

**Course Syllabus for
ASTR 1403.451
Revised: June 30, 2026**

COURSE INFORMATION

Department: Science

Discipline: Astronomy

Course Number: ASTR 1403.451

Course Title: Stars and Galaxies

Course Format: Fully online, dual credit

Campus Location: Dual Credit

Course Description: Study of stars, galaxies, and the universe outside our solar system.

Prerequisite: None

Credit: 4 **Lecture:** 3 **Lab:** 1

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Name: Randall C Presley

Contact: rpresley@lamesa.esc17.net

Office Location: Lamesa High School

Office Hours: Monday 7:00 to 8:30 pm
Tuesday 7:00 to 8:30 pm

E-mail: When you have questions, problems, or comments, you can e-mail me through BlackBoard Messages. Please use the BlackBoard Messages tool to e-mail me. Do not use my South Plains College e-mail address unless it is an emergency. I will respond to your e-mail within one business day (excluding holidays). I generally will not check my e-mail from 12:00 noon on Friday to 8:00 AM Monday of the following week. I generally will not check my e-mail during holidays. Therefore, there will usually be no response during those times.

Expectations when Corresponding: Please be polite, courteous, and respectful when using BlackBoard Messages, e-mail, discussion forums, and chat rooms. Do not use profanity under any circumstances. Do not write disrespectful, insulting, mean, rude, profane, insensitive, or other hurtful messages or comments under any circumstances. Failure to abide by this policy will result in the appropriate disciplinary actions. Students are expected to maintain a pleasant learning environment for themselves as well as for their classmates. Therefore, if, in the view of the instructor, a student is disrupting the class, the appropriate disciplinary action will be taken.

Online Disclaimer: This is to notify you that materials you may be accessing in chat rooms, emails, discussion forums or unofficial web pages are not officially sponsored by the instructor or South Plains College. The United States Constitution rights of free speech apply to all members of our community regardless of the medium used. The

instructor and South Plains College disclaim all liability for data, information or opinions expressed in these forums.

MATERIALS NEEDED**Textbook:****Supplies:**

Blackboard Access

Minimum Computer Requirements:

1. Personal computer
2. Web Browser: Google Chrome must be used.
3. A high-speed internet connection
4. A webcam on your computer
5. Microsoft Word and Microsoft PowerPoint software (a recent version)
6. Software or Program to read PDFs (Acrobat Reader)
7. A good soundcard and functioning speakers
8. Knowledge of how to navigate web pages and how to deal with pop-up blockers and other devices and warnings on your browser
9. Knowledge of how to download files from the internet and find them on your computer once they are downloaded
10. Knowledge of basic operations of Microsoft Word and Microsoft PowerPoint
11. Knowledge of how to view and adjust videos

OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**Core Curriculum Objectives addressed:**

- Communications skills—to include effective written, oral and visual communication
- Critical thinking skills—to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information
- Empirical and quantitative competency skills—to manipulate and analyze numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions
- Teamwork—to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal

This course partially satisfies a Core Curriculum Requirement: Life and Physical Sciences Foundational Component Area (030)

Student Learning Outcomes: Upon successful completion of this course students will:

- Describe key features of the universe, its scale, our place in it, and the physical principles relevant to astronomy.
- Understand basic principles of physics that allow astronomers to learn about the universe.
- Apply quantitative reasoning to solve a variety of astronomical problems.
- Explain the principles and uses of telescopes in astronomy.
- Describe the classifications and life cycles of stars.

- Explain the basic classification of galaxies in terms of structure.
- Discuss current theories of galaxy formation and evolution.
- Describe the spatial distribution of galaxies within the Universe.
- Describe the evidence for the Big Bang as the origin of the Universe and the methods for estimating the age of the Universe.
- Discuss experimental observations leading to the ideas of Dark Matter and Dark Energy and current theories for explaining these observations.

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: Unit tests, weekly quizzes, assignments, and discussion boards

Course Evaluation: Grades will

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Grade Distribution

- | | |
|---------------------|-----|
| • Tests | 30% |
| • Weekly Quizzes | 30% |
| • Discussion Boards | 20% |
| • Assignments | 20% |

Grading Scale Letter grades will be based on a fixed scale as follows:

- A: 90 – 100
- B: 80 – less than 90
- C: 70 – less than 80
- D: 60 – less than 70
- F: below 60

BlackBoard: The lecture portion of this course is completely online and is conducted through BlackBoard. BlackBoard may be accessed at <https://southplainscollege.blackboard.com/> For help concerning the use and features of BlackBoard you can access the help menu at each BlackBoard page that you visit.

Logging into the Course: You are not allowed to give your user ID and/or password to anyone. You will be dropped and given an F for your final grade if someone besides you is caught logging into this course under your user ID and/or password.

Computer Problems OR BlackBoard Server Problems: If a student's internet connection goes down, or a student's computer crashes or otherwise becomes inoperable for BlackBoard, it is the responsibility of the student to have their internet connection and/or computer repaired as soon as possible in order to avoid getting behind in the class. While the computer and/or internet connection is being repaired, the student should seek an alternate computer. This could be a friend's computer, a relative's computer, a computer at a library, or a computer at the computer lab on the Levelland/Lubbock campuses. It will be the student's responsibility to find an alternate computer to avoid getting behind in the class. If your computer crashes during a test, contact me immediately so that I can reset the test for you. It is the responsibility of the

student to have a backup plan in place. If the BlackBoard server goes down, the appropriate time extensions on any class work will be determined and announced by the instructor.

