

**AST 248: The Search for Life in the Universe****Table of Contents**

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## Course Information

**Course Title:** The Search for Life in the Universe

**Course Designator, Section:** AST 248

**SBC Designation:** STAS; DEC H

**Credits:** 3

**Pre-requisites, Co-requisites:** one DEC E or SNW course

**Semester, Year:** Fall 2025

**Modality:** In-person

**Mode of Instruction:** lecture and discussion

**Meeting Time:** M/W 0930-1050

**Classroom Location:** Javits 102

## Instructor Information

**Instructor Name:** Frederick M Walter

**Instructor Email:** Frederick.Walter@stonybrook.edu

**Instructor Office Phone Number:** 632-8232

**Office Hours:** TBD

**Office Location:** ESS 459

**TA Contact Info:** N/A

## Required Course Materials

see web page: <https://www.astro.sunysb.edu/fwalter/AST248/>

**Recommended Course Materials** see above web page

## Course Description:

From the Bulletin: A study of the role of science in modern society through investigation of the question: Does life exist elsewhere in the universe? Topics include a review of the astronomical and biological settings; the origin of life on the earth and possibly elsewhere; the evolution of life and the development of intelligence and technology. Also discussed are the ramifications of the development of life and intelligence for the atmosphere and the biosphere.

***"Two possibilities exist: either we are alone in the Universe or we are not. Both are equally terrifying."***

**- Arthur C. Clarke**

## Learning Objectives

see the web page: <https://www.astro.sunysb.edu/fwalter/AST248/lo.html>

## Stony Brook Curriculum (SBC) Learning Objectives: Explore Interconnectedness

### STAS SLOs

1. Apply concepts and tools drawn from any field of study in order to understand the links between science or technology and the arts, humanities or social sciences.
2. Synthesize quantitative and/or technical information and qualitative information to make informed judgments about the reciprocal relationship between science or technology and the arts, humanities or social sciences.

### Standards for STAS

1. *A certified course shall fulfill both learning outcomes. Certified courses will devote significant time to consideration of the consequences of science or technology for social, economic, ethical, moral, political, artistic, and/or other domains of experience.*
2. *Because of the inherent interdisciplinary nature of the STAS learning objectives, STAS courses may not be multi-certified.*

## What If You Have a Question?

- General Question Discussion Forum N/A
- When To Email the Instructor: Anytime
- When To Email the Teaching Assistant (if applicable): TBD
- Attending Office/Student Hours TBD

## Assessments

See the web page <https://www.astro.sunysb.edu/fwalter/AST248/general.html>

Assessment/Assignment/Exam	Points or Percentage	Due Date
Midterm 1	20	6 October
Midterm 2	20	10 November
About 10 weekly quizzes	20	Wednesdays
Term Paper	15	24 November
Final Exam	25	10 December
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	

## Response Time and Feedback on Assignments

### Grade Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage/ Points
A	95
A-	90
B+	88
B	85
B-	80
C+	78
C	75
C-	70
D+	68
D	65
F	<60

**This course is graded on a curve.**

Additional information

- [Undergraduate Grading System](#)
- [Graduate Grading System](#)

## Course Schedule

See web page <https://www.astro.sunysb.edu/fwalter/AST248/syllabus.html>

The possibility exists that unforeseen events will make schedule changes necessary. Any changes will be clearly noted in Brightspace Announcements or through Stony Brook email.

Dates/ Week/ Module	LO	Topic	Activities/Readings	Assessments

## Student Success Resources: How to Be a Successful Student in This Course

There are multiple resources, university offices, and help desks that are available to assist you with everything from advising, tutoring, accessibility and much more.

Review some [Academic Success Strategies](#) and visit the [Student Resources](#) page for links to resources on campus.

## Wellness & Support Statement

Stony Brook values student well-being, including mental health, and recognizes that a variety of factors can impact emotional wellness and academic success including stress, anxiety, depression, substance use, sexual violence, family or relationship concerns, and political conflict. [Resources are available](#) if you experience challenges or wellness concerns that affect your ability to be successful in class, and you are encouraged to reach out for help when you need it.

