This document is intended to provide supplemental information to clarify and elaborate upon your responsibilities for the laboratory and discussion sections of the course. The official syllabus should not be in conflict with anything in this document. If you think you see contradictory information, please let me know and I’ll have the appropriate document corrected. The aim here is not to create confusion but to explain more thoroughly exactly what you’ll be expected to do. Note that due dates apply specifically to sections I’m teaching; others may be slightly shifted due to different lab times.

I. DISCUSSION

You must attend each scheduled Thursday discussion section to receive full credit. Your attendance bears most directly on the grade you receive for the group problem portion of the next quiz. If you miss one discussion section, you will receive 50% of the score your group earns on the next group problem. If you miss more than one, or if you miss the group problem itself, your grade on that problem will be a zero.

A student who is late to the group quiz problem by 10 minutes or more will have to do the problem alone. This policy is in the interest of fairness to the other group members, who will have already spent time working the problem out – and of course ultimately to encourage being on time.

I’ll assign new groups after each quiz. If things are sufficiently random you should end up working with most of the students in the class at some point. When new groups are assigned, be it in discussion or lab, take a couple minutes for introductions, as you’ll be working closely with these people for a few weeks, and it’s easier to think and work together in a friendly environment.
II. LABORATORY

Your responsibilities with respect to the lab part of the course are a little harder to keep track of, and the official syllabus doesn’t go into as much detail as you may want. I’ll try to preemptively answer most of your questions in this section.

First, it is important to stress that you must earn a passing lab grade \((\geq 60\%)\) in order to pass the course. This is not a statement about how the arithmetic works out – it’s entirely possible to construct a seemingly passing composite score with a lab grade \(<60\%\), given the grade breakdown and scale in the official syllabus – it’s a statement that no matter what your other scores, nobody with a lab score \(<60\%\) will be allowed to pass the course. This is a hard rule set by the University for the course to satisfy the writing intensive requirement.

There are two things you’ll need to do before each lab (after the first week):

- Complete the pre-lab quiz on WebVista. You can try it as many times as you like, but you must achieve a score of at least 53% before attending lab that week. Your score will not otherwise factor into your grade.

- Read through and try to understand the lab notebook for the problems we’ll be doing that week. Then answer the Prediction and Warm-Up Question sections in your lab notebook. These need to be turned in to my box on the second floor of the physics building at least 24 hours before the scheduled lab period. Since you won’t want to tear apart your lab notebook, and you’ll want to reference what you’ve written while doing the lab, the typical way to do this is to photocopy the pages from your notebook and turn the copies in. The copiers in the physics building are not for student use – you should use the ones available in campus libraries.

At the end of each group of lab problems, usually every two to three weeks, each member of a group will be assigned a different problem to write a lab report on. You won’t know in advance which one you’ll be writing up, so you should work on each problem as though you’ll be writing the report on it. Lab reports will be due in my box by noon on Monday. When writing a report, you should follow the guidelines given in the appendices to the lab manual, and the course syllabus. Before turning a report in, staple the grading rubric page, found at the end of each Roman numeral-labeled Laboratory section in the lab manual, to the front.
The official policy on lab absences as stated in the syllabus is that failure to attend any one lab day will result in a zero for the upcoming lab report. Given that the lab grade is composed of five lab reports of equal weight and you need at least a 60% lab grade to pass the course, you’re pretty sunk if you miss lab during two different report periods. In situations where the University recognizes and excuses the absence, make-up work will be allowed, but this is rare. I strongly recommend you attend all lab periods.

Since this is a writing intensive course, you’ll be allowed to re-write your lab reports to get a higher grade, making corrections in line with my suggestions. The syllabus says rewrites are due in 2 days, but I won’t pick them up from my box until noon on Monday, so it’s simpler if we just set that as the deadline for all lab reports, both originals and re-writes. When turning in a rewrite, include your original version so I can quickly see the improvements you’ve made.