

2011-2012 Edition

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 2 |
| The Society of Physics Students | 3 |
| Why Should I Study Physics? | 4 |
| Ways to Study Physics at Harvard | 6 |
| Physics Course Strategies | 10 |
| Course Descriptions and Recommendations | 13 |
| Freshman Seminars | 14 |
| Physics Department Courses | 15 |
| Mathematics Department Courses | 21 |
| Astronomy Department Courses | 26 |
| Other Stuff | 28 |
| Research at Harvard | 31 |
| Contacts | 37 |
| The Back Page | 39 |

Introduction

The Harvard-Radcliffe Society of Physics Students – SPS for short – has produced this booklet for students who are considering concentrating in physics or a related field. Even if you're not planning to become a physics concentrator, we hope you'll find this booklet helpful.

It can be hard to decide on a field to concentrate in. It's also hard to choose which courses to take, whether they're in the physics department or outside of it. We can't help you with choosing an Expository Writing class, but we hope our experience as physics concentrators at Harvard will be useful to you. You can use this guide during shopping period, but you might want to keep it in a desk drawer for future reference — it might come in handy over the next few shopping periods. Take the guide out for a walk once in a while, it likes exercise too.

Of course, when you're choosing your concentration and classes, it's a good idea to get as much information as possible. You can obtain advice from the informational meetings held in the Science Center the week before classes begin, from individual members of the Physics Department Faculty, from the Head Tutor, and from upper-class students by emailing the SPS list. You can find online resources at <http://www.physics.harvard.edu>. In fact, we very strongly encourage you to get advice from as many sources as you can. (Of course, since no one reads the Introduction, we'll stress this later on too.)

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information in this booklet. Nevertheless, it may contain inadvertent errors and omissions, so you should be sure to consult *Courses of Instruction* and *Fields of Concentration* before making any final decisions.

The Society of Physics Students

Our name says it all. The Harvard-Radcliffe Society of Physics Students (SPS) works to promote the interests of physics students at Harvard and Radcliffe.

SPS organizes many different kinds of activities (academic, career-related, and just-for-fun events) throughout the year. To learn about research going on in the various sub-fields of physics and related areas, be sure to attend the Monday lunches at noon with the visiting colloquium speakers (eat nice food, learn a lot) as well as the Wednesday evening talks with Harvard professors as part of Physics 95 (all are welcome; ice cream served). We also host a number of talks about grad schools and careers for those trained in the physical sciences. Keep your eyes out for events such as liquid nitrogen ice cream socials on the 8th floor science center balcony (the observatory). Don't miss our annual nitrogen-frozen pumpkin drop on Halloween. Fanciful ideas such as races across non-Newtonian cornstarch have been proposed. Mixers with MIT (either in the form of friendly social events or competitive ultimate frisbee tournaments) are on the event horizon. The SPS Ministry of Chaos keeps the campus on its toes through its vigilante pranking activities. Our buddy system matches budding young physicists with experienced upperclassmen. We also have weekly meetings in the dining halls, not only for planning events but also just as a forum for geeky jokes and physics trivia (xkcd anyone?). Bring your problem set friends – all concentrations are welcome!

The SPS functions as a liaison between the community of physics students and the Physics Department. Periodically, the officers of SPS meet with the chairman and head tutor of the department to discuss issues of concern to physics students. There has recently been much consideration of how to improve the undergraduate physics experience that has led to, for example, semestral feedback sessions (with pizza) with the Department Chair and Head Tutors. We hope all physics students will bring ideas to this process.

The new physics undergraduate study serves as a great place to relax, meet up with other physics students, and get to know Undergraduate Coordinator (a.k.a. “undergrad mom”) Carol Davis, whose office is across the hall. Look out for weekly events with homemade food (usually Friday afternoons) and SPS movie nights!

Another important function of the SPS is informing physics students of events that may be of interest to them. SPS has produced this booklet in an effort to ensure that new students are fully informed about the options available to them. There is also an e-mail list, sps-list@hcs (with major SPS and department announcements) as well as a more informal sps-open@hcs (for

interesting events, opportunities, class advice, and links). If you want to subscribe to the e-mail list, go to our website, <http://hcs.harvard.edu/~physics/>.

Why Should I Study Physics?

Good question. Well, if you ask any physicist this question, he or she will probably tell you without hesitation: "It's fun!" Of course, not all of us are destined to become physics faculty. But even if you're not sure if you want to be a physics pro – in fact, even if you're not sure you want to be a physics concentrator – we think you should at least take a few physics classes. Give us the chance to convince you.

If you want to go into any science, knowledge of physics is a valuable tool to have. Not to toot our own horn too much, but physics is the basis for all phenomena in the understandable universe. Having knowledge of the principles behind all the other sciences leads to a deeper understanding and is a way to avoid silly errors. Do you want to be the biologist or inventor whose ideas violate the conservation of energy? Probably not. A firm grounding in physics can only help your work in other fields.

Also, physics is really fun.

Even if you're not sure if you want to go into research at all, knowledge of physics can help you out. As has become more and more clear, the job market of the new millennium is unlike anything we've ever seen before. Sociologist Manuel Castells calls it an Information Age, where the thriving center of the economy is based not only on technology but on *technology for creating even more technology*. Desirable jobs – the kind that pay off Harvard tuition bills – more and more demand rock-solid analytical skills and the ability to understand complex, difficult problems. A physics education is all about that.

A physics education is also fun.

To put it a little bit more concretely, more and more physics students are taking their undergraduate science degrees into the Big Three areas of professional school: medicine, law, and business. Doctors now routinely perform procedures such as "positron emission tomography" and "magnetic resonance imaging." The study and development of artificial joints and organs demand cutting edge materials and biophysics knowledge. As debates over cloning and movie pirating have shown us, new sciences and technologies have also led to all sorts of legal and social quandaries. Scientifically educated lawyers who can intelligently wade through these morasses are becoming a valuable commodity. And as business and industry become more ever more

technical, the executive who can actually understand her company's function or product is becoming increasingly valuable. If you're the Wall Street type, hedge funds and investment banks are always looking for people with the analytical and mathematical skills to do whatever it is they do down there. And they are willing to pay them lots and lots and lots of money.

The increasingly important role of technology in our everyday lives has also made clear the need for quality science education in our schools, from elementary to high school. A teacher with a solid science background is a lamentably rare creature, but he or she is also an immensely valuable resource to a school and to society at large. If you have some physics knowledge under your belt, schools will love you.

Also, physics is really fun.

Basically, we've been saying the same thing in a bunch of ways: physics demands clear logical thinking and strong math skills. Maybe you're not the kind of person that eats Gaussian integrals for breakfast, but taking even a few physics classes will help you hone your analytical thinking and problem solving. As a bonus, you'll learn all about the universe that we live in, which it turns out is a lot wackier than it seems at first glance. If you want to learn more about the clever ways physics applies to everyday life, you might think about taking Physics 125 (sneaky, aren't we?). And if you want to know all about the neat stuff going on in the forefront of physics, check out the Physics Department Colloquia (Monday afternoons), or the Wednesday evening lecture series (in conjunction with Physics 95). And pester your professors!

In conclusion, you should study physics. It's fun!

Ways to Study Physics at Harvard

Harvard is a very exciting place, but it's a bit confusing for the first few weeks — so much happens before you've really figured out where you are! You've probably come with a lot of interests, but you may not be sure how to pursue them here. The Society of Physics Students thought we could help you out a little bit as you get acclimated, by giving you some advice on what you can do with your interest in the physical sciences.

The first thing to realize is that you have many options. Some choices must be made by November of your sophomore year, when you select a concentration. You could concentrate in physics. You may wish to joint concentrate. You may have the option of advanced standing (in which case these decisions may be upon you even earlier). Or you might take physics classes for a secondary field or as electives, with no thought at all of concentrating in physics at all. New and different plans of study are constantly being invented, so you should also feel free to dream up just about anything and present it to Howard Georgi (the Head Tutor) or David Morin (the assistant Head Tutor). Chances are they've heard worse!

(And after all this, you may very likely change your mind about these decisions. No problem—nothing is written in stone!)

If you are considering concentrating in physics (or some variation on that theme), this section describes the myriad options for concentration. More details can be found in the *Fields of Concentration* booklet.

Or, you may wish to jump directly to the course descriptions.

The Physics Concentration

Let's start with the most straightforward case. You want to concentrate in physics. (Yay!) For non-honors, you must take twelve semester courses in physics or related fields. These twelve courses normally include the introductory sequence (through a semester of quantum mechanics) and math through multivariable calculus and linear algebra. After that, almost everything you can think of counts either as a physics course or as a related course. So you can concentrate in physics without actually taking **that** many physics courses. However, if you're sitting here figuring out how few you can get away with, you might be happier in another department.

