



CHAFFEY HIGH SCHOOL

1245 North Euclid Avenue, Ontario, California 91762 • (909) 988-5560 • FAX 988-0146

Principal
Thomas O. Mitchell
Assistant Principals
Bart Goldstein
Victor M. Ruiz
Joni Siegel
Susan Teed

Dear Students and Parents of Students of Astronomy I,

Welcome to Astronomy I. I hope you will enjoy and learn a lot in this class. This course is special in that it is one of only a few college preparatory courses in astronomy offered by a public high school in California. Accordingly, this course helps to meet the University of California's entry requirements for a college prep elective.

THIS COURSE WILL CHALLENGE YOU: As with any college preparatory science class you are expected to be curious, to ask questions, to theorize and to put your ideas to the test. Your commitment and enthusiasm for learning are what will make this course successful for you. We enjoy many special opportunities in this course. These opportunities will have several evening outings to Cow Canyon Saddle near Mt. Baldy Village for sky viewing under better atmospheric conditions than are available in our valley.

Therefore, I need you to fill out the accompanying cards permitting student participation after normal school hours. Please understand that while the evening events cannot be made mandatory, they will be enormously enriching and productive. Happily, there will be **no charges** for these activities this year. Finally, I invite all parents to join us for any or all of our evening events. Many parents in the past have found these to be very interesting activities.

CALCULATORS: Part of our investigation of the universe involves the use of formulas. Since our course is not primarily concerned with developing mathematical skills, calculators are required. I recommend that students bring with them **every day** either a scientific calculator (such as a TI-30) or a graphing calculator (such as a TI-83).

HOMEWORK: As with any college preparatory course, homework is an integral part of our class. You should expect regular assignments as well as some longer term activities. I expect you to do all of the reading, homework and project work assigned in this class. Generally, I will not repeat the readings during our lectures and class discussions (that would be pretty silly). I will supplement and complement the reading with activities, computer simulations, videos and updates from what is currently being learned by astronomical researchers around the world. I expect you to get help whenever you need it. You should be aware that this class will take some time each week, especially when evening observational activities are planned. I will inform your student about the particular requirements for the class.

COMMUNICATION: Students and parents can reach me at 988-5560 ext. 2434, by e-mail at tajames@tajames.net and at our web page <http://tajames.net> You can also find class information and grades on School Loop. I can be reached in person after school almost any day until 4 or 5 p.m. Any issue that develops that affects your progress in the class should be discussed promptly with me.

Please help me to provide the best educational experience I can for your student by:

- discussing my expectations,
- monitoring your student's progress during the year (regularly ask your student what he or she is learning -- the answer is *never* "nothing!" – and ask them to explain to you what they are learning),
- communicating your concerns with me.

A little about me:

I have lived in Upland with my wife since 1978. Our nineteen-year-old daughter will begin her second year of study at UC Berkeley this fall. We also have a married daughter who graduated from Westmont College in 1999 and completed a PhD in Environmental Sciences at UC Riverside in 2006. I like astronomy, camping and backpacking, playing guitar, gardening, computers and sports. After graduating from South Pasadena High School in 1972, I earned bachelor's degrees in Physics and Astronomy from the University of California at Berkeley. After working for a number of years in private industry as an electronic engineer and production manager, I entered teaching. I earned my Master of Arts degree in Education from the Claremont Graduate University in 1992. I have studied chaos theory and dynamical systems and have pursued research astronomy having co-published articles in the October 1994 *Astrophysical Journal Supplement* and June 20, 1999 *Astrophysical Journal* reporting research in which I used the Hubble Space Telescope in 1996. This is my twenty-second year teaching at Chaffey.

Teaching is something I truly love to do. I enjoy helping students understand and discover new things. It is important to me that your student succeeds in this class. This class may be easy at times and quite challenging at other times. This means they have to work at learning the material. This means they have to try every day to do their best. Above all, mathematics is an essential, important and beautiful skill. Like all skills, students will need to **practice** this skill to perfect it.

There is a poem by Robert Frost that says, "*Two roads diverge in a wood, and I -- I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.*" For us, the road less traveled leads to education, personal growth and satisfaction, while the other road does not. It is my hope that your child will do well this semester and continue traveling the road less traveled by.

Please keep this letter for future reference.

Sincerely,

Tom James

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have read the expectations of the class and have discussed these with _____.
(student's name)

The best time to reach me by phone is:

(time)

(phone number)

Signed _____

Date _____

Please print name _____

Please list any concerns or comments in the space below:
