PHYS 2108
Bennington College
Fall 2025

A Brief Introduction to Astronomical Observing

(1 credit)

Class Times: Clear Evenings, starting at 7:30pm

Me

Hugh Crowl
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Office Hours: Tuesday 9:30am-11am, Thursday 1pm-2:30pm *or by appointment*

Course Page: http://crowl.bennington.edu/observing/

Course Overview: In this course, students will learn the fundamentals of observing the night sky with a telescope. This course will teach how to find the basic constellations and how to use both manual and computerized telescopes to point at celestial objects in the night sky. While there will be some classroom time to teach fundamental concepts, the vast majority of the class will consist of practical, hands-on time with telescopes at Stickney Observatory.

Course Goals: Students will (1) learn how to use telescopes to observe the night sky and (2) learn how to meaningfully record their observations.

Observing: Your sole assignment for this class is to use telescopes to observe the night sky as much as possible during these first three weeks of September and record those observations in an observing notebook. Because of the weather conditions, it is likely that you will need to observe in chunks – every night it is clear (weekday or weekend), you should plan on coming down to Stickney Observatory for at least some time. While this class is only 1 credit, it also only meets for 3 weeks; as such, it is expected that you will spend a comparable amount of time on this class as you do on a full 4-credit class for these three weeks.

Evaluation/Grading: You will be given an observing notebook for this course. ***All work for the course must be done in the observing notebook.*** In addition to my informal observations of you, the observing notebook will be the primary way I evaluate your work for this class.

Academic Accommodations: Bennington College provides reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities when such accommodations are requested and necessary to ensure equal access to College programs and facilities. If you believe you are entitled to an accommodation speak with Academic Services about any disability-related needs (academicservices@bennington.edu or 440-4400). If approved, you will receive a memo detailing your specific accommodations; it is your responsibility to provide me with the memo and discuss the implementation of accommodations. Note that I will not be aware of your needs if you do not share this memo with me. Accommodations are not retroactive, so the sooner we meet to discuss your needs, the better. Students experiencing mental and/or physical health challenges that are significantly impacting their academic work are encouraged to speak with their faculty advisor or a member of Academic Services about the impact and to connect with resources through health and psychological services (440-4426 or 440-4451).