We're serious when we say twelve semester courses in physics *or related fields*. These related fields' courses might include offerings of the Chemistry,

Mathematics, Applied Mathematics, Computer Science, Astronomy, Engineering, Statistics, and other departments. Check them out!

If you're looking for a well-rounded physics education, the honors course requirements serve as a good guideline. (Most people do honors, especially since there's no thesis, tutorial, or general exam requirement; most departments require at least a thesis.) For an honors degree, thirteen to fifteen courses are required, including the introductory sequence, two math courses beyond multivariable and linear algebra, and the advanced laboratory class (physics 191). Quantum beyond the first semester and thermodynamics/statistical mechanics courses are highly recommended, especially for those considering graduate work. If you already know single-variable calculus, you may be able to place into a higher math course and reduce the number of courses required for honors to as few as thirteen.

Joint Concentrations

So now that you're taking 50 million classes, what about combining a physics concentration with something else? If you have a very strong interest in another area, you may want to consider a joint concentration (Harvard speak for a double major). Joint concentrations require the completion of honors requirements in both departments. While this sounds like a gargantuan task, it's usually feasible.

Some fields combine quite naturally with physics. For example, "physics and math" works out to a mere three semesters of math beyond multivariable calculus and linear algebra (including one analysis, one abstract algebra, and one geometry course) among your thirteen courses for the Honors Physics degree. "Physics and Astrophysics" is also easy; just substitute the astrophysics laboratory course for the lab course offered by the Physics Department, and take four semesters of astronomy (16, 17, 98, and two others) that count as related courses in Physics.

If that's all you do, you may ask why you should bother to declare a joint concentration. Perhaps most simply, it lets potential employers/graduate schools/significant others know what your real interests are. A joint concentration will also give you greater access to both departments.

Some fields, on the other hand, do not combine with physics quite so naturally. For a joint concentration like Physics and Classics, you'll really have to talk with the Head Tutor of each department. "Negotiate" might be the more appropriate term, but do not despair — with a bit of persistence all things are possible. And, such joint concentrations have probably been done before! (You will probably soon learn the story of one dedicated concentrator in Physics and Music and the physics-related musical he wrote. Another student who just

graduated in 2009 did a special concentration combining physics and theater; her thesis was a play on quantum mechanics!)

Also, a joint concentration in physics is easier than one in many other areas. If both departments require a thesis for an honors degree, then a joint concentrator must write a thesis combining the two fields. Because physics does not require a thesis for honors, only the thesis requirements of the other department apply.

There are a few subtleties to joint concentrations. While the “physics and math” joint concentration does not require a thesis, the “math and physics” concentration does. “Chemistry and Physics” is also a bit different — it is a single concentration blending the two fields, technically *not* a joint concentration. No, it doesn’t make much sense, so read the fine print carefully!

Secondary Field

The Faculty of Arts in Sciences offers “Secondary Fields” at Harvard College, which may be thought of as the equivalent to what are called “minors” at other institutions. Amongst the departments offering secondary fields is the Physics Department. Students who decide not to study Physics as their primary concentration and have difficulty “negotiating” a joint concentration with another department should certainly consider this as an option!

The secondary field in Physics requires 4 courses. Students must take one course in electricity and magnetism (usually Physics 15b or 153), one course in wave phenomena and/optics (normally 15c), and one course in quantum mechanics (normally 143a). The final course should simply be a physics course at the 100 level or higher. Of course, students are welcome to take courses of higher level that cover the specified material. Note that although mechanics (normally 15a or 16) is not required for a secondary field, it is a prerequisite for almost all other physics courses and is strongly recommended.

More information on the details and procedures of this new option can be found on the Secondary Fields Website:

<http://www.secondaryfields.fas.harvard.edu/Physics/program-desc-physics.htm>

Interested students should, as always, consult Dr. Morin or Prof. Georgi!

Other Options for Physics Concentrations

The Undergraduate Teaching and Education Program (UTEP) option is great if you have an interest in education; you will receive teaching certification along with your bachelor’s degree. The education requirements are quite significant, though, so for this concentration you’ll want to plan ahead. You’ll

need some time for the student teaching senior year! (That may seem far away now, but it'll arrive before you know it.)

Biophysics is great if you have interests in biological questions from a physical standpoint. As a very research-oriented option, coursework is flexible enough for concentrators to continue with classes in the physical sciences, many of which have departmental courses at the intersection with biology. Instead, work in a professor's lab is required instead of the standard physics laboratory course. For more information on working with professors, please see the "Research At Harvard" section.

Not Concentrating at All

Maybe you're interested in physics but you'd rather spend most of your time doing something else. Great! You can still take a lot of physics classes. As a freshman, there are a few different options of introductory sequences that you can look into: 11a and 11b; and 15a (or 16), 15b, and 15c. For the life sciences, or if you are interested in medical school, be sure to look into the Physical Sciences 1, 2 and 3. You will typically need to have these classes under your belt to take a higher-level course, but all the requirements are negotiable – just talk to Prof. Georgi or Dr. Morin. In particular, we often see math, chemistry, or even biochem concentrators taking quantum mechanics (143a). Certain other classes (120, for example) are not as mathematical as most and are also worth thinking about. More advanced undergraduates in the sciences should be well-qualified to take many 100-level physics classes.

Advanced Standing

Beyond the different concentration tracks, you may also have the option of advanced standing: graduating in three years by using your Advanced Placement test scores to get you a year's worth of credit. (You will receive notification by mail if this applies to you.)

If you wish to gain Advanced Standing, you must declare this choice near the end of your sophomore year. It should be noted that although a large number of students qualify for Advanced Standing, very few actually make any use of it (by graduating in three years or getting a Master's). If you are considering doing this, it is important to get the official word by reading the booklet on Advanced Standing available at the Freshman Dean's Office (FDO).

With Advanced Standing, it is also possible to complete a fourth year master degree in Physics or in other departments (A.B.-A.M. program). However this is a mammoth undertaking and there are very few students who

have done that in the past. Please consult the student handbook for the most updated information.

Physics Course Strategies

We can't be sure that this advice will be useful to everyone, but if you learn the same way most of us do, these hints may help your physics career run more smoothly. Here are some general strategies that many of us wish we had learned sooner.

• Talk to older students!

Upper-class students are the most valuable source of information about *anything* at Harvard. They can tell you about courses, professors, research opportunities, summer programs, ways around bureaucratic obstacles, where the party's at — in short, how to get the most out of your Harvard experience. If the people you talk to don't know the answer to your question, chances are they know someone else who does.

Self-promotion time: coming to SPS meetings is a great way to meet older physics concentrators (and people who like physics, or people who like people who like physics). The first few SPS meetings focus heavily on course advising. Signing up for an SPS big buddy is another way to get good advice. You should also feel free to contact the SPS officers at any time; see the back cover for contact information.

• Look into classes before shopping period

If you go to the COOP a few days before classes, you should have a chance to look at the text for each class. Look at the first chapter. How do you feel? Now open the book to the middle. Excited? Great! Also, for both physics and non-physics courses, consult the *Q-Guide* to see how students have rated the course in the past. Note, however, that the professor for the course may have changed; the *Q-Guide* will point you to another course they have taught if possible. Take this information into account! The professor makes the course!!! Check the online *Q-Guide* for ratings from previous years: <http://q.fas.harvard.edu>

• Take advantage of shopping period

The surest way to assess a course and its professor is to attend the lectures during shopping period. Be sure to grab a syllabus. This is your chance to check out all the courses you're considering — and you should look at more courses than you plan to take. Even if you think you already know what you're taking, shop around. You may discover a wonderful class you never even knew about, or you can get a glimpse of courses you may take in the future. Science classes generally dive right into material, so be prepared to take notes

and have a way to copy them once you finalize your course selections. Don't take a class you don't enjoy in the first few lectures. Studies have shown that initial impressions of Harvard classes are almost always correct.

• **Get the best section leader**

In most physics courses you won't be required to attend section, but we feel that a good section can greatly enhance your experience. If you are dissatisfied with your assigned section, don't just stay home; find the section most worthwhile for you. If you're required to attend a particular section with which you are unhappy, keep in mind that a "schedule conflict" could make a section change necessary.

Just because a section is optional doesn't mean it's useless — attending section helps reinforce the material you're learning, demonstrates how to work college-level problems, and gives you an opportunity to ask questions about points that confuse you. Plus, a TF who sees you regularly in section may be friendlier when you come to ask her for help on your problem set. It's also good to get to know grad students: they can be very cool people, and they will also expose you to the kind of life that you might live for the next 5-10 years, should you continue in physics. They can also introduce you to their own research and their professors and tell you where to find free food.

• **Go to your professors' office hours!**

Remember when you were thinking about going to Harvard and everyone warned you that you would never have any contact with professors? This is your big chance to prove them wrong! You can use professors' office hours to get help with difficult course material, find out about their research, or discover that they have lives outside of physics. You *will* have to go out of your way to seriously interact with most professors, but most will be delighted to see you at their office hours — don't be intimidated! Several lonely professors have been overheard begging students to visit their office hours.

