Physics Student Lab Policy, Summer 2017

Email Policy: All announcements, notifications, and other correspondence related to this lab will be sent to your official USM email account (first.last@usm.edu). Also, please use only this account when contacting the Lab Coordinator or your TA about the lab to ensure that your messages are delivered, instead of being filtered as junk. If you are unable to access your official USM email account, or if you need technical assistance, please contact the iTech helpdesk at 6-4357 or on the first floor of Cook Library.

Co-Requisite: All physics labs must be taken in the same semester as the associated physics lecture. If you drop the lecture, then you must also drop the lab, and vice versa. You will not be allowed to participate in the lab if you are not also enrolled in the lecture unless you have successfully completed the co-requisite lecture course (or equivalent) in a previous, recent semester.

Drop-Dates (Summer 2017): The drop dates for the labs are stated in the current academic calendar, which can be found on the Registrar’s website at https://www.usm.edu/registrar/summer-2017-academic-calendar. The last day to drop a class without academic or financial penalty is 6-12-17; this can be done through SOAR. Instructor (Lab Coordinator) permission is required if you wish to drop the lab after this date. To obtain permission, simply initiate the drop request in SOAR as usual, and then use the “Special Permission” link shown next to the error message to request Instructor permission. If permission is granted, then your lab grade will be a W, which will not affect your GPA. The very last day to drop, even with special permission from the Lab Coordinator: 7-11-17.

Note: You will not be allowed to drop the lab after this date and will receive the grade (A-F) that you have earned in the lab.

Grading: Your lab grade will be calculated from the averages of the best 10 out of 11 weekly quizzes (30%) and lab reports (50%), as well as a final exam (20%), with the following scale strictly applied: F < 60, 60 ≤ D < 70, 70 ≤ C < 80, 80 ≤ B < 90, 90 ≤ A ≤ 100.

Note: It is your responsibility to track your course progress and calculate your lab grade according to the given formula and scale.

The quizzes will be based on material from both the preceding week’s lab activity and the activity to be performed on the day of the quiz; each quiz will consist of several conceptual and experimental questions. A thorough review of the previous week’s lab activity and a careful reading of the current week’s lab activity are both needed in order to sufficiently prepare for each week’s quiz. Copying another’s quiz, any open lab materials, or using inappropriate electronic devices are all considered cheating and will not be tolerated!

Lab reports must be turned in, in person, at the beginning of the lab section in which you are enrolled. They will be graded using the lab report guidelines and grading rubric posted here: http://www.usm.edu/physics/physics-and-astronomy-laboratory-information. They will be considered late if they are not turned in at the beginning of the normal lab meeting that immediately follows the lab in which the reported activity was performed in the laboratory. Late lab reports may only be turned in for grading until the other students’ lab reports for that same lab activity have been graded and returned to the class, with a 10% per day penalty assessed for each late lab report. Lab reports will not be accepted for grading once the other students’ lab reports for that lab activity have been graded and returned to the class. After this, they may be submitted for evaluation and feedback only; no points will be awarded.

The lab final is an individual exam that is both timed and comprehensive; it consists of a total of 20 conceptual questions and/or calculations (2 points each) and 3 experimental activities (20 points each) that will each require individual computer-based data collection and analysis, correct calculations with proper units and significant figures, and an accurate physical interpretation of results.

Note: The lab final will NOT be given during finals week! It will instead be given on the last scheduled day of lab (refer to the posted lab schedule). Although data collection during the lab activities may occur in groups, all quizzes and lab reports, as well as the final exam, are individual assignments. Lab partners are NOT allowed to help you on the quizzes, lab reports, or final exam!

Attendance: You must be enrolled in a particular lab section in order to attend that section, and you may only attend the section that you are enrolled in. Any exceptions to this must be arranged with and approved by the Lab Coordinator on a per case basis prior to attending a different lab section; you will not be allowed to attend alternate lab sections without verified permission from the Lab Coordinator.

