

Western University
Faculty of Science
Department of Physics & Astronomy
PHYSICS 2950Y / 3950Y / 4950Y - UNDERGRADUATE SEMINAR
Course Outline - 2026-2027

1. Course Information

Courses	Physics 2950Y - Year 2 Seminar Physics 3950Y - Year 3 Seminar Physics 4950Y - Year 4 Seminar
Course Name	Undergraduate Seminar
Weight	Pass/Fail, full-year course
Academic Term	Fall/Winter 2026-2027
Delivery Mode	In person
Schedule	Thursday, 3:30 PM-4:30 PM
Location	BGSB-0153

Cross-listing: Physics 2950Y, Physics 3950Y, and Physics 4950Y meet together as one undergraduate seminar.

Prerequisites: N/A.

2. Instructor Information

Instructor	Email	Office	Role
Dr. Andrea Soddu	asoddu@uwo.ca	PAB 122	Instructor
Dr. Eugene Wong	ewong4@uwo.ca	PAB 233	Instructor

Students must use their Western (@uwo.ca) email addresses when contacting the instructors.

Office-hour format and availability of additional help resources: Dr. Soddu's scheduled Friday office hour (3:00 PM–4:00 PM) is held in person in PAB 122. Additional meetings with Dr. Soddu may be arranged by email and may be held in person or via Zoom, subject to instructor availability. Dr. Wong's scheduled Friday office hour (3:30 PM–4:30 PM) is held in person in PAB 233. Additional meetings with Dr. Wong may be arranged by email and may be held in person or via Zoom, subject to instructor availability.

3. Course Syllabus, Schedule, Delivery Mode

Course Description

A forum for second-, third-, and fourth-year Physics and Astronomy students to meet one another, faculty, graduate students, alumni, and invited speakers in an informal setting. The seminar will discuss research areas, provide information on careers and graduate study, develop professional and communication skills, and create opportunities for interaction within the Physics and Astronomy community.

Course-Level Learning Outcomes

- Describe a range of current research areas and opportunities in physics and astronomy.
- Identify academic, research, graduate-school, and career pathways available to Physics and Astronomy students.
- Communicate and discuss scientific and professional topics effectively in an informal seminar setting.
- Engage constructively with peers, faculty, graduate students, alumni, and external speakers.
- Develop transferable professional skills through interactive activities, discussions, and presentations.

Structure

The undergraduate seminar meets for one hour once per week in person. Sessions may include short presentations, guest speakers, research talks, panels, Q&A sessions, small-group discussions, workshops, lab or facility tours, and other interactive activities. Individual sessions are normally self-contained. No more than approximately 15 minutes of outside work is expected per seminar meeting.

Potential Topics

The exact Fall and Winter schedules will be announced through OWL Brightspace and may be adjusted in response to speaker availability and student input. Potential topics include:

- Physics and astronomy research presentations across a broad range of fields
- Undergraduate research opportunities and how to approach potential research supervisors
- Graduate-student research and Q&A about graduate-school experience
- Graduate-school applications and pathways
- Careers in physics and astronomy, including industry and non-academic careers
- Alumni and professional networking
- Communication, writing, presentation, and professional skills
- Laboratory or research-facility tours and hands-on activities
- PASA activities and undergraduate community building
- Research opportunities, summer programs, co-op, and related application information

Key Sessional Dates

Dates	Details
September 10, 2026	First seminar meeting
October 15, 2026	Fall Reading Week - no seminar
November 26, 2026	Last Thursday of Fall classes
January 14, 2027	First Winter seminar meeting
February 18, 2027	Winter Reading Week - no seminar
April 1, 2027	Last scheduled seminar

4. Course Materials

OWL Brightspace

Course announcements, schedules, links, and any additional materials will be posted to OWL Brightspace. Students are responsible for checking the course site regularly for news and updates.

OWL Brightspace: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/>

If students need assistance with OWL Brightspace, they may consult the OWL Brightspace Help resources or contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

Technical Requirements

Students require regular access to a computer and stable internet connection for OWL Brightspace. No additional paid software is required.

5. Methods of Evaluation

The Undergraduate Seminar is offered on a pass/fail basis. The course is required for Physics and Astronomy program modules, and attendance and participation are therefore mandatory.

Requirement to pass: Students must attend and participate in at least 75% of the scheduled seminar meetings. Students who do not meet this essential participation requirement will not pass the course.

Participation may be recorded in class using methods announced by the instructors, including attendance records, brief electronic responses, discussion participation, or other seminar activities.

Course-Level Use of Generative AI

Unless explicitly permitted by the instructors for a particular seminar activity, students should not use generative AI to complete participation activities or other work used to satisfy the course requirements. If generative AI is permitted for a particular activity, the conditions of use will be specified by the instructors in advance.

Essential Learning Requirements

Attendance and participation in at least 75% of the scheduled seminar meetings is an essential learning requirement of this course. Students who do not meet this requirement will not earn a passing grade. When a student has not demonstrated proficiency in this essential learning requirement and the shortfall results from a granted Academic Consideration, they will be withdrawn (WDN) from the course. The student may appeal to the Associate Dean (Academic) for reinstatement with an Incomplete (INC) standing. Where an appeal for INC is granted, their maximum course load may be reduced during the term in which they complete the outstanding course requirements.

Missed Seminar Meetings

The 75% participation threshold is designed to provide flexibility for occasional absences. There are normally no specific make-up activities for individual missed seminar meetings when a student does not have an approved timetable conflict or academic accommodation.