• **Use the Undergraduate Physics Study and the Physics Research Library**

The Undergraduate Physics Study is an area specifically reserved for undergraduates to work, relax, and chat with friends. The study, on the second floor of Jefferson, is right next to the offices of Dr. Morin, the assistant head tutor, and Carol Davis, the undergraduate coordinator. Look for SPS events, TF office hours, and free food here!

Located on the fourth floor of Jefferson Laboratory, the Physics Research Library is one of the most pleasant places to work or relax on campus. The library is open to all Monday-Friday 9AM-5PM, but anyone with keycard access to Jefferson (including any physics concentrators who desire it) has 24-hour access. The very friendly librarians hold most course textbooks on reserve. Don't misunderstand the name of this library — it's open to the entire physics community, whether you want to do research, work on a problem set,

or read the newspaper. And, don't forget the cookies every Monday afternoon before the departmental colloquia – they can be found here.

- **Work with other people on problem sets!**

We cannot emphasize enough the importance of this. On a practical level, a study group will make your life easier on problem set night and help you understand the material more fully. More importantly, you'll meet and get to know your fellow concentrators. If you're taking a class aimed at physics concentrators, **check out Leverett dining hall on Wednesday (and also Thursday) nights – it is where almost everyone does their problem sets.** Leverett is usually chock-full of physics concentrators until the wee hours of the morning. Nights at Leverett usually end up being one of the best parts of being a physics concentrator at Harvard.

If you're going to work outside of Leverett, assembling a study group might take some persistence. But don't be shy about asking people to work with you. If you can't find a study group, just email sps-open. Also try Facebooking people in your classes (no it's not sketchy, and yes, it really works), or come to SPS meetings to meet other people in your classes.

We feel obligated to warn you: don't rely on your study group as a crutch — copying answers for problem sets won't help on the exam. And it is technically academic dishonesty and could get you in trouble. We hope that you'll find that your fellow students are more valuable as teachers than as sources of answers.

- **Check out previous final exams.**

Final exams for many courses are on the web at <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~exams> or on file in Cabot Science Library and Lamont Library. Studying problems from old exams is a great way to prepare for your own final. Beware, however, if the professor for the class has changed, because the final may be entirely different.

Course Descriptions and Recommendations

We are only providing brief course descriptions here since you can look up more detailed descriptions in the online *Courses of Instruction* (<http://www.registrar.fas.harvard.edu/courses/>). However, we've also offered some opinions that you won't find in the *Courses* guide. Just remember that these are our opinions; yours may differ. Also, the prerequisites listed in the course guide are not always up-to-date. Check with the professor if you are considering not following them, however. The prerequisites listed below are also our opinions.

Due to editorial constraints (i.e. the Physics Department gives us money) we are unable to rate professors as well as courses. You should be aware, however, that in many cases **the satisfaction one gains from a class has more to do with the professor who is teaching it than the course material itself.** The *Q-Guide* is an excellent resource for professor ratings. If you wish to find professor ratings from previous years, back issues of the *Q-Guide* can be found at <http://q.fas.harvard.edu>

Students who have taken the course provide an even better source of information. (Always feel free to badger your SPS buddy or the SPS officers about such things; we've certainly done our share of asking for info!) **We can't emphasize this strongly enough:**

Ask around about professors and courses!!

Also, the professors themselves are good source of information. You might want to talk to them, to watch them in action during shopping period, or both. We suggest that if you are unsure of which course is right for you, talk with the professor giving the course.

If you think you may be familiar with the material in a course, check the final exams. Take a look at these to get an idea of the level of the course. Even better, find out when this year's professor last gave the course, and check out the exams from that year. Cabot Science Library has books of exams, but the better bet is to use the Web. Final exams for most courses (not just science courses) since Fall 1997 can be found on the web at <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~exams>.

Below we have included all undergraduate courses offered by the Physics Department, and many courses in the related fields. Courses in brackets are not offered this year. **Those marked by an asterisk (*) are courses you should especially consider during your first year.** The rest you might just want to

mull over for a while. (Or, as Nobel Laureate Leon Lederman said: “Put your nose to the glass and look at all the candy!”)

***Freshman Seminars**

Freshman seminars are very different from most other courses you will take in your first year. In these courses, a small group of students works closely with a professor in the investigation of a field—there is a great deal of informal interaction in addition to standard classroom fare.

A freshman seminar can supplement the introductory sequence (see below) if you think you may concentrate in physics; it can also be a great way of dabbling in physics if you’re sure you won’t concentrate in it. The only good reason not to take a seminar is time. These courses are electives. If it’s important to you to get started on the introductory sequences in physics, math, and chemistry all at once, then you might not have time for a freshman seminar. Still, don’t discount the option without some thought; a freshman seminar (inside or outside your field) can be one of your best academic experiences at Harvard.

We heartily recommend considering a freshman seminar in any area that piques your interest; here we list those related to physics. Also consider taking a freshman seminar not in physics – it’s a great way to expand your interests. Note that there are many seminars not listed here related to the other sciences as well:

- * Freshman Seminar 21p: Materials, Energy, and Society
Fall Term; David R. Clarke
- * Freshman Seminar 22i: The Science of Sailing
Fall Term; Jeremy Bloxham
- * Freshman Seminar 22j: Seeing By Spectroscopy
Spring Term; William Klemperer
- * Freshman Seminar 22u: E. coli in Motion
Fall Term; Howard C. Berg
- * Freshman Seminar 23e: The Scientific Method: A Roadmap to Knowledge
Spring Term; Robert Sackstein
- * Freshman Seminar 23y: All Physics in 13 Days
Spring Term; John M. Doyle
- * Freshman Seminar 24e: The Physics and Applied Physics Freshman
Laboratory
Fall Term; Jene A. Golovchenko
- * Freshman Seminar 25u: The Atomic Nucleus on the World Stage
Fall Term; Roy J. Glauber
- * Freshman Seminar 26j: The Universe’s Hidden Dimensions
Spring Term; Lisa Randall

Seminars require an application and, occasionally, an interview, but are well worth the effort. More information and a complete listing of seminars are available at the Freshman Dean's Office:
<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~seminars/>

Physics Department Courses

<http://www.registrar.fas.harvard.edu/courses/>

Introductory Courses

For Non-Concentrators:

* Physical Sciences 1, 2, 3: an introduction to the physical sciences for biological applications

These are the introductory courses to physics as well as physical chemistry with an emphasis on biological applications. They are intended especially for pre-med students, but are recommended for any students who are interested in the physical sciences but do not have any background. Among other things, Physical Sciences 1 (PS1) covers introductory physical chemistry, while PS2 and PS3 cover mechanics and electromagnetism, respectively. Note that PS2 and PS3 are not accepted for credit towards a physics concentration, though they are accepted for other concentrations, such as chemistry. Students should consult the department for more information.

* Physical Sciences 10, 11: an introduction to physical chemistry

These are new introductory courses to physics as well as physical chemistry aimed more at students with interests and background in the physical sciences. PS 10 covers concepts from quantum mechanics and statistical mechanics, while PS 11 is a more advanced version of PS1. Pre-med general chemistry requirements can be fulfilled with any two courses from Life and Physical Sciences A, Life Sciences 1a, Physical Sciences 1, Physical Sciences 10, and Physical Sciences 11. Students should consult the department for more information.

* Physics 11a, b: Mechanics; Electricity, Magnetism, and Waves

These courses comprise a standard college-level one-year introduction to physics. They are not accepted for concentration credit, but they do satisfy medical school requirements and is highly recommended for a pre-med concentrating in an area other than physics but looking for more rigorous treatment than PS2 and PS3. Physics 11a,b is also accepted for credit in some other concentrations, including chemistry and engineering. Math 21a is listed as a corequisite; however, if you are comfortable with your calculus skills it may not be necessary.

Note: Where Math 21a is listed as a pre/corequisite, Applied Math 21a or Math 23b, 25a, or 55a will also satisfy the requirement. Similarly, Applied Math 21b or Math 23a, 25b, or 55b can substitute for 21b.

For Concentrators and Anyone Else Interested:

* Physics 15a: Introductory Mechanics and Relativity

* Physics 16: Mechanics and Special Relativity

Ah, the great freshman dilemma. Physics 15a and 16 are your choices for your first physics class as a physics concentrator – you can take either one, and both feed into the same sequence (15a/16, 15b, 15c, 143a). Concentrators split evenly between these two – about half of concentrators start out with 15a, while the other half elect to take 16. Basically, 15a is hard, while 16 is **very** hard. Both go beyond the high school AP Physics level and introduce all sorts of interesting and crazy mechanics problems. Many freshmen are not sure whether they will be able to handle 16. Fortunately, the Department makes it easy to switch between the two at the beginning of the semester once you get a feel for the classes. You probably want to take a look at 16, but **don't feel obligated to take it**. Depending on what you took in high school, it might be a better idea to hone your math background first – 16 is very demanding mathematically. **And if you're planning on taking other difficult classes, there's no point in killing yourself with work**. On the other hand, Physics 16 is a trial-by-fire bonding experience for those who take it. Many who take it call it one of the standout experiences of their Harvard career.

