chapter quiz (available toward the end of each week). Taking your quizzes at the last minute is NOT a good idea. Study as much as you can during the week without overwhelming yourself on any one day. Once again, you should not attempt to cram everything in on the day it is due!

To take a Quiz go to the AstroPortal and select Assignments from the tab menu or home page and take the assigned quiz for that week. The quiz is timed and you can only take the quiz once (just like a traditional non-online quiz!). You should be able to review any of your quizzes on your Gradebook page any time after you submit it. In your notebook record your answers (both right and wrong along with reason why) for future studying.

Preparing for the Exams
The Exams are given after the completion of each unit of material at the times indicated on the Assignments page at the AstroPortal, and on the Course Syllabus. By the time of the Exams, you should have completed reading and studying each assigned chapter (see how above) and have completed all previously assigned weekly reading quizzes. To prepare your review for the Exams first read the Study Guide found on the Blackboard course webpage and practice writing responses to the Study Questions. At that point in your studying of the previously read chapters it might be a good time to then thoroughly review your notes.

Where to get help
Send me an email: david.michaels@canyons.edu, post questions on the Discussion Boards, particularly the Help Me, Please! discussion board.

For help with Blackboard call Tech support at (661) 362-3344 or email bbsupport@canyons.edu

For help with the AstroPortal “...call 1-800-936-6899 or click here for more options”

Sincerely,
Professor David Michaels

This document can be found at my courses webpage at http://bb9.canyons.edu
Frequently Asked Questions

Is there a guide to the online course?
Yes. The Orientation Letter. It is found on Blackboard.

Do I need to log in to Blackboard or the Astroportal?
Yes. By midnight Wednesday or you will be dropped from the course.

What needs to be done and Blackboard?
Find and read the Lecture Notes and Study Guide. That is all that is to be done there.

What needs to be completed on Astroportal?
Everything else, including all assignments.

Is the Astroportal the primary way we will be handling all course assignments? discussion boards, quizzes, etc?
Yes. Almost entirely on the Astroportal. Blackboard is where my lecture notes and study guide are posted.

Are there assignments to be completed this first week?
Yes. They are found on the Assignment list on the Astroportal and are due this Friday, if not completed you will be dropped from the course.

Is there an overall list that has all the assignments, their due dates, and where to find them?
Yes. Viewed by selecting the Assignment tab on the Astroportal. You’ll be spending much time on this page.

Are we to assume that all due dates for assignments are correct? (I checked them out, they look like a lot, but probably aren’t. I’m not too sure.)
Yes. There is a lot. 16 weeks of material compressed into 5. The assignments near the end which cover chapters 5-7 are for extra credit, since we will not cover those chapters in this compressed course. Most of the listed assignments are animations, tutorials, and links. The more involved assignments each week are the quizzes, longer tutorials such as the Learning Curves, and occasional lengthy videos, number about three per chapter. Most of your time in this course will be spent reading and studying.

Is there a study guide?
Yes. It is found on Blackboard.

Are there lectures?
Yes. It is found on Blackboard.

Where are the chapter quizzes?
Quizzes will appear on the assignment list at end of each week, i.e. this is when you come to take your quiz, usually they appear three days before they are due, so keep track of the due dates.

This document can be found at my courses webpage at http://bb9.canyons.edu
Frequently Asked Questions

Why do the quizzes for chapters 5 through 7 already appear, weeks before they are due?
Since they are for extra credit they can be taken at any time.

Are we required to do the assignments for chapters 5 through 7?
No. Those topics won't be assigned for this short-term class, but can be worked for extra credit up to a maximum of 30 bonus points.

Can I make up assignments, or Quizzes, Exams?
No. Assignments and due dates are all posted from the beginning of the semester. You have plenty of time and warning to complete them all before they are due.

Can we save our answers during Quizzes and Exams, and return to finish the Quiz at a later time?
No. Just as you cannot ‘save’ your quiz in an on-ground class walk away and return later in the day to finish, you cannot do so online.

Do we get points for viewing the tutorials and animations or do they come with an activity?
Everything listed there is an assignment. If it is not listed, it is not assigned. The point totals are to the right of the name on the assignment listing and not all assignments are worth points. Some are just short videos and animations to watch. The points are usually earned for correctness within the assignment, such as responding to questions within the assignment. The first week’s assignments are typical of what is to come. (It will be obvious and straight forward how it works once you start the assignments) The exception is for the assignments near the end of the list for chapters 5-7. Those are not assigned, but can all be done for bonus points, to a maximum of 30 points, since those topics won't be assigned for this short-term class, but can be learned for extra credit.

Are there additional resources beyond what is listed under assignments?
Yes. On the Astroportal there are self quizzes, “Flashcards” for terminology and concept building, and many more animations not assigned but recommended. The web is loaded with much more and Youtube has many great astronomy videos and lectures. If you find something you think is worth sharing with the class, please let me know and I may post it.

I was exploring the astroportal, and for the attendance portion it says to ask your Professor for the pin number to mark yourself present. Is it the same every time or do I need to ask you every time?
I do not use attendance pins or anything else remotely of the sort.

What’s a good way to get help and ask questions?
There are two discussion boards. The one on Blackboard is intended more for week one issues. On the Astroportal the last item on the Assignment list is our class astronomy discussion board for all things astronomical. Post away. And, you can always email me.

What if I’m having trouble with technical issues with the Astroportal?

This document can be found at my courses webpage at http://bb9.canyons.edu
Frequently Asked Questions

First. Always use Firefox for the Astroportal. Other browsers don’t work well, as warned on the portal and in the Orientation Letter. If a non-Firefox browser was not the issue, call technical support. They will be “happy to assist you!” Contact tech support via their online form or via phone at 1-800-936-6899, or techsupport@bfwpub.com