The Purpose of Section

In this class, we devote two and a half hours a week to lecture, so I won't be giving additional lectures here in section. Instead, we'll focus on the kinds of things that cannot be done in a huge lecture hall — in particular, group exercises, class discussions, and hands-on demonstrations to reinforce what you learn in lecture. These will generally be guided by worksheets that I will pass out near the beginning of each class.

Worksheets will not be graded or even collected — in fact, sometimes I will not even leave room for you to write your answers down, and often we may not finish the entire worksheet. So don't worry about writing down all the "right" answers — instead, discuss the questions with your partners and decide on an answer as a group. When you're finished, we may go over the worksheets as a class, or instead I may come around to each group and ask you to explain your solutions.

Attendance will not be taken in class, but coming to section is strongly recommended. We will cover the same sort of material as in lecture, but hopefully in a more interactive and exciting way... and later in the day, as well!

Homework

Homework counts for a very large fraction of your grade in this course (50% or more), and late work will not be accepted — so for your own sake, be thorough, and turn in all assignments on time! If you need extra help with any assignment, please feel free to send me an e-mail (I will try to respond as fast as possible) or come to my office hours. You can also discuss the problems with your fellow students, as long as you work out the solutions to your problems individually — you may not, for example, help a friend answer a homework problem and then copy the result.

Observational Project

You are required to complete one observational project this semester, recording your choice of either the Moon and its phases or the planets and their motions in the sky. It is important that you get started on this project as soon as possible (before the end of January) so you have a complete set of observations to report. Approximately at the end of each month, you should bring the observations you have so far to section for me to check off. Feel free to ask me anytime if you need help with this project (in particular, for locating the planets in the sky).

Final Notes

We'll cover an immense breadth of material in this course, including elements from subjects as diverse as astronomy, geology, biology, and even history; and will touch on many of the most profound questions of all time, including our origins and to some extent our destiny. Enjoy the ride!