Anyway, the fine print: both these classes cover mechanics and special relativity. If you choose to take 16, which covers some special topics, you will find out that there's a lot more to mechanics than $F = ma$. For 15a, concurrent enrollment in Math 1b is required (with 21a highly recommended), while for 16 concurrent enrollment in Math 21a or an equivalent is required: most students in 16 last year took one of Math 23/25/55. And by the way, we also recommend 15a for non-concentrators who wish to take physics and come out with a fairly deep understanding of the subject (many chemistry and engineering concentrators choose this option).

* Physics 15b: Introductory Electromagnetism

Physics 15b covers electricity and magnetism **at a level significantly beyond AP**, and follows 15a/16 in the introductory sequence. Math 21a is a formal corequisite; however, we recommend a multivariable background coming into the course.

A few students each year consider skipping 15b to take 153 (Electrodynamics). Consult with Prof. Georgi and think long and deeply before deciding.

Physics 15c: Wave Phenomena

This is a course in waves and optics. Physics 15b is a prerequisite and Math 21b is a corequisite. It covers important material for future courses, including the wave equation, Fourier analysis, and a formal introduction to oscillations. Oscillations are the basis of quantum mechanics, and 15c will provide powerful tools for future physics courses (even if balls on springs and pendula seem boring to you now).

Most of those taking this course are physics (or astronomy) concentrators, though some chemists interested in physical chemistry take it as well. There are also still plenty of people there for interest's sake, and we encourage non-concentrators who have the time to get at least this far.

Note that this course, more so than 15a and 15b, can be a noticeably different experience under different professors. For example, under David Morin it was a more math-based course. Under Jenny Hoffman, it was less so. Matt Schwartz, on the other hand, who will continue to teach 15c this coming spring, incorporates a lot of real world examples into his lectures and covers topics such as antenna arrays and color perception.

Physics 143a: Quantum Mechanics I

Ah, quantum mechanics. As Prof. John Doyle puts it, "this class is what separates physicists from everyone else." This course is required of all concentrators and is a prerequisite for most of the cool upper-level physics courses. Physics 15c is a prerequisite. Math 21b is also a definite prerequisite; we feel that the more linear algebra you know, the better you will understand the material. (Math 23a, 25a, or 121 will make this course even more worthwhile!) If, by the time you are ready to take 15c, you are already strong in linear algebra, Fourier Analysis, and understand the wave equation, you may consider taking 143a concurrently with 15c, BUT having previously taken 15c makes 143a much, much more comprehensible. Taking 151 (Mechanics) before this class also helps, although not many concentrators go that route.

Concentrators in other sciences often take this course, especially chemists as an alternative to the quantum course in the chemistry department. The course will have a very different flavor from Chem 160, so consider this decision carefully.

All of these introductory courses are offered every semester (except Physics 16, which is only offered in the fall), so if you think that you don't want to start right in (though we can't imagine why you wouldn't) but later have a change of heart, you don't need to spend a whole semester twiddling your thumbs and waiting for the intro course you want to take. If you do take your physics classes "out of phase," they will be significantly smaller and may have a different set of professors. But once you finish 143a, you'll be back in sync with the rest of the concentrators.

Courses Beyond the Introductory Sequence

Physics 125: Widely Applied Physics

This course presents applications of elementary physics; it emphasizes physical intuition and order-of-magnitude calculation. It is a fun survey of how physics can be useful in other sciences and in everyday life. The 15abc series is a prerequisite, with 143a recommended at least as a concurrent course. The material covered in this course varies drastically depending on which professor is teaching.

Physics 129: Energy Science

Consult the department for more information.

[Physics 136: Physics of NMR Imaging with Medical Applications]

Consult the department for more information.

Expected to be offered in 2012-2013

Physics 140: Physical Biology and Biological Physics

Consult the department for more information.

[Physics 141: The Physics of Sensory Systems in Biology]

Consult the department for more information.

Expected to be offered in 2012-2013

Physics 143b: Quantum Mechanics II

This course takes what you learned in 143a and uses it to study all kinds of physical systems. The exact details of what is covered vary from year to year, but they generally involve atomic systems and approximations. You won't learn much more about fundamental quantum theory in 143b; the main developments are different ways to approximate various situations to make them amenable to solution by quantum mechanical means.

However, keep in mind that 143b covers some basic material physicists are expected to know and that you might not get in any other class; atomic and molecular physics are fundamental applications of quantum mechanics. Physics 143b will definitely firm up what you learned in 143a. It can get a little tedious but you'll be a better physicist for it – and it's critical for grad school.

Physics 145: Elementary Particle Physics

Elementary particle physics is a large and difficult area that requires a great deal of mathematical and physical preparation to understand fully. Most students never see much of the theory, except for little tidbits about neutrinos, until graduate school. This course successfully remedies that situation by focusing on intuitive understanding of the concepts involved rather than the calculational aspects.

This course is taught in partial seminar format, with a limited enrollment. Thus there is a greater opportunity for interaction with the professor both in and out of the classroom. A fun and rewarding course that is highly recommended!

Physics 151: Mechanics

This course studies mechanics from a more advanced point of view than 15a or 16, starting with the Lagrangian formulation. However, once you get past Lagrange's and Hamilton's equations, there is a lot of time left over, and the course seems to vary greatly with the idiosyncrasies of its instructors. Because of this, we suggest that you do some research before taking this course, to find out what the instructor plans to cover (*and what students in previous years thought of that instructor*). Many concentrators choose to skip this class because the math can get dense, but classical mechanics can be pretty interesting. Taking this course concurrently with 15c is a great way to prepare for 143a, which will involve lots and lots of Hamiltonians.

* Physics 153: Electrodynamics

Physics 153 is an intermediate course in electrodynamics. It reconsiders the non-electronics material of 15b with greater mathematical sophistication and overall depth. Prior understanding of concepts from electricity and magnetism are assumed, however, so we do not normally recommend skipping 15b to take 153 (certain topics, such as circuits, are not covered in 153). Some professors also spend part of the course covering important mathematical techniques (e.g. Bessel functions). Some students are particularly happy with David Griffiths' *Introductory Electrodynamics*, which is typically the text for this course.

Physics 165. Modern Atomic, Molecular, and Optical Physics

Consult the department for more information.

[Physics 167: Condensed Matter Physics of Modern Technologies]

Consult the department for more information.

Expected to be offered in 2012-2013.

Physics 175: Laser Physics and Modern Optical Physics

This course fills the optics niche that the department lacked in undergraduate courses, with a much greater emphasis on applications. Introduction to quantum electronics (laser physics) and modern optical physics aimed at advanced undergraduates.

Physics 181: Statistical Mechanics and Thermodynamics

Physics 181 presents statistical mechanics and thermodynamics. 143a is prerequisite for the course. This course, or Engineering Sciences 181, or Chemistry 161, is strongly recommended for concentrators at some point. You really can't get by as a physicist without knowing something about this stuff.

The Physics Department course is more geared towards statistical mechanics, while the ES course emphasizes thermodynamics. Chemistry 161 covers much of the same material, but with a focus on applications to chemistry.

[Physics 195: Introduction to Solid State Physics]

This is the class for those who wish to know something experimentally useful! This introduction to solid-state gives you an overview of semiconductors and a hint of superconductors. (You get to find out that superconductors are so complicated, you really have to take another class for them.) After this class, you'll know a lot of numbers and orders of magnitudes, essential for back-of-the-envelope calculations. This course alternates between being in the Physics and the Applied Physics departments.

Expected to be offered in 2012-2013.

Applied Physics 195: Introduction to Solid State Physics

The alternate version of Physics 195 offered through SEAS.

Laboratory Courses

* Physics 123: Laboratory Electronics

This course in laboratory electronics presents the skills needed to construct scientific instruments, a valuable ability for those wanting to go into experimental physics or just those wanting to leave Harvard actually being able to do something useful. The broad introduction to analog and digital electronics is also valuable for engineering concentrators and some Computer Science concentrators. There are no formal prerequisites, but high school physics or any other physics is useful, as is at least slight familiarity with calculus. Previous experience with basic electronics or low-level programming can be immensely useful. Engineering Sciences 151, 154 and 156 cover similar topics, but the physics course is more focused on "seat-of-the-pants" electronic design emphasizing broad understanding over calculational proficiency. As might be expected, the class requires a substantial time commitment, but you get out of it everything you put in. Estimates of workload range from 1.5 to 2.5 normal classes.

