

Earth Sciences 1086F: Origin and Geology of the Solar System

Instructor: Dr. Elizabeth Webb, Department of Earth Sciences.

I encourage you to post questions about the course content in the online Forums. If you need to contact me about something personal, please email at ewebb5@uwo.ca and put the course code (1086F) in the subject line. Please read the syllabus before asking or posting a question.

Course Description

This half-course will explore the Solar System; we will look at our star (the Sun), the planets and their satellites, and other bodies such as asteroids and comets. We will consider the hypotheses and theories that attempt to explain their origins. We will see how our knowledge of Earth's geology applies to other planetary bodies in the Solar System. We will end the course with a discussion of potential extraterrestrial life. As technology improves and as more and more space vehicles probe beyond Earth, knowledge expands dramatically. We will note new hypotheses and new exploration data with postings on the course forum.

This course emphasizes qualitative approaches to the topics included, thus is appropriate for all students, irrespective of backgrounds. Course content is available *online only*. It is your responsibility to maintain access to the internet for the duration of the course.

Course Objectives

- The primary goal of the course is to gain an appreciation of what we know about the Solar System, and how we know what we know.
- We will learn to recognise the processes of evolution of a star-planet system, and we will see that the evolution we know best – that of Earth – may not apply well elsewhere.
- We need to understand the logic of a scientific study: from observation and gathering of evidence to hypothesis and, eventually, refined theory.
- We will learn to write scientific reports; an assigned topic will be researched and presented in scientific format.
- We will take part in online discussions about new developments in planetary exploration.

Important dates

- Essay submission #1 deadline: **Tuesday October 11th, 1:00 pm**
- Quizzes 1-3b: **Saturday, October 22, 11:55pm**
- Mid-term test: **Saturday, October 22, 2:00 pm, HSB room 40 (if writing in London)**
- First graded forum post deadline (Write an Exam Question): **Thurs Nov.17, 11:55pm.**
- Revised essay submission #2 deadline: **Friday November 25th, 1:00 pm**
- Second graded forum post deadline (Space News): **Friday Dec 2nd 11:55 pm**
- Quizzes 4-7: **Wednesday Dec 7th, 11:55 pm**
- Deadline to read required forum posts and participate in polls: **Wed Dec 7th, 11:55 pm**
- Final exam set by the Registrar's office.

Final exam date will be set by the Registrar's office (UWO's exam period runs **Dec 10 - 21**, but exams for distance courses such as this may fall outside of this period). Please check the exam period on the [distance studies web page](#) before making any travel arrangements!

Method of Evaluation

- 30% Mid-Term 2 hour written examination
Midterm Exam is scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 22 @ 2 pm, HSB 40 (if in London).
 - Fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, and short-answer questions.
 - *This covers Units 1, 2 and 3 inclusive (to the end of Chapter 11)*
 - Make-up midterm will be held on Wednesday October 26th @ 7 pm
You can only take the make-up with permission from an academic counsellor.

- 30% End-of-Term 2 hour written examination
Date, time and location to be determined by the Registrar's office
 - Fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, and short-answer questions.
 - *This covers the second half of the course: Units 4, 5, 6 & 7 inclusive (to the end of Chapter 19). The exam is not cumulative.*

- 20% Scientific Report (Assigned Research Topic). Submitted in 2 parts:
See the Assignment Information provided on OWL
The written assignment must be completed to pass the course
 - 10% Submission of first version : **Due Tuesday October 11th, 1:00 pm**
 - 10% Submission of second version: **Due Friday November 25th, 1:00 pm**

- 10% Participation
 - 2% for posting at least 1 thoughtful question/comment/answer in the Forum "Suggested Exam Questions" by **Thurs Nov.17, 11:55pm**
Some of the suggested questions will be used on real exams.
 - 5% for participating in the Forum "Space Exploration in the News" by **Friday December 2, 11:55 pm**. See Forum instructions on OWL for details.
 - 2% for reading 100% of the posts in the "Space Exploration in the News" Forum by **Wed Dec. 7th, 11:55 pm**
 - 1% for participating in polls distributed throughout the course notes (must be completed by the last day of classes: **Wednesday Dec. 7th, 11:55 pm**)

- 10% Graded Quizzes (at intervals during the course; see *Weekly Schedule*)
Quizzes 1, 2, 3a and 3b must be completed by **Saturday Oct 22, 11:55 pm**.
Quizzes 4, 5, 6 and 7 must be completed by **Wednesday Dec 7th, 11:55 pm**.
 - There are 8 graded quizzes. There are also 8 self-tests; these are not graded, and are available to you as practice quizzes.
 - Spelling and grammar count on the quizzes! These are online quizzes, so misspelled words will not be recognized.
 - The quizzes are automatically administered through the OWL system. **Don't wait to submit your quizzes until the last minute!** Last minute computer problems will not be accepted as grounds for accommodation.
 - No one will be permitted to complete a quiz after the due date.

