

Frequently Asked Questions

Contents (quick-jump links)

[Absences](#)

[Clickers](#)

[Course Calendar](#)

[Exams](#)

[Grading](#)

[Help](#)

[Homework](#)

[Labs](#)

[Mastering Physics](#)

[Office Hours](#)

[Online Issues](#)

[Prep problems](#)

[Recitation](#)

[Registration & Scheduling](#)

[Textbooks](#)

[TAs, Graders and Boxes](#)

When it's not included here in FAQ's: See the full [Syllabus](#).

Absences:

“What if I miss class (lecture)?” No need to notify anyone—just follow along from the online guided study; catch up as you can.

“What if I miss a lab session?” If there's still time that week to attend another lab, email the TA of another lab that would work for you, then wait for his/her permission to attend (**do NOT drop in without that permission**); copy the instructor on all emailing. If there's no time to arrange this for the current lab week, then you'll need to make up the lab during Week 10 (and for that you don't need to pre-arrange—or even attend your own lab time—it's basically an open “drop in” time).

“What if I miss an exam—illness, accident, oversight, etc.?” First, notify the instructor right away. Then plan to complete the rest of the course and finish all other work (and take all other exams). At the end of the term, the instructor will then issue you an “Incomplete” grade, and you can take the missing exam next term (PH 213 is offered every term, including Summer).

“But what if I haven't yet missed the exam? What if I have a known conflict with a scheduled exam? Can I pre-arrange to take the exam at another time?” Yes, possibly, but it would only be earlier, not later—and only 2 hours earlier at most. (Exams are always new material, and as such they take 10-20 hours to develop. So they are generally not completely written or printed until sometime the day they are to be given.)

Clicker (TopHat) (and see also page 7 of the Syllabus):

“I'm new to Top Hat. How do I obtain the app? How do I use it?” Go here for all your help/support needs:

<https://learn.oregonstate.edu/classroom-response/student-tools>

“If I miss my regular lecture time, can I drop in on the other section?” Yes (so long as there are spare seats), but **you won't get any clicker points that day**. Your Top Hat app is activated only for your registered lecture time (either 1100, 1400 or 1500).

“How can I confirm that my clicker responses are being received and credited?” Your entire course history—every one of your responses—is automatically saved each class session. You can access your record via your Top Hat account.

“What if my app fails or my device runs low on batteries during class?” It's just like missing or being late to class: You won't get any clicker points for any questions you don't answer.

Course Calendar:

“Why are some links broken?” Links will show in black-and-white if they’re still unconnected to material; they will be connected later—that’s normal and intentional. Links appear in color only when their materials are actually posted.

“Why can’t I open your text links, such as those in the Calendar?” For some reason, certain browsers and mouse designs detect a live text link only when you mouse over an edge (or end) of that set of text characters. Try that.

“The Calendar offers Before Class materials almost every day, but sometimes the After Class link just disappears—why?” Some class sessions didn’t need any follow-up, so the black-and-white link reserved for After Class was made totally white (hover the mouse to see that it’s still there)—meaning that nothing will be posted there this term.

Exams:

“I heard that exams are open-notes—true?” You’re allowed to bring one standard-sized sheet of paper (both sides OK) with anything you want written on it, provided that it’s in your own handwriting. See page 9 of the Course Information.

“What if I don’t agree with the scoring on my exam?” You can submit an appeal. See pages 9-10 of the Course Information.

Grading:

“I heard that if I’m within a few points of a grade cutoff for the term, I could qualify for a “bump” up to the higher grade—true?” True—under certain conditions. See page 11 of the Course Information.

“52 is a C?!? 84 is an A?!? Why is your grading scale so different—and so spread out?” Physics is a difficult subject, and there’s a lot of material in a relatively short amount of time. This grading scale ensures compliance with AR 17 while bowing to other university pressures to enhance “success” rates. But that requires quite a wide range for C grades and a narrower, steeper scale for B’s and above (and D’s and below). See the more detailed discussion on page 11 of the Course Information.

Help:

“I’m not doing well in the course, and I just don’t know what to do next. What’s the first step?” Email me for an appointment and we’ll sit down and take a look. Do this as early in the term as you can—do not wait and spin your wheels for weeks and weeks!

“Where can I hire a tutor?” Visit the Physics department office in Wngr 301. We maintain a list of physics majors who can help. But after that, it’s a private arrangement—you come to mutually agreeable terms with the tutor. The only restriction by the department is that you may not hire anyone who is working as a TA or grader in this course.