Physics 191r: Advanced Laboratory

In this laboratory course, required of all *honors* concentrators (and highly recommended for all concentrators), students carry out three experiments chosen from a list. These are not your basic high school measure- G -with-a-pendulum-and-stopwatch experiments: topics include superfluid helium, the lifetime of the m -meson, and Nuclear Magnetic Resonance. Physics 15abc is required, and 143a is highly recommended. The actual knowledge needed for these courses is highly dependent on the experiments performed; some experiments make more sense if you've also taken 181. If you are leaning towards Astrophysics (and have taken enough courses in that department), talk to the head tutors about the possibility of taking Astronomy 191 instead.

The 90's: Research, Reading, and Ice Cream

Physics 90r/91r: Supervised Research/Reading

These two courses allow students to pursue research or reading in areas of physics not covered in the curriculum or in which more in-depth knowledge is wanted. They are very valuable for those who think they may wish to pursue physics after their undergraduate years. Since the subject matter can be anything, so can the prerequisites. See the section on research for hints on figuring out what to study. These courses often culminate in a senior thesis. Talk to any professor to arrange your reading or research.

Physics 95: Topics in Current Research

Physics 95 is first and foremost a course in science communication, with an emphasis on upperclass-level physics. The centerpiece of the class is the three 20-minute oral presentations that each student is required to give throughout the semester; individual attention is given by the professor in this seminar-style course to every student's presenting skills, ensuring that you walk away with a clear understanding of how to get in front of people and give an engaging, comprehensible talk about any subject.

Directed toward juniors and seniors, this course offers a wider variety of topics to titillate the imagination. The course is complemented by weekly Wednesday evening lectures by different Harvard professors; each professor discusses his or her ongoing research, and free post-lecture ice cream is served every week. This course is an excellent opportunity to learn about the ongoing research interests of the faculty, to develop effective communication skills as a scientist, and to follow up on one research topic from lecture in the required term paper.

Mathematics Department Courses

Part of being a physicist is learning a lot of math, whether you want to or not. So here's a brief outline of the math classes you'll probably be encountering soon. More detailed information on these and other courses in mathematics may be found in *Mathematical Sciences at Harvard*, available from the Mathematics Department.

All freshmen take a math placement exam during their first week at Harvard. This exam may place students in any of the pre-calculus and first year calculus courses, or it may indicate Math 21a. (If you are placed in Math 21a, *any* of the multivariable calculus courses may be appropriate for you.) However, students should remember that this placement exam, while a guideline, is only that: a guideline. If you feel you have been misplaced, you are ultimately free to decide for yourself.

Pre-calculus and First Year Calculus Courses

* Math Ma,b: Introduction to Functions and Calculus

This is a pre-calculus and introductory calculus sequence for those not quite ready to jump into Math 1a. Applications are emphasized. Sadly, it is virtually impossible to concentrate in (and really enjoy) physics if one begins math with these courses.

* Math 1a,b: Introduction to Calculus

These courses are a first year study of Calculus. Many physics concentrators begin math in one of these two courses; however, the large number of prerequisites for many physics courses gives these students fewer choices in their later schedules.

Multivariable Calculus and Linear Algebra

* Math 21a,b: Multivariable Calculus; Linear Algebra and Differential Equations

Math 21a presents multivariable calculus. It is appropriate for students who have completed Math 1b or received a 4 or 5 on the AP Calculus BC exam. Math 21b is a course in linear algebra and differential equations. Though most people take 21a and 21b in that order, the courses can actually be taken the other way around too. Most physics concentrators begin math in 21a, which allows concurrent enrollment in 15a or 15b. Very few skip these courses; if a more theoretical perspective is desired, Math 23, 25 or 55 may be more appropriate, but this course will give you the most knowledge you need for early physics classes. A multivariable calculus sequence (21, 23, 25, or 55) is a prerequisite for most 100-level math or physics courses.

Note that although you are assigned a particular section for the 21a,b sequence, it is important to have a good section leader. Therefore, there is some “flexibility” in “picking” the section you attend.

* Applied Math 21a,b: Mathematical Methods in the Sciences

Historically, these classes can sometimes be much more calculation-based and less theory-based than Math 21a and b, but in the last couple of years the two sets of courses have been much more similar (particularly the 21a portions.) The 21b portion sometimes spends a couple fewer weeks on linear algebra and a couple more weeks on differential equations, which has benefits and disadvantages since both are very important in physics. Logistically, the courses are often taught in one medium professor-led lecture rather than a multitude of small graduate student-led sections, as Math 21a,b typically are. In the end, the two different 21 sequences are pretty similar, and interested students should shop them both to make a decision aligning with their tastes and preferences.

* Math 23a,b: Linear Algebra and Real Analysis

This course is aimed at people who want to see what theoretical math is like but don't want to kill themselves by taking Math 25 or 55. The course covers multivariable calculus and linear algebra in a more sophisticated manner than Math 21. It is difficult but well worth the effort if you're willing to spend some serious time thinking about math. It is best, however, if you have already taken a non-theoretical version linear algebra or multivariable calculus so that you have the math to do your physics sets.

The 23 sequence gets rather mixed reviews – talk to upperclassmen about the instructor and textbook used. In recent years, students have complained about having to memorize proofs as part of the theoretical aspect to the class: last year, there were 20+ required proofs each semester.

* Math 25a,b: Honors Linear Algebra and Real Analysis

Math 25 presents a rigorous treatment of linear algebra and multivariable and differential calculus. It is intended for math concentrators, but not even a majority of the enrollment ends up concentrating in math. We suggest it for those who would like a deep understanding of elementary calculus from a rigorous point of view and who are willing to make a substantial time commitment. While much of the material has no direct bearing on physics, students who qualify for this course can generally learn what is necessary for the physics courses on their own. Realize that this requires a lot of work, and dedication. Thus, for a physics concentrator, this is a “pleasure course” (in the intellectual sense — *not* the workload sense). The official prerequisite is a 5 on the AP Calculus BC exam or permission of the instructor, but most students who take it have won many math competitions in high school and/or taken math far beyond AP Calculus. Make sure you are solid on your math and know enough for your problem sets before taking this class.

* Math 55a,b: Honors Abstract Algebra and Analysis

This course covers the same topics as 25 and 122 but at an even more intense level (and often goes much further in depth). If you don't know yourself to be one of the top 100 math students in the country, it's probably not for you. A masochistic streak is helpful. Those who take the course, however, rarely regret it.

Post-Calculus Courses

Applied Math 104: Complex and Fourier Analysis

The course is one of a pair (with Applied Math 105), and is extremely valuable for physics concentrators, presenting the basis for much of the math used in advanced natural science courses. They are typically more demanding than introductory sequences classes (at least Math 21), with 104 being more difficult than 105. Note that the material and problem sets in Applied Math 104 are somewhat shorter on theory, which suits some physics majors better

than others. Nonetheless, problem sets may require quite the time commitment and are worth a large chunk of the course. Note also that, in the past, the curve is not the most generous and that you will have to work very hard to achieve an A in this course. The students in this course typically have strong math backgrounds. Some examples of topics covered are contour integration, uniform convergence, and conditional probability.

Applied Math 105: Ordinary and Partial Differential Equations

This course is a straightforward look into the methods of solving ODEs and PDEs, tools essential to the field of physics. The course is currently in good hands with Eli Tziperman, who combines both clarity and humor in his useful lectures. Again, the course is short on theory. The pedagogical progression typically goes as: proof of method, specific example of method, and then general example of method. (Sometimes the proof comes afterward.) It is a clearer course than Applied Math 104 and if you are able to keep up with the multitude of methods being thrown at you, this course is manageable and most importantly, useful. You will find that a multitude of students take this course, from engineers to economists to geologists.

Applied Math 147: Nonlinear Dynamical Systems

The closest you will get at Harvard to an undergrad class in chaos theory (but also check out Math 118r). OK, so this class spends just a few weeks in giving a qualitative explanation of chaos. The other topics it covers are also very relevant to modern physics: oscillations and bifurcations in ordinary differential equations, approximation by maps, and rescalings of systems. The applications to physics are not thoroughly motivated; instead, it focuses on evaluating physical problems through certain techniques. Biology, economics, engineering, and applied math students also take this class, though the systems studied more often come from physics than from any other subject.

Math 101: Sets, Groups and Topology

This course is an introduction to the methods of rigorous mathematics. Through a variety of topics from geometry, analysis, and algebra (the three major subfields of math), students are taught how to write proofs. If you would like to learn how real math is done without the drink-from-the-firehose approach of Math 25, this course may be exactly what you are looking for.

Many upper-level math courses require the ability to write proofs. Math 23, 25, and 121 are the only other courses that explicitly teach this important skill, and this course cannot be taken for credit if you will also be taking either Math 23, 25, or 55. Since this course teaches brand-new material instead of building on what you've learned already, there are no formal prerequisites. AP Calculus is recommended.