Scientific Report (essay)

- Details about the requirements for the Scientific Report (essay) can be found on the OWL site under “Assignments”.
- Completion of the essay assignment is required to pass the course.
- The essay is worth 20% and is submitted in two different versions. The first version will be worth 10% of your course grade. You will receive feedback on this version that you can use to improve your essay and resubmit for the second version, which is also worth 10% of the course grade. Revising your essay to improve its content, based on feedback from your TA, is an opportunity both to improve your writing and to increase your grade.
- The revised (second) version of the essay may be submitted at any time up to the final submission deadline. If no revisions are made, the grade for the final version will be the same as that for the first version. **Even if you decide not to make any revisions, you must resubmit your essay before the second deadline.**
- Every effort will be made to complete the grading of the essay in a timely fashion. Grades and feedback will be released online within four weeks following submission.
- Questions about the essay should be posted to the forum or communicated to your TA in an email.
- All essay submissions must be made through the OWL submission system. Mail attachments will not be graded.
- When you submit an assignment you will receive an email receipt from OWL and an email receipt from Turnitin.com. **Keep these for your records.**
- Submission problems must be communicated to the instructor and TA before the deadline.
- **Late assignments** submitted within one hour of the deadline will receive a 2% penalty.
- For 5 days following those “**Due Dates**” (including weekend days) reports may be submitted, but will be subject to a mark deduction of 10 % per late day. No reports will be accepted after that.
- Late penalties may be reduced only upon the recommendation of an academic counsellor.
- When you submit your report, you will get a **Turnitin score**. Scores of up to 30% are not unusual in this kind of writing, but scores in excess of 40% could indicate a problem. Your TA will use the Turnitin report to check for originality in the written content. **If evidence of plagiarism is found, you will get an automatic zero, and you will be reported to the Dean.** Plagiarism is a serious offense (see note on plagiarism below), and is treated seriously in this class.

Online Forums

The OWL website has a forum feature that you can use to discuss topics related to class material with your classmates. Feel free to ask each other questions, answer other people’s questions, and make comments. I will be monitoring the forum at least three times per week, and all class participants are required to read and contribute to the forum. If you

have any personal questions, you can email the instructor directly and I will respond. Before sending a message, consider posting your query to the forum where you may get a quicker response and allow other students to benefit from the discussion. Some information may be communicated only through the forum, so **be sure to check regularly for new forum posts**. Please keep your comments clean, respectful, and on-topic.

- You are required to make one original and thoughtful post in the **Write an Exam Question** topic before **Thursday November 17, 11:55pm**. **Your contributions to this topic will be graded**. Further details are in the Forum description on OWL.
- You are required to make at least one original post in the **Space Exploration in the News Forum** by **December 2, 11:55 pm** and read 100% of the posts in this Forum before the end of the last day of classes (**Dec 7**). **Your contributions to this topic will be graded**. Further details are in the Forum description on OWL.

Academic offences

Electronic devices are not permitted during either the mid-term or end-of-term examinations. These include cell-phones, iPads, tablets, and iPods. They must be turned off and put in your bags. **They are not allowed in your pocket.**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism is a **serious academic offence**. The UWO Senate Academic Handbook defines plagiarism as "The act of appropriating the literary composition of another, or parts or passages of his writings, or the ideas or language of the same, and passing them off as the product of one's own mind." Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt by using proper referencing. For more information see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar.

Please note: When you write your essay, you are **not** allowed to copy and paste **ANYTHING** (even if it's just a sentence!) from **ANYWHERE**. This includes text from websites, papers, books, other students, etc. You are not allowed to copy and paste paragraphs and then change several words. You must gather ideas for your report then **write the entire paper in your own words**. If *any* part of your paper is determined to be plagiarized, that part of your paper will **NOT** be marked. **NO EXCEPTIONS!**

Plagiarism detection software: All required papers will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement,

currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Multiple Choice: Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating

Students' responsibilities in the event of a medical issue

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, you must provide valid medical or other supporting documentation to an academic counsellor in your home faculty as soon as possible *and* contact your instructor immediately. It is the student's responsibility to make alternative arrangements with their instructor once the accommodation has been approved and the instructor has been informed. In the event of a missed final exam, a "Recommendation of Special Examination" form must be obtained immediately. A list of forms can be found here:

http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/general-information/forms_listing.html

No accommodations will be given without documentation, and you must contact the instructor before the deadline or exam, unless you are physically unable to do so.

A student requiring academic accommodation due to illness should use the Student Medical Certificate when visiting an off-campus medical facility or request a Records Release Form for visits to Student Health Services. The form can be found here:

https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical_document.pdf

Support Services

The course is available (upon registration) at <https://owl.uwo.ca/portal>.