Late Work Policy: Late work will be docked 10 points. In the event of an emergency or extenuating circumstances, contact your instructor before the assignment is due.

Artificial Intelligence Policy

This policy specifically addresses the unauthorized use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools or technologies to gain an unfair advantage in academic activities.

- **Definition of Unauthorized Use of AI:** The unauthorized use of AI refers to employing AI tools and technologies without proper authorization or in violation of the Student Handbook, with the intention to gain an unfair advantage in academic activities. This includes, but is not limited to, the following actions:
 - Using AI to generate or complete assignments, projects, or assessments without disclosing the use of AI or without instructor permission.
 - Utilizing AI chatbots or virtual assistants to seek answers or assistance during exams, tests, quizzes, or other assignments where that has not been explicitly allowed.
 - Manipulating AI systems or algorithms to bypass security measures, access unauthorized information, or compromise the integrity of academic assessments.
 - Sharing or distributing AI-generated content as one's own work without proper acknowledgement or attribution, as indicated by your citation style guide or your instructor.

See also <https://www.southplainscollege.edu/syllabusstatements/>

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Topic
	Getting Started
1	Astronomy is the Oldest Science
2	Observing the Sky
3	Nature of Light
4	Spectroscopy
5	Hertzsprung-Russell Diagram
6	Universal Gravitation
7	Nature of Stars
8	Birth of a Star
9	On the Main Sequence
10	Death of Stars
11	Black Holes
12	The Milky Way
13	Galaxies
14	Search for Exoplanets and Life
15	The Big Bang
16	Finals Week

POLICIES**Attendance Policy:**

Students are expected to attend all classes in order to be successful in a course. The student may be administratively withdrawn from the course when absences become excessive as defined in the course syllabus.

When an unavoidable reason for class absence arises, such as illness, an official trip authorized by the college or an official activity, the instructor may permit the student to make up work missed. It is the student's responsibility to complete work missed within a reasonable period of time as determined by the instructor. Students are officially enrolled in all courses for which they pay tuition and fees at the time of registration. Should a student, for any reason, delay in reporting to a class after official enrollment, absences will be attributed to the student from the first class meeting.

Students who enroll in a course but have "Never Attended" by the official census date, as reported by the faculty member, will be administratively dropped by the Office of Admissions and Records. A student who does not meet the attendance requirements of a class as stated in the course syllabus and does not officially withdraw from that course by the official census date of the semester, may be administratively withdrawn from that course and receive a grade of "X". Instructors are responsible for clearly stating their administrative drop policy in the course syllabus, and it is the student's responsibility to be aware of that policy.

It is the student's responsibility to verify administrative drops for excessive absences through MySPC using his or her student online account. If it is determined that a student is awarded financial aid for a class or classes in which the student never attended or participated, the financial aid award will be adjusted in accordance with the classes in which the student did attend/participate and the student will owe any balance resulting from the adjustment.

Plagiarism and Cheating: Students are expected to do their own work on all projects, quizzes, assignments, examinations, and papers. Failure to comply with this policy will result in an F for the assignment and can result in an F for the course if circumstances warrant.

Plagiarism violations include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Turning in a paper that has been purchased, borrowed, or downloaded from another student, an online term paper site, or a mail order term paper mill;
2. Cutting and pasting together information from books, articles, other papers, or online sites without providing proper documentation;
3. Using direct quotations (three or more words) from a source without showing them to be direct quotations and citing them; or
4. Missing in-text citations.
5. Violating the Artificial Intelligence policy, as outlined in the syllabus. For more information on AI, please reference this in the syllabus statements:

<https://www.southplainscollege.edu/syllabusstatements/>

Cheating violations include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Obtaining an examination by stealing or collusion;
2. Discovering the content of an examination before it is given;
3. Using an unauthorized source of information (notes, textbook, text messaging, internet, apps) during an examination, quiz, or homework assignment;
4. Entering an office or building to obtain unfair advantage;
5. Taking an examination for another;
6. Altering grade records;
7. Copying another's work during an examination or on a homework assignment;
8. Rewriting another student's work in Peer Editing so that the writing is no longer the original student's;
9. Taking pictures of a test, test answers, or someone else's paper.

Student Code of Conduct Policy: Any successful learning experience requires mutual respect on the part of the student and the instructor. Neither instructor nor student should be subject to others' behavior that is rude, disruptive, intimidating, aggressive, or demeaning. Student conduct that disrupts the learning process or is deemed disrespectful or threatening shall not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action and/or removal from class.

Institutional Policies

Updated policies concerning the following can be found here

<https://www.southplainscollege.edu/syllabusstatements>

- Diversity Statement
- Disability Statement
- Nondiscrimination Policy
- Title IX Pregnancy Accommodations Statement

Brainfuse

You also have 180 FREE minutes of tutoring with Brainfuse each week, and your hours reset every Monday morning. Log into Blackboard, click on the tools option from the left-hand menu bar. Click on the Brainfuse link and you will automatically be logged in for free tutoring. You may access Brainfuse tutors during the following times:

Monday – Thursday: 8pm-8am

6pm Friday – 8am Monday morning

For questions regarding tutoring, please email tutoring@southplainscollege.edu or call 806-716-2538.

Note: The instructor reserves the right to modify the course syllabus and policies, as well as notify students of any changes, at any point during the semester.