Math 110: Vector Space Methods for Differential Equations

This is a new course; consult the department for more information.

Math 112: Introductory Real Analysis

This course introduces concepts of real analysis (metric-space topology, differential and integral calculus) in a rigorous manner. It treats similar material to Math 23, 25 and 55, though at a less intense pace, and cannot be taken for credit in addition to these courses. Every theoretician (and most physicists in general) should have a working knowledge of real analysis. The class can be variable in how it is taught, however, so check which professor is teaching it and talk to math students.

Math 113: Analysis I: Complex Function Theory

Complex analysis makes its appearance in all sorts of areas of physics. This course deals with the material in a rigorous manner for its own sake. If your interest in this material is only its use as a calculational tool for physics, you may wish to consider Math 115 or Applied Math 105a in lieu of this course.

Math 114: Analysis II: Measure, Integration and Banach Space

An enhanced version of real analysis for people who have completed Math 23, 25, or 55. Topics covered include: Lebesgue measure and integration; general topology; introduction to L^p spaces, Banach and Hilbert spaces, and duality.

Math 115: Methods of Analysis

The course is billed as being designed for those with a strong interest in physics, and indeed most of the subject matter is highly relevant to physics. The course covers the basics of complex analysis and then moves on to applications such as Fourier analysis, Laplace's equations, and Bessel functions, all of which appear frequently in physics. However, most who have taken the course say that few examples relating to physics were presented and thus the relevance was not apparent until the topics appeared in physics courses. We suggest this course for those whose focus lies in physics but who wish to learn the roots of the math more deeply than they might in Applied Math 104.

Math 116: Convexity and Optimization with Applications

Consult the department for more information.

Math 118r: Dynamical Systems

Dynamical systems appear in all sorts of physical processes, and this course provides the mathematical tools necessary to analyze such systems, with an emphasis on applications. It is targeted at both physics and math concentrators.

Math 121: Linear Algebra and Applications

This course presents a more complete and rigorous view of linear algebra than Math 21b, which is the prerequisite. It is quite valuable for quantum mechanics. This course is also supposed to be designed to teach proofs should you not already have experience with them. However, it is not to be taken in addition to Math 23, 25, or 55.

Math 122,123: Abstract Algebra

The former is an introduction to groups from which most physicists would benefit. (It is quite valuable for particle physics in particular.) The latter focuses on Galois theory and hence is far less relevant for physics. Though these courses do function as a sequence, it is quite reasonable (and common) to take the former without the latter.

Math 131: Topology I: Topological spaces and fundamental group

An introductory course in topology. Very interesting, but only relevant for gung-ho theorists. If that's you, though, this stuff is essential. Familiarity with groups (via Math 101 or 122) would be helpful, though some people pick it up as they go along.

Math 132: Topology II: Smooth Manifolds

An independent course from Math 131, aimed at students with Math 23, Math 25 or Math 55 background. Topics covered are: differential manifolds, smooth maps and transversality, winding numbers, vector fields, index and degree, differential forms, Stokes' theorem, and an introduction to cohomology.

Astronomy Department Courses

* Astronomy 16: Stellar and Planetary Astronomy

Astronomy 16 is a class aimed at incoming freshmen with an interest in astronomy. The only corequisite is 15a, although Astro 16 is offered in the spring. This class is a fun introduction to the field of astrophysics, and is highly recommended for those considering further pursuit of astronomy as well as those who are interested in the subject.

A highlight of the class is the optional exoplanet lab where students use the Clay Telescope to observe the transit of a known exoplanet. If you are successful, you will get an automatic A for the class.

* Astronomy 17: Galactic and Extragalactic Astronomy

This course, offered in the fall, deals with the physical principles of galaxies and, more generally, the universe. It forms a set with Astronomy 16, although 17 is a relatively newer course which has been finding its bearings.

Although it has become better integrated with Astronomy 16, it seems that organization and quality of lectures is still an issue. Note that you can take 16 and 17 in any order if you want, but 16 before 17 makes the most sense. Just like with microeconomics and macroeconomics, it seems as though getting the smaller scale picture before the bigger scale picture is most effective. Similar to Astronomy 16, this course only requires concurrent enrollment in mechanics.

Astronomy 91r: Supervised Reading and Research

This is just like Physics 90r and 91r combined, but with an astronomy focus.

Astronomy 98: Research Tutorial in Astrophysics

This introductory tutorial is normally open to juniors considering a concentration in astronomy or a joint concentration. This is an excellent way to get a broad overview of a topic and see what is actually being done at the forefront of research. We highly recommend this course for anyone even vaguely considering an astronomy concentration or focus (last year it received a 5.0 in the *Q-Guide*). Astronomy 16 or 17 is the official prerequisite.

Astronomy 100: Methods of Observational Astronomy

This course teaches you how to use the basic tools of astronomy research: telescopes, spectrometers, detectors, etc. The course is designed to give you a realistic, hands-on approach to examining astronomical data, and students report that it is successful in that regard as well as an enjoyable class. The class also takes a trip over spring break (make sure you have that time free!) to the F. L. Whipple Observatory on Mount Hopkins in Arizona, which is always fun. Note that although work during the semester is not overly rigorous, the final project typically requires a substantial time investment.

[Astronomy 110: Exoplanets]

Consult the department for more information.
Expected to be offered in 2012-2013.

[Astronomy 120: Stellar Physics]

Consult the department for more information.
Expected to be offered in 2012-2013.

Astronomy 130: Cosmology

Consult the department for more information.

Astronomy 150: Radiative Processes in Astrophysics

This class, primarily for graduate students, investigates light in all of its astrophysical detail, covering various emission mechanisms and radiative transfer. While students with no astronomy experience but a strong physics background could survive this course, background is recommended.

Astronomy 151: Astrophysical Fluid Dynamics

Consult the department for more information.

Astronomy 191: Astrophysics Laboratory

The astrophysics lab course is intended for concentrators in astronomy or dual concentrators; however, physics concentrators with a demonstrated interest in astronomy may take it. As always, if you're not sure if you're eligible, check with Prof. Georgi or Dr. Morin. Unlike Physics 191r, Astronomy 191 presents more opportunities for participation in real research, and past projects have actually produced publishable results. This course is highly recommended for students with an interest in astronomy who want a taste of real research.

Other Cool Stuff

* Computer Science 50 and 51: Introduction to Computer Science

These courses present an introduction to computer science and the programming languages C, C++, and LISP. CS50 is quickly becoming one of the most popular classes at Harvard, with an enrollment of over 500 students last year. The programming and internet skills presented in CS50 will be valuable both in general and to someone considering a career in science. The material covered in CS50 is highly recommended, though there may be less painful ways to pick up that knowledge. CS51 tends to be less immediately relevant to physicists.

Engineering Sciences 181: Thermodynamics

This is a thermodynamics and statistical mechanics course similar to Physics 181, but with a focus on more practical applications, and emphasizing thermo over stat mech. Most people find it more comprehensible as well. We highly recommend either Physics 181 or ES 181, with physics being the choice for those who will study thermo and stat mech more deeply later (most physics concentrators), and probably ES for those who just need to have some thermo in their lives (all physics concentrators, in our opinion).

Many other Engineering Sciences courses are also relevant to physics. Check out *Courses of Instruction*, and talk to engineering concentrators for more information (especially about instructors). Below we have listed some particularly related to physics (whose topics are not as well covered in physics courses):

Engineering Sciences 120: Mechanics of Solids

Engineering Sciences 123: Fluid Mechanics and Transport Processes

Engineering Sciences 135: Physics and Chemistry: In the Context of Energy and Climate at the Global and Molecular Level (new course)

Engineering Sciences 173: Electronic and Photonic Devices

Engineering Sciences 190: Materials Science and Engineering

Dramatic Arts 163x: Puppetry in Performance

Puppet theater has almost nothing to do with science, with the possible exception of the annual puppet show put on by second-year grad students, and we mention it here only to see if you are still reading :)

* Life and Physical Sciences A / Life Sciences 1a; Physical Sciences 1

These courses represent a standard year-long introductory course in chemistry. We recommend a **basic knowledge of chemistry for all physics concentrators** simply because we think broad backgrounds are important for avoiding falling into thought ruts later in life. Also, you may learn important skills for making exciting demonstrations involving fire.

Unfortunately, these classes tend to be dominated by pre-med and biology students, which can be frustrating.

* Physical Sciences 10: Chemistry: A Microscopic Perspective on Molecules, Materials, and Life

* Physical Sciences 11: Foundations and Frontiers of Modern Chemistry: A Molecular and Global Perspective

These courses are new in 2011-2012. Besides your typical introductory general chemistry material, they intend to introduce fields and applications that you might not get to outside of more advanced physics and chemistry classes. PS 10, for instance, promises to go over the fundamentals of quantum mechanics and statistical mechanics, with calculus to be “used extensively,” while PS 11 touches upon nuclear energy. Consult with the department for more information.

