Hello and welcome to Astronomy 131. My name is Dr. Randy Phelps, and I will be the instructor for the course. Regrettably I will be out of the country for the first week of class, as I am attending a research conference in Portugal. Fortunately, however, the wonders of technology allow you to get started, even in my absence. In fact, the Internet will be used extensively throughout the course, so you might as well get a taste of things to come!

I will return on September 7, and be in email contact (phelps@csus.edu) until we meet in class on Tuesday, September 10. I will be adding students, if seats are available at that time, but to reserve your place in line, please send me an email with your request. In the meantime I do expect you to undertake the first week’s assignment, outlined below.

Your Assignment For The First Week Of Class

Assignment 1 (Tuesday, September 03):

• Your first task is to become familiar with my website, where all of the class material will be located.

Please explore www.csus.edu/indiv/p/phelpsr, and specifically the material under the “Teaching” link located on my homepage. You should find the “Astronomy 131 homepage” by going to my website, clicking on the “Teaching” link, followed by the link for the fall course offering of Astronomy 131. If you can’t find it as outlined above, go to http://www.csus.edu/indiv/p/phelpsr/Teaching/Astr131/Astr131_index.html. Once there you will notice a link for the class syllabus.

• Your second task is to carefully read the class syllabus, which is only available online.

Please click on the syllabus link and carefully read it as it contains all of the important information about the class. You need to be able to find both the Astronomy 131 homepage and the syllabus, so it is best to be able to start from my homepage. If you are having trouble finding the syllabus, however, you can go to it directly from the web link http://www.csus.edu/indiv/p/phelpsr/Teaching/Astr131/SYLLABUS_131.html.

Assignment 2 (Thursday, September 05):

• Do Not Show Up For Class! Your first task for assignment number 2 is to do “Module 1” on “The Solar System - Overview”.

All of the lecture notes for the class are available online, and to access them you need to look over the “lecture material” for the day. To find the lecture notes for the “Solar System – Overview” module (Module 1), simply look in the syllabus for the September 3 entry in the “Course Schedule”. Click on the link for “Module 1: The Solar System – Overview” and learn the material. Within the lecture notes in general, there may be additional links (indicated in blue and underlined). Click on those links to gain further insight into the material. Please note that some links may not work properly – this site is a work in progress and some material I use in class is copyrighted, and can not be put (legally!) on the web. My apologies….

Please note after you open Module 1 there is a link to the lecture notes, a list of material you should be comfortable with at the end of the assignment, as well as a set of questions you should be able to answer. The answers to the questions are not to be turned in, but I will be happy to discuss them with you before the date listed in the syllabus (September 12 as it turns out – see the entry in the “Course Schedule” for September 12). My intention is to be sure that people keep up with the material, and not wait until the last minute to learn the material. This is the format I will use throughout the course.

- Your second task for assignment number 2 is to look over the following web links to fill in what the lecture notes (which are notes after all) may not clearly explain:

| http://seds.lpl.arizona.edu/nineplanets/nineplanets/nineplanets.html |
| http://solarsystem.nasa.gov/features/planets/planetsfeat.html |