Homework:

“It seems like there are a lot of different ‘assignments’ we’re supposed to do outside of class, but some are not for credit—and only one kind is even called ‘Homework.’ Can you clarify?” Yes, here’s a quick summary:

Before Class materials	Not for credit	(but you won’t do well with clicker questions without doing these)
Mastering Physics “Assignments”	Not for credit	(like the Student Workbooks, just more optional resources for you)
Prep problems	Not for credit	(but you won’t do well on HW or exams without doing these)
Take-home portions of labs	For credit	(you turn these in to your Lab TA’s wooden box)
Homework (HW) problem sets	For credit	(you turn these in to the PH 212 HW TA’s wooden box #15)

Labs:

“What if I miss a lab session?” If there’s still time that week to attend another lab, email the TA of another lab that would work for you, then wait for his/her permission to attend (**do NOT drop in without that permission**); copy the instructor on all emailing. If there’s no time to arrange this for the current lab week, then you’ll need to make up the lab during Week 10 (and for that you don’t need to pre-arrange—or even attend your own lab time—it’s basically an open “drop in” time).

“What if I’m late turning in a take-home lab part?” You can turn it in anytime up to Friday, June 7 at 5:00 p.m., but it will be worth only 1/4 of what you would have earned if the same work were turned in on time. There is no 2-lab limit on this; only lab reports (your in-lab work) has a 2-lab limit during make-ups week.

Mastering Physics:

“What’s our Course ID for the Mastering Physics access code?” See the link on page 2 of the Course Information.

“Do I need to buy Mastering Physics access separately if I’m not purchasing it via a textbook package?” This course does not assign any items for credit in MP; it’s just another resource offered. It’s noted as “required” only because it’s offered basically free (very little added cost—like the Student Workbooks) when you purchase the book package at the bookstore, so we encourage you to include it. But no, you don’t need MP to complete anything for credit. So you must be the judge whether a separate purchase is worth it to you (first, ask a friend to let you “test drive” MP, maybe).

Office Hours:

“Do I need to make an appointment for your office hours?” No, just drop by (Wngr 309). If the door is open, it’s a public space—great for small group work. If I ever need to talk to a student in private during my scheduled open Office Hours (and see page 2 of the Syllabus for that schedule), then I will temporarily close my office door. Or, I will arrange an appointment time outside of my regular Office Hours.

“What should I do if my schedule prevents me from visiting during your office hours?” E-mail me, and we will make an appointment for another time that works for both of us.

“Why do you hold some of your Office Hours in the WormHole (Wngr 334)?” Tuesdays are “heavy traffic”—because take-home labs and HW are due that day—and there’s simply more room for everyone in the WormHole.

Online issues:

“Why is most of the course not hosted on Canvas?” Canvas is not well-suited for large-enrollment courses. However, we do use it for what it’s best at: Sending announcements, registering and monitoring clickers, and posting scores (but not grades).

“Do you use FaceBook or other social media?” No, I use only email for individual messaging to students. I use Canvas announcements for group messaging.

Prep problems:

“How and why should I do the Prep problems?” **These are past exam problems.** Work enough so that you get a sense of the scope and depth of possible HW and exam problems—the Course Calendar tries to guide you this way with one or two per day. If you struggle with HW and exams, you’re not working enough Prep problems.

Recitation (PH 223):

“Do I have to register for the recitation?” That’s something only you and your advisor can decide. The recitation is required for some majors but not for others.

Registration and scheduling:

“How can I change my lecture section or lab section?” For any/all issues about registration, contact or visit Judy Burks in Wngr 301. (Use the Contacts page here, if you wish.)

“I heard that it’s possible to skip the lab portion of the course if I’m re-taking the course for a higher grade—true?” True. But you’ll still need to register for lab, then notify us and request permission to opt out of actually attending the lab or doing any lab-related work. There is now an announcement posted on Canvas about all this—go there.

“What’s that Wednesday evening PH 213 class I see on my class schedule—that starts at 2030?” That’s the time reserved for our midterm exams (8:30 - 9:50 p.m.). It’s used only twice this term but it has to be reserved on your schedule every week so that you can’t register for any other course for that time slot.

Textbooks:

“Can I just use an electronic version of the textbook?” Yes, that’s one of the options offered now. There is also an option to buy softcover loose-leaf pages.

“Can I use an older edition of the textbook?” Yes, but be aware that the 4th edition has different sequencing of the chapters and material—and probably some different numbering and items in the problem sets. This course will refer only to the 4th edition, so it’s up to you to check for differences to your textbook edition.

TAs, Graders and Box #'s:

“How do I find out who my Lab TA is?” Use the Contact Info link on the course home page.

NOTE: The Contact Info page is not available until sometime late in Week 1.

“How do I find out my Lab TA’s box number?” Use the Contact Info link on the course home page.

“How do I find out where to turn in my HW—what’s that box #?” Use the Contact Info link on the course home page.

“What if I’ve turned in a take-home lab or HW to the wrong box #?” **As soon as you can**, use the Contact Info link on the course home page to contact the Lab TA or HW grader—and copy me on all emails. Report what box # you accidentally used instead; the TA or grader (or I) will then retrieve and re-direct your assignment