* Chemistry 20, 30: Organic Chemistry

This sequence is Harvard’s organic chemistry sequence for chemists and other science concentrators that want a taste of real chemistry (although a few humanities and social science concentrators make an appearance). Most Chem/Phys concentrators take this route over the alternative (Chemistry 17/27).

These courses have a reputation of being both difficult and time consuming, so keep that in mind when planning your schedule. They are, however, well-taught and organized and are very fulfilling for those who are interested.

Chemistry 40: Inorganic Chemistry

This course is both useful for Chem/Phys concentrators as well as anyone with an interest in materials science. Consult the department and other students for more information.

Chemistry 160: Physical Chemistry

This course is an introduction to quantum for chemistry people. If you are interested in a chemist's perspective on quantum mechanics, this may be the course for you. However, Physics 143a is required of all pure physics concentrators, and thus this course has relevance primarily to Chem/Phys concentrators. Chemistry 160 focuses more on measurable results of quantum theory, while Physics 143a focuses on the mathematical underpinnings of quantum mechanics.

Chemistry 161: Statistical Thermodynamics

This course is unlike Physics 181 and ES 181 in its strong focus on chemistry. Though not recommended for those interested in the physical aspects of thermo, it is certainly a good choice for Chemistry concentrators with an interest in physics or for Chem/Phys concentrators. It also serves as a good introduction to some topics in biophysics research.

Once again, there are lots of other good chemistry courses of interest to physics concentrators.

Other departments that have more specialized courses of interest to physics concentrators include Earth and Planetary Sciences, and Molecular and Cellular Biology, so check with their concentrators or the *Courses of Instruction* for more details. The History of Science and Philosophy departments also offer interesting courses relating to physics that are good fun even though they don't count for concentration. They're also really wonderful for people who have no inclination to concentrate in physics. For those who just wish to dabble in physics, many of the Science A cores and Science of the Physical Universe (Gen Ed) courses are excellent (and people tend to forget... there's no *maximum* to the number of cores you can take). There are about 1800 other courses in *Courses of Instruction* that might interest you as well, so take a look!

MIT offers some physics courses (Course 8) that may not be offered here. Most notable is an undergrad class in string theory! For more information, try <http://web.mit.edu/catalogue/>.

Some Notes on Feedback

SPS does a lot of work to make sure the advising system and classes offered at Harvard for physics students are truly worthwhile. It's why we meet with members of the department so frequently and also why we make this booklet – so students can make informed decisions.

In order to help us along, we need you to participate in this process of continual reform. Come to SPS meetings and let us know what needs to be fixed! Fill out *Q-Guide* evaluations! And don't just wait until someone tells you about giving feedback – the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning has an anonymous feedback form (<http://bokcenter.harvard.edu>) that provides anyone (a professor, TF, advisor, anyone with an email address) with immediate comments. Your feedback is key to informing future students about classes and also directly improving the department's curriculum.

Research at Harvard

Do it. Do it! **Do it!** Undergraduate research is one of the most valuable experiences Harvard has to offer.

Don't think that research is only for those who already know what area of study they would like to pursue. One of the best ways of seeing if you like something is doing it! Therefore, research may actually be *more* important for those who are undecided.

Fortunately, Harvard's science departments have plenty of opportunities for undergraduates. There are quite a few reasons why you would want to do research. For one thing, research can often be a very exhilarating and rewarding experience. It will give you a glimpse into the life of a scientist and the nature of real science beyond the sterile classroom environment. It also looks really good on graduate school applications — even if you don't apply to the field in which the research was performed – and is practically required for graduate school in experimental physics.

Unfortunately for the undergraduate, most professors would like you to have some clue about something before you begin. So let's begin with that.

Good things to know

Computers are indispensable tools in pretty much every branch of science these days. Theoretical physicists use them to simulate mathematical models, experimentalists perform complex data analysis and reduction, chemists do molecular modeling, and computer scientists make them do all sorts of neat things. A background in programming is highly sought after (though by no means necessary!) in research positions. Many scientists these days are amateur programmers by necessity; you can become one too with a little effort. If you happen to be a *real* programmer, though, so much the better -- you can be very valuable to a faculty member. What (usually) matters is not so much which

languages you know as a general ability to make the computer do what is needed of it. If you'd like to get your feet wet, check out CS 50 and 51.

Mathematica and Matlab are becoming increasingly important in both theoretical and experimental physics. Many of the introductory math and physics courses use them, so they often provide a short tutorial. There is also a course offered by Earth and Planetary Sciences called EPS 100: The Missing Matlab Course, which provides a more formal introduction to Matlab, although it seems that the labs are geared toward the earth sciences rather than math or physics. The ability to use programs like Mathematica and Matlab effectively will win you friends very, very quickly. Once you've got the hang of one of them, though, put it on your resume! Professors will love you if you can teach them how to get more out of the tools they're already using.

On the other end of the spectrum, experience with electronics can also be a plus. Even a basic understanding of how to put together simple circuits can be useful in getting in the door to a more hands-on research experience. (Physics 123 might not be a bad way to get started.)

But in general, most professors don't really expect much previous laboratory experience from their undergraduate students, since most labs are very different and experience in one often does not completely prepare you for another. Basic concepts such as lab safety and care of expensive equipment are generally all they ask. The professors and graduate students will help you learn everything you don't know ahead of time (which will be a hefty majority of what you'll be doing no matter what experience you bring to the job).

Many professors would like some course experience, though this is highly dependent on the type of work. In general, the introductory courses in each department are a good launching point. But far more important is your attitude and the interest you display in their particular area of research. Even if you don't really know anything about their field, they'll be interested if you seem to be genuinely curious about it.

How you can get involved

"So how do I get hooked up with a job?" you ask. Well, it's all up to you. Truth be told, the physics department won't go out of its way to just hand you a job. You have to take the initiative yourself. But you, being a resourceful and intelligent Harvard undergraduate, should be undaunted. Professors *want* to hire you; you just need to make sure they know you exist. Here are a few tips:

*** Talk to professors**

This is all there is to it. If you might like to work for someone that teaches one of your classes, go to office hours and ask them about their work and their

colleagues' work. If the research sounds interesting, ask the professor if he or she needs some help! Professors may not even know they need an assistant until you tell them so. And don't be afraid to knock on the door of random professors. (In this modern age, we recommend an e-mail to introduce yourself and schedule an appointment ahead of time.) To give guidance to this random knocking, most departments publish lists of the research taking place for their graduate students. There is, however, no reason an undergraduate shouldn't get a copy of that list and look it over. Once again, the initiative is yours. If something sounds interesting, get in touch with the professor.

*** Talk to students who already have jobs**

You might also hang around in the department you'd like to work in: talk to the students who are already working there! Most of the happy students didn't find their position through official channels. They might know who needs help, or who else to talk to. Again, you are welcome to contact SPS officers, or any other members of SPS, to ask for advice.

*** Check department offices and the SEO**

If a particular professor is in need of students, he or she may make that known to the department office. Department offices are a good first contact point. Another source is the Student Employment Office. Some professors in desperate need of students will post on the SEO's bulletin boards. Check those out. The SEO is online at <http://www.seo.harvard.edu/>

*** Attend departmental seminars**

Another way of finding out about interesting research is to attend the seminars held by most departments. The Physics Department, for example, holds a Wednesday night lecture series (in conjunction with Physics 95) in which professors speak about their research at an undergrad level. Also look out for the Monday Physics colloquia. It is important not to be intimidated by research you cannot completely understand. In fact, "I was really interested but I didn't quite follow this part . . ." can be a good way of opening conversation with the professor later. If you get involved, you'll learn quickly enough.

While we're on the topic of seminars, it's good to know that there are enough talks in the area to replace your course load. At Harvard, there are not only departmental talks (physics, chemistry, astronomy, etc.), but also subgroup seminars (Materials Science, Squishy Physics, Condensed Matter, High Energy Theory, CNS, various CfA divisions). Outside of Harvard, there are even more opportunities: sign up for the weekly Boston Area Physics Calendar (BAPC) email list at <http://cosmos.phy.tufts.edu/bapc.html>.

*** Check out tutorial courses**

Yet another way to find out about research is through the tutorial courses offered by most departments. These provide a more in-depth discussion of

various professors' research as well as personal interaction with the professors. We highly recommend the introductory tutorial in the department of Astronomy.

*** Check the Radcliffe Institute**

The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study has a number of fellows every year that are looking for enthusiastic undergraduates to help them with their research. Contact the Institute or professors individually; also talk to students for their experiences.

*** Talk to department offices and Head Tutors**

For all these departments—Physics, as well as Chemistry, Astronomy, and the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (which includes Applied Physics, Computer Science, Engineering Sciences, Applied Mathematics, and Earth and Planetary Sciences)—start by contacting the department office and the head tutor.

