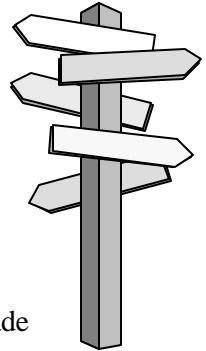


Physics First Year Experience

(Phys 120-01)

Fall 2008

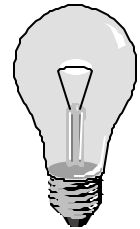
What am I doing here? You are probably here because you are curious about the world around you, and are either thinking of, or already planning on, a career in physics or engineering. In this class, you should learn a little more about what is involved in “physics”. In addition, you will get to know your fellow classmates, the physics upperclassmen, and the physics faculty better.



Is this class going to be fun? Having fun is one of the official course goals. Your grade partially depends on how much fun you have. Just kidding about the grades.

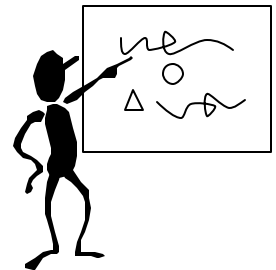
Is this class going to be easy? Yes. This class won't even require calculus!

Am I really going to get a grade for this? Sort of. This class is a “pass/fail” class. Your grade will be determined by completion of one or two short assignments, and by your degree of participation in class. I expect to see you in class **every** week. Missing more than one class activity will result in a **failing** grade. If, for some unthinkable reason, you miss a class activity, I *may* allow you to do some make-up work if you contact me within 24 hours of the event. Make-up assignments, when given, will depend on what you missed and why, as well as your attitude following your absence.



In addition, you will be required to attend (at least) one physics colloquium this semester (an informal presentation about physics and science). Colloquia are typically held on Thursdays at 4:00 in Bailey 135.

So what's really going to happen? Most of the time, we will investigate a particular topic in class. Some weeks, we will meet together with the other sections of this class; in yet other weeks, a different faculty member will be your instructor. You may have to do some independent investigation, and you may have to make a few presentations in class.



Some of the subjects that we hope to examine include:

- A tour of the department research labs
- How to write about experimental science
- Archimedes: why things float
- Fermi: The art of estimation
- An introduction to probability
- An introduction to sound waves

