

ASTRO 342 – FALL 2006

Term Projects

As stated in the syllabus, the **term project** is an important part of the course. The theme of the term project is constructing a model solar system, and investigating its properties. This project will require:

1. Several written exercises performed throughout the term, which will progressively refine your system.
2. Presenting the results to the class in a brief (10-15 minute) oral report.
3. In the exercises and the paper you are required to cite the sources of your information, including web sites.

We recommend you undertake this project in a team of 3-4 people. Teams have the advantage that they can divide up the work, gather more information than an individual, and mutually evaluate the quality of the information they find. However, teams also have greater overhead in getting organized. Teams must be formed by the due date of the first exercise. Since the exercise will be team work, only one copy of the exercises, with the names of all team members will be turned in. However, in the last exercise we will ask each person to describe their specific contribution to the team. You may also do this project alone or with another person. Our experience is that the quality of individual projects, and thus the grade, is generally lower than team efforts.

According to the syllabus this project is worth 25% of your grade. However, a project like this cannot be graded as precisely as a problem set or an exam, so to grade the exercises we will use a simple 4-tier system, consisting of the following grades. The talk will be pass/fail.

* Outstanding – your team went substantially beyond the typical effort. In this case will you will get up to 100% of the “possible points” for the term project. However, because it is a big reward we’ll set the bar high for this grade.

* Good Job - your team did good work and we all learned some things. This is the grade we optimistically hope to give to almost everybody. With this grade, you will get about 90% of the possible points. Probably this will bring most people’s grade up a bit. If you already have an A at this point, then this grade may bring your average down a bit, but it will still keep you in the A range.

* NMoW (needs more work) – your team didn’t quite get it together. Your work seemed thin in places, or you didn’t go much beyond the basic course material on the topic. In this case, you will get about 80% of the possible points.

* F - You didn’t do the project, 0% of the possible points. This might be the route of choice for someone taking the course pass/fail, who has enough points to pass. But be

sure to check the part about having enough points to pass! We will not be offended that you are not doing the project.

The presentations for these projects will most likely be given during class time on dead week, the last week of classes.