To be honest, as a freshman, you probably won't get involved in heavy-duty research. But you'll probably have your hands full with classes and socializing anyway. If you have special skills you can probably make yourself useful, and you can at least start cultivating contacts that will help you find summer and term-time jobs in the future.

Summer Jobs and Research

For summer jobs, in addition to local employment, there are many opportunities outside of Harvard. For example, check out the Rowland Institute for Science (<http://www.rowland.org>) and other universities and companies in the area. The department office compiles a notebook with summer opportunities for undergraduates. Additionally, the SPS will disseminate information over e-mail. There are also many summer programs with sites on the web.

“REU”s (Research Experiences for Undergraduates) are one of the most popular ways to get paid to do research over the summer. The NSF runs a network of REU programs in all branches of science and engineering. The central homepage is at <http://www.nsf.gov/home/crssprgm/reu/>. Deadlines for these programs are often pretty early — January and February are common. There are also many Harvard programs that will fund research at Harvard, in the US, and abroad: for example, PRISE, Herchel Smith, and Weissmann. Check them out. Be forewarned that there is a lot of competition for these positions (especially REUs) and freshmen are unlikely to snag them. But they often do take note of the brave people who apply against all odds, and freshman applicants are sometimes solicited the next year. Also note that most of these

have a more formal application including letters of recommendation from professors. So go to those office hours and buddy up to your professors! Knowing and being liked by a few professors has benefits far beyond summer job applications. Just let some of their fame and glory ooze onto you. The Physics Department website has a really good list of places to do research.

For students looking to go abroad, RISE (Research Internships in Science and Engineering) is a neat summer internship program at institutions all over Germany for students from the US, Canada, and the UK. It is a fairly new program (started in 2005), but a number of Harvard students have done it, so talk to them for more information. The website is <http://www.daad.de/rise/en>.

When to start scoping out the profs

As early as possible! For summer positions, you should start talking with professors before Spring Break, ideally in February for many grant deadlines. Term-time employment is often more flexible and professors may be hiring at any time. Still, if possible, making contact during the summer can be a good idea. Also, keep at it! If you walk into any professor's office you are likely to see a desk piled so high with papers you can't even see the little sign saying "A disorganized desk is a sign of genius." That note with your phone number can easily get lost in that vastness. Pester professors until they hire you or send you to another professor to get a job. They can be pestered in person, by phone, or via e-mail (physics professors are generally available via e-mail at lastname@physics.harvard.edu). And if you've submitted something to a department office, definitely pester them. Bureaucracy *can* move if it is prodded enough.

What I really want to know about: \$\$\$\$\$

The first thing to decide in undertaking research is whether you want to get paid! The key is that if you want to get paid, your professor has to have spare money to pay you with, which is something of a rarity. But there are a lot of grants out there that can help you out, even if your professor is feeling a little strapped for cash. For the grants discussed below, deadlines are usually early and pretty stringent. Semester applications are due either before the semester begins or very early on (1 or 2 weeks afterward) and summer applications can be due as early as February.

If the research experience is more important to you than money, you have more options. The 90r series of courses in Physics, Astronomy, Chemistry, Engineering are an easy way to do research. You won't get paid, but at least you'll get credit! Another advantage is that you're almost guaranteed not to be

doing grunt work. If you are, talk to someone. There is better research to be done.

If you're feeling very generous, you may wish to work for some professors for a while without pay until you've learned the ropes. This is a good way to negotiate a position somewhere you really want to work even though the professor wants experience you don't have. It also gives the professor time to free up or find funds to pay you with.

Okay, you say, cut the altruism. I want dough. Well, don't expect to become rich overnight (or ever, for that matter). Most research positions will keep you somewhat lean. There are some ways to increase those paychecks, however. If you qualify for the Work-Study program, professors will love you because it pays a big chunk of the bill. If not, make sure your professor applies for a Faculty Aide grant. This fund will provide half of your pay up to a certain amount.

Another important thing to know about is the Harvard College Research Program. Grants from this program will pay you to perform almost any kind of research under the guidance of a faculty adviser. The grants last one semester, so there are three deadlines throughout the year (for fall, spring, and summer). More information is available on the HCRP website at <http://www.seo.harvard.edu/resprog/hcrp.html>.

There are plenty of other sources of funding – search around and you're guaranteed to find something. If you work at the CfA, and your professor works for NASA or NSF, he or she can apply for additional funding from them, just for you. A relatively new grant is the APS/IBM Women in Science Internship, which is especially for women in the "hard sciences." Other grants are available; the Student Employment Office and department offices can help you find them. In addition, try out the Office of Career Services. They publish a book called "The Harvard College Guide to Grants" which you can look at for a few minutes by sacrificing your Harvard ID briefly or by purchasing for \$5.

Good luck, and remember to invite us to Stockholm when you get your Nobel Prize!

Contacts

Below we have tried to list some important people and web pages. You can always find phone numbers from Harvard Information, 5-1000. And we hear this newfangled World Wide Web is pretty useful for finding information, too.

Department of Physics, Jefferson Laboratory, 3rd floor

<http://physics.harvard.edu>

Chair, Melissa Franklin (chair@physics)
Director, Anne Trubia (trubia@physics)
Head Tutor, Howard Georgi (georgi@physics)
Associate Head Tutor, David Morin (morin@physics)
Undergraduate Coordinator, Carol Davis (davis@physics)

The e-mail address of Professor *Lastname* of the Physics Department is usually lastname@physics.harvard.edu.

Society of Physics Students

sps@physics
physics@hcs
<http://www.hcs.harvard.edu/~physics/>

Co-Presidents, Annie Baldwin (abaldwin@college)
& Nikko Pomata (npomata@college)
Vice-President, Marlee Chong (mmtchong@college)
Treasurer, Phillip Yao (pyao@college)
Events Coordinator, Sam Meyer (smeyer@college)
Secretary, Tom Rice (tsrice@fas)
Freshman Representatives, Kristin Barclay (kbarclay@college)
& Amy Chen (amychen@college)

Postal mail, although we haven't the foggiest idea of what you'd ever want to mail us:

H/R Society of Physics Students
Jefferson Laboratory
Harvard University
Cambridge, MA 02138

We also have a mailbox in the Physics Department office, in the third floor of Jefferson Lab, in case you'd like to give us some kind of physical object.

Other Departments and Important People

Department of Astronomy, Observatory P-212

<http://cfa-www.harvard.edu/hco/astro/>

David Charbonneau, Head Tutor in Astrophysics

dcharbon@cfa.harvard.edu"

Center for Astrophysics

<http://cfa-www.harvard.edu>

Department of Chemistry, Mallinckrodt 118

<http://chem.harvard.edu>

Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, Hoffman 4th fl.

<http://www.eps.harvard.edu/>

Division of Engineering and Applied Sciences, Pierce 212a

<http://www.deas.harvard.edu>

Department of Mathematics, Science Center 325

<http://math.harvard.edu>

STAGR (Student Astronomers at Harvard-Radcliffe)

<http://www.hcs.harvard.edu/~stahr>

Harvard Chemistry Club

<http://www.hcs.harvard.edu/chemclub>

The Back Page

The preceding wonderful and useful booklet was prepared by the Harvard-Radcliffe Society of Physics Students, a non-profit organization (a *really* non-profit organization) dedicated to making physics students happy through mentorship and advising, establishing excitement about the wonderful field of physics, and by fostering a social and friendly physics community. And, of course, obtaining free food. All are welcome to join our meetings.

This booklet was originally written by Derrick Bass, Theresa Lynn, and Cynthia Phillips. It was updated in 1996 and 1997 by Charlene Ahn and Ben Rahn; in 1998 and 2000 by the then SPS Officers; in 2001 and 2002 by Craig Hetherington and Genevieve Reynolds; in 2003 by William Zientz; in 2004 by Doug McClure, Bart Horn and Marc Parris; in 2005 by Peter Williams; in 2006 by Limor Spector and Bailes Brown; in 2007 by Benedict Huang and Ognjen Ilic; in 2008 by Lin Cong; in 2009 by Kenny Gotlieb and Anjali Bhatt; in 2010 by Nikko Pomata; and in 2011 by Phil Yao, Marlee Chong, Kristin Barclay, Amy Chen, Tom Rice, and Annie Baldwin. We take sole responsibility for the opinions expressed in this book and once again caution you that much of this material is opinion.

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Margaret Law, David Morin, and Chris Stubbs

We would greatly appreciate feedback on this booklet: did it help you? Which sections were most useful? Would you like to see more of something, less of something? Suggestions for other sections, better organization, a better title, or a more fashionable wardrobe for SPS officers are welcome. Drop comments in the SPS box, give us a call, or send us e-mail!

Have a wonderful year, and we hope to see your picture on the concentrators' bulletin board in the spring!