Students with a timetable conflict or academic accommodation should contact the instructors to arrange an appropriate alternative way to meet the course participation requirement. Depending on the circumstances, alternatives may include participation in approved Physics and Astronomy outreach, student-support, colloquium, conference, or departmental activities.

Academic Consideration

Students must familiarize themselves with the University Policy on Academic Consideration - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs, posted on the Academic Calendar:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

This policy does not apply to requests for Academic Consideration submitted for attempted or completed work, whether online or in person. The policy also does not apply to students experiencing longer-term impacts on their academic responsibilities. These students should consult Accessible Education.

For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar's webpage: https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/

All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the affected course requirement.

This seminar has no tests, examinations, assignments, laboratories, or quizzes. The 75% attendance and participation threshold is an essential learning requirement. The threshold itself provides flexibility for occasional absences. Students whose circumstances prevent them from meeting the essential participation requirement should contact the instructors and, where appropriate, submit an Academic Consideration request through the Student Absence Portal (SAP). The consequences of not meeting this essential learning requirement are described above.

There is no final examination in this course; therefore, the Faculty procedures for Academic Consideration for final examinations and Special Examinations do not apply.

6. Additional Statements

6.1 Religious Accommodation

When a recognized religious holiday either requires a student to be absent from the University, or requires or prohibits an activity that makes it impossible for them to complete an academic requirement scheduled that day, they are entitled to accommodation. No student will be penalized for an absence for religious reasons, and an alternative means of satisfying the requirement will be arranged. This accommodation is provided in accordance with the University's policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf

The student should submit their request through the Student Absence Portal (SAP), identifying the conflict and the specific seminar meeting or course requirement affected.

Faculty timelines for religious accommodation require requests for midterm tests to be submitted no later than one week before the test and requests for final examinations no later than two weeks before the exam. This course has no midterm tests or final examination, so these specific timelines do not apply. Requests affecting a seminar meeting should be submitted through SAP as early as possible so that an alternative means of satisfying the participation requirement can be arranged.

Students are responsible for finding out what was covered in any seminar they miss due to a religious observance, and for taking the appropriate steps to keep up with the course.

If a suitable arrangement cannot be reached between a student and their instructor, they should consult the Undergraduate Chair of the department offering the course, and if necessary, the Associate Dean (Academic) of the Faculty of Science.

For a list of recognized religious observances, please visit the calendars posted on the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion website - <https://www.edi.uwo.ca> (About Us - Resources - Additional Resources - Calendars).

6.2 Academic Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Accessible Education, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on appropriate documentation.

Policy: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic Accommodation_disabilities.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Accommodation_disabilities.pdf)

6.3 General Academic Policies

Registrar Services: <https://www.registrar.uwo.ca/>

The centrally administered @uwo.ca email account is the student's official University email address. Students are responsible for attending to messages sent to that account in a timely manner.

Policy on Request for Relief from Academic Decision:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/requests_for_relief_from_academic_decisions.pdf

Undergraduate procedures:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/undergrad_requests_for_relief_procedure.pdf

6.4 Scholastic Offences

Policy on Scholastic Offences:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf

Undergraduate procedures:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/undergrad_scholastic_offence_procedure.pdf

Use of Electronic Devices During Assessments

In courses offered by the Faculty of Science, the possession of unauthorized electronic devices during any in-person assessment (such as tests, midterms, and final examinations) is strictly prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to: mobile phones, smart watches, smart glasses, hidden cameras and wireless earbuds.

Unless explicitly stated otherwise in advance by the instructor, the presence of any such device at a student's desk, on their person, or within reach during an assessment will be treated as a scholastic offence, even if the device is not in use.

Effective September 2026, the typical penalty for this offence is a failing grade in the course AND a 12-month prohibition on retaking the course.

Only devices expressly permitted by the instructor may be used during an assessment. The use of a phone, tablet, or computer to respond to an authorized iClicker poll in this seminar is expressly permitted. It is the student's responsibility to review and comply with these expectations.

Use of Generative AI Tools

Unless otherwise stated, the use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Google Gemini, or similar platforms) is not permitted in the completion of any course assessments, including but not limited to: assignments, lab reports, presentations, tests, and final examinations.

Using such tools for content generation, code writing, problem solving, translation, or summarization - when not explicitly allowed - will be treated as a scholastic offence.

If the use of generative AI is permitted for a particular assessment, the conditions of use will be specified by the instructor in advance. If no such permission is granted, students must assume that use is prohibited. It is the student's responsibility to seek clarification before using any AI tools in academic work.

Use of Software for Assessments

Clickers: iClicker may be used for polling and tracking attendance. Your clicker responses will be tracked with your name and Western email address. Anonymous information collected by the polls may be shared outside the classroom, but no student's name or email address will be disclosed. Student's privacy will be held with utmost regard. Since clickers are used to track attendance, and students are required to attend 75% of the seminars, each iClicker account cannot be used by anyone but the student. Using another student's iClicker account is considered cheating and constitutes an academic offence.

6.5 Support Services

Science & Basic Medical Sciences Academic Advising: <https://www.uwo.ca/sci/advising/>

Mental Health@Western: <https://uwo.ca/health/>

Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If a student has experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), they can find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts, at:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Accessible Education: http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html

Learning Development and Success: <https://learning.uwo.ca>

University Students' Council: <https://westernusc.ca>

Science Students' Council: <https://www.westernssc.ca>