In the event of a short-term absence from class, students are encouraged to communicate immediately and work directly with instructors. However, if a student is struggling with an extended absence due a hospitalization, family illness or death, they are encouraged to reach out to the Student Support Team.

## Technical Requirements and Assistance

[D2L Brightspace](#) is Stony Brook University's digital learning environment. It is used for the facilitation of communications between faculty and students, submission of assignments, and secure posting of grades and feedback in your courses. To [access Brightspace](#), go to [mycourses.stonybrook.edu](https://mycourses.stonybrook.edu) and use your SBU NetID and password. If you are unsure of your NetID, visit [Finding Your NetID and Password](#) for more information.

Sometimes submitting coursework via a tablet and/or mobile device can be challenging. Computers equipped with the appropriate software are available for use at the various [SINC site computer labs](#). Both physical and virtual labs are available. You can also borrow a computer through [SBU's Laptop Loan Program](#).

Visit the [Technical Requirements page](#) for additional information regarding hardware and software options.

Please use the following information if you need technical assistance at any time during the course or to report a problem with Brightspace:

Brightspace Support via SUNY Helpdesk

- Phone: 1-844-673-6786
- Submit a [ticket or chat online](#)

Stony Brook University: Academic Technology Services

- Phone: 631-632-9800
- Email: [AcademicTechnologies@stonybrook.edu](mailto:AcademicTechnologies@stonybrook.edu)

### **Privacy Policies**

This course utilizes various educational technologies to enhance the learning experience. You can access links to the [privacy policies](#) of the tools and platforms used at Stony Brook University on the Syllabus Addendum webpage.

### **Course Policies:**

see web page <https://www.astro.sunysb.edu/fwalter/AST248/general.html>

**Late Work Policy:** late work will be accepted but penalties will be assessed

**Attendance Policy:** Attendance will not be taken, but the midterms and weekly quizzes will be held in class.

**Bibliographical Information/Reference List** see web pages

### **University Policies**

#### **Student Accessibility Support Center Statement**

If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact the Student Accessibility Support Center, Stony Brook Union Suite 107, (631) 632-6748, or at [sasc@stonybrook.edu](mailto:sasc@stonybrook.edu). They will determine with you what

accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and the Student Accessibility Support Center. For procedures and information go to the following website: <https://ehs.stonybrook.edu//programs/fire-safety/emergency-evacuation/evacuation-guide-disabilities> and search Fire Safety and Evacuation and Disabilities.

### **Academic Integrity Statement**

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty is required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty in the Health Sciences Center (School of Health Professions, Nursing, Social Welfare, Dental Medicine) and School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty please refer to the academic judiciary website at [http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/academic\\_integrity/index.html](http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/academic_integrity/index.html)

### **Critical Incident Management**

Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and the School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. Further information about most academic matters can be found in the Undergraduate Bulletin, the Undergraduate Class Schedule, and the Faculty-Employee Handbook.

### **Understand When You May Drop This Course**

If you need to drop or withdraw from the course, it is your responsibility to be aware of the tuition liability deadlines listed on the registrar's [Academic Calendar](#). Before making the decision to drop/withdraw you may want to [contact me or] refer to the University's policies:

- [Undergraduate Course Load and Course Withdrawal Policy](#)
- [Graduate Course Changes Policy](#)

### **Incomplete Policy**

Under emergency/special circumstances, students may petition for an incomplete grade. Circumstances must be documented and significant enough to merit an incomplete. If you need to request an incomplete for this course, contact me for approval as far in advance as possible. You should also read the University's policies that apply to you:

[Undergraduate Bulletin](#)

[Graduate Bulletin](#)

**Course Materials and Copyright Statement**

Course material accessed from Brightspace, Zoom, Echo 360, VoiceThread, etc. is for the exclusive use of students who are currently enrolled in the course. Content from these systems cannot be reused or distributed without written permission of the instructor and/or the copyright holder. Duplication of materials protected by copyright, without permission of the copyright holder is a violation of the Federal copyright law, as well as a violation of Stony Brook's Academic Integrity.