If you anticipate that you will need to miss your regular lab section, then it is your responsibility to contact the Lab Coordinator at least 1 day before your regular lab meeting (or the alternate lab section that you would like to attend if that section comes earlier in the week than your regularly scheduled lab) to make arrangements to attend a different lab section during that week. You will only be allowed to do this if there is space in an available lab section; the sooner you initiate contact about attending a different section, the more likely it is there will be an available slot for you in another section during that same week. If you attend an alternate lab section that is earlier in the week than your regular lab section, then your lab report from the previous week is due at the beginning of that section. If the alternate section comes later in the week than your regular lab, then your lab report is still due by your normal lab time, or when the arrangements to attend the later section are made with the Lab Coordinator, whichever comes first. Although attending an alternate lab section may be allowed under certain circumstances to allow you to stay caught up with your lab assignments, doing so does not imply a due date extension for a lab report that is currently due. Lab reports are always due at the beginning of your regularly scheduled lab and may be considered late if they are not turned in by then.

Note: You will NOT be allowed to attend alternate lab sections during the lab make-up sessions or for the laboratory final exam! Both of these activities must be completed in the lab section in which you are officially enrolled.

NOTE: Since there is only ONE section of each lab this summer, attending alternate lab sections will NOT be available!

Make-ups: If unforeseeable and extenuating circumstances demand that you miss your regular lab section and you are unable to make the necessary arrangements with the Lab Coordinator in time to attend another available, regularly scheduled lab section that same week, then you will need to submit a request to make up the missed lab to the Office of Student Ombudsman Services (OSOS), which can be found at http://www.usm.edu/student-affairs/office-student-ombudsman-services or on the 2nd floor of R.C. Cook Union. If your request to make up the missed lab is approved, then you will be contacted via email to make the needed arrangements for the make-up. All make-up requests must be submitted to OSOS as soon as possible (but no later than 1 week) after the lab is missed to ensure sufficient time to coordinate your participation in the relevant make-up session. Make-up lab reports will be due at the regular lab meeting immediately after the make-up lab is performed and will be considered late if it is not turned in by then. Although make-up labs may be arranged under certain circumstances to allow you to make up missed labs, doing so does not imply an extension for a lab report that is currently due. Lab reports are always due at the beginning of your regularly scheduled lab. If you successfully obtain OSOS approval for more labs than can reasonably be made up during what remains of the current semester, then you will be given an I for your lab grade and allowed to make up the labs for which you have approval during the next semester.
Note: Whether or not you are allowed to participate in an alternate lab section or a make-up lab, you are still responsible for studying the material from the missed lab in order to prepare for the upcoming quiz, as well as the final lab exam.

Weather Cancellations: In the event that the university cancels classes for one lab day during a single week due to extreme weather, an extra lab will automatically be scheduled for Friday of that same week (3 pm for afternoon labs, 6 pm for evening labs, and in the same location) to allow the posted lab schedule to proceed in order and on time. If you are unable to participate in the Friday make-up lab, then it is your responsibility to obtain permission to attend an alternate or make-up lab, as outlined above. If more than one lab day is cancelled during a single week due to extreme weather conditions, then an extra lab will automatically be scheduled for Friday of that same week if possible (3 pm for afternoon labs, 6 pm for evening labs, and in the same location) to make-up the first lab that was cancelled that week and an updated schedule showing the remaining lab activities for the semester will quickly be posted to the web page at http://www.usm.edu/physics/physics-and-astronomy-laboratory-information.

Lab Procedures: First, lab reports from the previous week’s experiment are due at the beginning of your normally scheduled lab section. Second, the timed quiz will be administered by the TA. Third, a brief introduction to the upcoming lab activity will be given by the TA, with a chance to ask questions before beginning the lab activity. Next, you are to complete lab data in the lab, calculations, and questions sections of each lab activity in groups of 2 or 3, which may be assigned or changed by the TA at any time during the semester. Finally, you are to clean up your lab station, which includes logging off of the computer, unplugging all sensors from, and powering off, the Pasco interface, as well as throwing away any and all trash generated during the lab activity. This should be verified (and initialed) by the TA before you leave each lab meeting; points may be deducted from each lab report that is not initialed by a TA!

Behavior: Bring a printed copy of each lab activity, or your lab manual, as well as a pencil, and a graphing or scientific calculator, to each lab meeting. The use of any external data storage device is not permitted in lab. No cell phones, smart phones, laptops, tablets or any other internet-capable electronic devices are to be out during the lab session for any reason. If you have any of these items, please ensure that they are off (or silenced) and put away. The use of any data storage device or internet-capable device during the quizzes, activities, or exams will be considered cheating. If you must use your phone during the lab period, please exit the lab to do so.