Help with computer problems encountered either during initial setup or during the course should be addressed to ITS: <http://www.uwo.ca/its/>

General information about Distance Studies courses, including viewing exam schedules, is available at: http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/applying/distance_studies/

The web site for Registrarial Services is found at: <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services provided by the USC are listed here: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Instructions for how to contact the Student Development Centre are given here: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

SDC's Learning Skills Services: Rm 4100 WSS, <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning>. Counsellors are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

Accessibility Statement

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

Course Outline

Each Unit contains an Introduction, a Self-Test and a Graded Quiz. The study guides in the Unit Introductions are a starting off point for you to begin your studies. Remember that ALL material is testable; it is not limited to that which is in the study guide.

1. Unit 1: Basic concepts
 - Chapter 1 – Scientific Theory and the Big Bang
 - Chapter 2 – Time and Space
 - Chapter 3 – Matter and the Nebular Hypothesis

2. Unit 2: The Solar System
 - Chapter 4 – A Star called Sun
 - Chapter 5 – Geometry of the Solar System

3. Unit 3: The Terrestrial Planets
 - Chapter 6 – When two planets collide
 - Chapter 7 – Earth
 - Chapter 8 – The Moon
 - Chapter 9 – Mercury
 - Chapter 10 – Venus
 - Chapter 11 – Mars

* the Mid-term exam covers up to the end of Chapter 11 *

4. Unit 4: From Asteroids to Meteorites
 - Chapter 12 – Asteroids
 - Chapter 13 – Meteorites

5. Unit 5: The Gas Giant Planets
 - Chapter 14 – Jupiter and family
 - Chapter 15 – Saturn and family
 - Chapter 16 – Uranus and Neptune
6. Unit 6: Plutoids, TNOs and Comets
 - Chapter 17 – Plutoids and TNOs
 - Chapter 18 – Comets
7. Unit 7: Extraterrestrial Life
 - Chapter 19 – Life in the Universe

* the Final exam covers the Unit 4 Intro to Chapter 19 *

Suggested weekly schedule

This is only a suggested schedule and the readings are not evenly spaced – you should plan your own schedule according to your reading speed and your other obligations. Plan ahead, read regularly and keep up with the Chapters. Ask questions frequently and read the Forums. The numbers in parenthesis are the approximate number of pages of text per week without figures.

Week 1, starts September 8 (~8 pages)

- Start work on the essay as soon as your schedule will allow
- Introductory materials and familiarise yourself with course site on OWL
- Unit 1 Introduction
- Chapter 1

Week 2, starts September 12 (~16 pages)

- Chapter 2
- Chapter 3
- Quiz 1

Week 3, starts September 19 (~21 pages)

- Unit 2 Introduction
- Chapter 4
- Chapter 5
- Quiz 2

Week 4, starts September 26 (~24 pages)

- Unit 3 Introduction
- Chapter 6
- Chapter 7

Week 5, starts October 3 (~12 pages)

- Chapter 8
- (First Essay submission is next week!!)

Week 6, starts October 10 (~16 pages)

- Chapter 9
- Quiz 3a
- Chapter 10
- Deadline for essay submission: **Tuesday, October 11 at 1:00 pm**

Week 7, starts October 17 (~21 pages)

- Chapter 11
- Quiz 3b
- Prepare for midterm test (content from Chapters 1-9)
- Midterm on **Saturday October 22** (time and place to be announced)
- Deadline for Quizzes 1-3b: **Saturday October 22, 11:55 pm**

Week 8, starts October 24 (~15 pages)

- Unit 4 Introduction
- Chapter 12

Week 9, starts October 31 (~15 pages)

- Chapter 13
- Quiz 4
- Unit 5 Introduction

Week 10, starts November 7 (~16 pages)

- Chapter 14

Week 11, starts November 14 (~15 pages)

- Chapter 15
- Deadline for posting to 'Write an Exam Question' forum topic: **Thursday November 17, 11:55 pm**
- (The second essay deadline is next week)

Week 12, starts November 21(~15 pages)

- Chapter 16
- Quiz 5
- Unit 6 Introduction
- Deadline for revised essay: **Friday, November 25, 1:00 pm**

Week 13, starts November 28 (~23 pages)

- Chapter 17
- Chapter 18
- Quiz 6
- Deadline for posting to 'Space Exploration' forum topic: **Friday Dec 2, 11:55 pm**

Week 14, starts December 5 (~16 pages)

- Unit 7 Introduction
- Chapter 19
- Quiz 7
- Prepare for final exam
- Deadline for Quizzes 3b-7: **Wednesday December 7, 11:55 pm**
- Deadline for reading required Forum posts **Wednesday December 7, 11:55 pm**

Exam period:

Provisionally **Dec 10-21**. * Please check the exam period on the [distance studies web page](#) before making any travel arrangements! Note that the exam period for distance courses may differ from the exam period in the academic calendar.