

GENERIC ELECTIVE (GE - 14): INTRODUCTORY ASTRONOMY

Course Title & Code	Credits	Credit distribution of the course			Eligibility criteria	Pre-requisite of the course
		Lecture	Tutorial	Practical		
Introductory Astronomy GE – 14	4	3	1	0	Class XII pass	NIL

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course is meant to introduce undergraduate students to the wonders of the Universe. Students will understand how astronomers over millennia have come to understand mysteries of the universe using laws of geometry and physics, and more recently chemistry and biology. They will be introduced to the Indian contribution to astronomy starting from ancient times up to the modern era. They will learn about diverse set of astronomical phenomenon, from the daily and yearly motion of stars and planets in the night sky which they can observe themselves, to the expansion of the universe deduced from the latest observations and cosmological models. Students will also be introduced to internet astronomy and the citizen science research platform in astronomy. The course presupposes school level understanding of mathematics and physics.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this course, student will gain an understanding of,

- Different types of telescopes, diurnal and yearly motion of astronomical objects, astronomical coordinate systems and their transformations
- Brightness scale for stars, types of stars, their structure and evolution on HR diagram
- Components of solar system and its evolution
- Current research in detection of exoplanets
- Basic structure of different galaxies and rotation of the Milky Way galaxy
- Distribution of chemical compounds in the interstellar medium and astrophysical conditions necessary for the emergence and existence of life
- Internet based astronomy and the collaborative citizen astronomy projects
- India's contribution to astronomy, both in ancient times and in modern era.

SYLLABUS OF GE – 14 (Lecture-45 hours)

THEORY COMPONENT

Unit 1:

Introduction to Astronomy and Astronomical Scales: History of astronomy, wonders of the Universe, overview of the night sky, diurnal and yearly motions of the Sun, size, mass, density and temperature of astronomical objects, basic concepts of positional astronomy: Celestial sphere, Astronomical coordinate systems, Horizon system and Equatorial system

Unit 2:

Basic Parameters of Stars: Stellar energy sources, determination of distance by parallax method, aberration, proper motion, brightness, radiant flux and luminosity, apparent and absolute magnitude scales, distance modulus, determination of stellar temperature and radius, basic results of Saha ionization formula and its applications for stellar astrophysics, stellar spectra, dependence of spectral types on temperature, luminosity classification, stellar evolutionary track on Hertzsprung-Russell diagram

Unit 3:

Astronomical Instruments: Observing through the atmosphere (Scintillation, Seeing, Atmospheric Windows and Extinction). Basic Optical Definitions for Telescopes: Magnification, Light Gathering Power, Limiting magnitude, Resolving Power, Diffraction Limit. Optical telescopes, radio telescopes, Hubble space telescope, James Web space telescope, Fermi Gamma ray space telescope.

Astronomy in the Internet Age: Overview of Aladin Sky Atlas, Astrometrica, Sloan Digital Sky Survey, Stellarium, virtual telescope

Citizen Science Initiatives: Galaxy Zoo, SETI@Home, RAD@Home India

Unit 4:

Sun and the solar system: Solar parameters, Sun's internal structure, solar photosphere, solar atmosphere, chromosphere, corona, solar activity, origin of the solar system, the nebular model, tidal forces and planetary rings

Exoplanets: Detection methods

Unit 5:

Physics of Galaxies: Basic structure and properties of different types of Galaxies, Nature of rotation of the Milky Way (Differential rotation of the Galaxy), Idea of dark matter

Cosmology and Astrobiology: Standard Candles (Cepheids and SNe Type1a), Cosmic distance ladder, Olber's paradox, Hubble's expansion, History of the Universe, Chemistry of life, Origin of life, Chances of life in the solar system

Unit 6:

Astronomy in India: Astronomy in ancient, medieval and early telescopic era of India, current Indian observatories (Hanle-Indian Astronomical Observatory, Devasthal Observatory, Vainu Bappu Observatory, Mount Abu Infrared Observatory, Gauribidanur Radio Observatory, Giant Metre-wave Radio Telescope, Udaipur Solar Observatory, LIGO-India) (qualitative discussion), Indian astronomy missions (Astrosat, Aditya)

References:

Essential Readings:

- 1) Seven Wonders of the Cosmos, Jayant V Narlikar, Cambridge University Press
- 2) Fundamental of Astronomy, H. Karttunen et al. Springer
- 3) Modern Astrophysics, B. W. Carroll and D. A. Ostlie, Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.
- 4) Introductory Astronomy and Astrophysics, M. Zeilik and S. A. Gregory, Saunders College Publishing.
- 5) The Molecular Universe, A. G. G. M. Tielens (Sections I, II and III), Reviews of Modern Physics, Volume 85, July-September, 2013
- 6) Astronomy in India: A Historical Perspective, Thanu Padmanabhan, Springer

Useful websites for astronomy education and citizen science research platform

- 1) <https://aladin.u-strasbg.fr/>
- 2) <http://www.astrometrica.at/>
- 3) <https://www.sdss.org/>
- 4) <http://stellarium.org/>
- 5) <https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/zookeeper/galaxy-zoo/>
- 6) <https://setiathome.berkeley.edu/>
- 7) <https://www.radathomeindia.org/>

Additional Readings:

- 1) Explorations: Introduction to Astronomy, Thomas Arny and Stephen Schneider, McGraw

Hill

- 2) Astrophysics Stars and Galaxies K. D. Abhyankar, Universities Press
- 3) Textbook of Astronomy and Astrophysics with elements of cosmology, V. B. Bhatia, Narosa Publication.
- 4) Baidyanath Basu, An introduction to Astrophysics, Prentice Hall of India Private Limited.
- 5) The Physical Universe: An Introduction to Astronomy, F. H. Shu, University Science Books

Note: Examination scheme and mode shall be as prescribed by the Examination Branch, University of Delhi, from time to time.