

Article Discussion Guidelines

PHY 700 Astrobiology, Spring 2013

We will discuss a recent (or classic, or controversial, or interesting) journal article during most class meetings. You will work in teams of two students to lead discussion for your assigned article.

I will select article which will be readable, but there will likely be some technical terminology or methodology which needs decoding. Please ask me about anything you have questions on. Weekends are fine.

Presentation

You should prepare a short presentation about the paper. Plan on 15 minutes, with 3-5 slides.

- Start with a short introduction to the problem. Why is this work being done?
- What is the main point of the paper? Can you pull out one key figure or table with the main results?
- Give a brief summary of any what they did, and what they concluded.
- Think about any broader implications. How does this fit into themes and open questions of astrobiology?
- If this paper is controversial, put it in context of the controversy.
- Any comments on the paper? Is it a significant result? Did you find any holes?

Be prepared for Q&A! With discussion, your presentation will likely be longer than 15 minutes.

Make sure you share the effort equally between you.

Tips

A few tips about reading journal articles:

- Don't try to get all of the details the first time through. Understand the big picture first. The details will fall into place.
- Don't get stuck on one detail you can't understand. Move on. Ask me, or ask someone else in class to look at it.
- If you can't figure out where an equation comes from, don't worry about the constant terms (factors of 2, pi, etc.). Start by figuring out if the variables make sense, or at least go in the right direction ("OK, an increase in distance should decrease the flux... looks good.")

All of you are expected to read the papers and participate actively in the discussions, whether you are presenting or not.