No open food or drink containers are allowed in the lab at any time. You may leave the lab if you need to visit the water fountain, vending machines, or restroom, but do not return to lab with open food or drink containers. If you do need to step out of lab for any reason, please inform the TA beforehand and return to the lab quickly enough to avoid being counted as absent for that lab by the TA.

You are expected to be in lab on time each week; tardiness will result in reduced time for you to take the timed quiz, possibly including absent for that lab, in which case you will not be able to turn in a lab report for a grade unless you have a valid excuse and are granted approval to make it up (see above). Similarly, if you leave the lab too early to collect all lab data, calculate all results, and answer all questions (your TA will need to verify all of this before you leave each week), you may be counted as absent. You must be present in each lab and do the lab activity in order to receive a grade for your lab report for that activity. Do not leave the lab without the TA’s initials in order to avoid being counted as absent for that lab or losing any points for completeness or cleanliness.

Misuse or/and abuse of the lab and/or computer equipment will not be tolerated! Nor will any behavior that disrupts the educational environment or compromises the safety of anyone, including yourself. The first time you engage in any such behavior will result in a verbal warning from the TA (and a call to UPD if necessary), notification of the Lab Coordinator, and a mandatory meeting with the Lab Coordinator before you will be allowed to resume participation in the lab. Any further incidents may result in disciplinary action, possibly including expulsion from the lab course or university. Please be respectful of the lab and those you share it with at all times!

Cheating on quizzes, lab reports, or the lab final will not be tolerated! The first time you are caught cheating on any assignment will result in a verbal warning from the TA, an immediate zero on the assignment in question (which may not be made up or counted as a drop grade) for all parties involved in the cheating, and possibly a mandatory meeting with the Lab Coordinator before resuming participation in the lab course. Any further incidents of cheating will result in the involved students receiving a grade of XF (Failure due to academic misconduct) for their lab grade and a report to the university’s academic authorities. While cheating on quizzes or the final exam is straightforward (using an internet-capable or storage device in lab, looking on someone else’s quiz or exam, etc.), cheating on the lab reports is a bit more difficult to categorize. You are allowed to work in groups and are encouraged to help each other understand the material, but in the lab only. Any plagiarizing of another’s work, including other students in your lab, students from another lab section (past or present), or other resources such as online or printed materials, the associated lab activity document, or previously submitted lab reports, will be considered cheating. For further clarification of plagiarism, please review the University’s Plagiarism Tutorial at http://www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/plag/plagiarismtutorial.php. USM’s academic integrity policy may be viewed at http://www.usm.edu/institutional-policies/policy-acaf-pro-012. Note: repeated acts of academic misconduct may lead to expulsion.

Writing and Speaking Centers: The university offers, at no cost, help with writing and/or speaking assignments for students through the Writing Center and the Speaking Center, both located on the first floor of Cook Library. Both centers ask students to make appointments; walk-ins are welcome, but such students may have to wait for tutors to become available. It is suggested that students bring copies of their assignments and preliminary work (such as outlines or rough drafts) to appointments so that the staffs at either center can be of better assistance. If you need additional assistance with your assigned lab reports, please visit the Writing Center on the first floor of Cook Library, or make an appointment at https://www.usm.edu/writing-center/make-appointment.

Writing Center: Email: www.usm.edu/writingcenter Phone: (601) 266-4821
Speaking Center: www.usm.edu/speakingcenter Phone: (601) 266-4965

Accommodations: If a student has a disability that qualifies under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and requires accommodations, he/she should contact the Office for Disability Accommodations (ODA) for information on appropriate policies and procedures. Disabilities covered by ADA may include learning, psychiatric, physical disabilities, or chronic health disorders. Students can contact ODA in the following ways if they are not certain whether a medical condition/disability qualifies.

Email: oda@usm.edu Phone: (601) 266-5024 (Voice)
Mail: The University of Southern Mississippi Phone: (601) 266-6035 (Fax)
118 College Drive #8586 Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
800) 582-2233 (TTY)