Instructors: Dr. Bao-An Li  
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Office Hours: MTR 1:30-4:00pm or by appointment  
Text: No

Catalog Description: PHYS 401, Current Problems. 1 semester hour  
Current problems or topics in research, employment, and trends in physics and astronomy are considered. Students are required to attend all department colloquia and seminars on Thursday. Research projects may be assigned during the semester.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Objective 1: Students will have a broad overview of the latest development in the forefronts of physics and astronomy

Objective 2: Students will learn how active scientists analyze problems, develop strategies and set up experiments to test hypothesis and solve problems

Objective 3: Students will learn presentation and communication skills

Objective 4: Students will learn how to become a life-long learner

Grading

(1) Attendance will be taken during each class. Absence twice without pre-approval or acceptable/verifiable excuse will lead to an unsatisfactory final grade. (2) IF this is the first time you are taking this course or did not receive a satisfactory grade previously in this course, a 5-15 page term paper in PDF format is due by email by 5pm on Dec. 5th. You can write about any topic in physics or astronomy that is most interesting to you. Students are encouraged to consult any faculty member in the department while preparing the term papers. A failing (Unsatisfactory) grade of the term paper will automatically lead to an Unsatisfactory grade in the course.

Cheating, Plagiarism, and other Breaches of Academic Conduct:

Academic cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct may result in removal of the student from class with a failing grade or may in extreme cases result in suspension or expulsion from the University as described in the “Code of Student Conduct” section of the Student's Guidebook.
Classroom Behavior:
Disorderly conduct which interferes with the normal classroom atmosphere will not be tolerated. The classroom instructor is the judge of such behavior and may instruct a disorderly student to leave the room with an unexcused absence or, in more serious situations, a student may be removed from the class with a failing grade. **All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See Student’s Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct)**

Attendance and Tardiness:
*Students are expected to be on-time and present for all class meetings.* Excused absences can be arranged prior to the class period being missed for appropriate activities as determined by the instructor. If an emergency results in an absence, the student should contact the instructor as soon as possible informing the instructor of the emergency and inquiring about ways to make up the missed class. The instructor will make judgments on how to handle the situation. Possible reasons for an excused absence are listed in the Student's Guidebook under class attendance policy. A student who is tardy at the time roll is called may be marked absent. **Attendance records will be maintained. Any student who misses more than three consecutive classes without a proper excuse will be penalized a letter grade.**

ADA Eligible Students:
ADA eligible students should make arrangements with the instructor in the first week of the semester about special arrangements needed for classroom or testing facilities and procedures to accommodate the disability.

Evaluation of Instruction:
Students will be given opportunities to evaluate instruction near the end of the semester. The physics department utilizes a scantron-graded questionnaire with statements regarding various elements of instruction and in addition utilizes an open-ended form where students can make comments on all elements of the classroom. These comments are given to the instructor and department head soon after the grades are recorded. If students have concerns about the classroom experience during the semester they should inform the instructor of those concerns and failing a satisfactory response may, as a last resort, contact the physics department head with those concerns.

A&M-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.