Questionnaire for ISP213H, fall 2003

For 1 extra credit point, please fill this out completely.

This course is unlike anything taught anywhere in the country—I suspect that you’ve never taken anything like it, nor will you in the future. It’s a work in progress and something that I’ve decided to devote myself to – attempting to portray research physics to non-scientists is something that should be done more, and this is the vehicle I’ve chosen. Preparing and maintaining this course, in the way that I’ve done it, is an enormous amount of work. I’m eager to be sure that it’s worth it!

Although in our department we typically teach courses no more than 3 times in a row, because of the idiosyncratic nature of this course, I’ll keep doing it as long as there are customers and I can manage it with my research responsibilities. When I stop, this course stops.

So…here’s my plan:

• Either: print this, fill it out by hand, and give it to Amelia.

• Or, type your answers into the MS Word document and a) send it to her as an attachment or b) give it to her.

Either way, she will judge its level of completion and note your identity to me for grading purposes. I’ll not know your identity unless you choose to tell me.

A. Expectations and outcomes.

1. Why did you take the course again?

2. Did the course satisfy your expectations? If so, why and if not, why not?
3. This is an honors course and as such it’s supposed to be a significant amount of work. Please characterize the relative amount of work in this course compared to other honors courses you have had, or are taking.

4. Are you officially in the honors college? If not, what is your status in this regard?

5. What is your year in school?

B. Content

The premise of the course was: a presentation of an intellectual history of physics. Please be specific:

1. What eras/sections/topics worked and which didn’t work and why?

2. The art. Here, I thought that similarities between the development of art and physics were interesting enough to try to marry them. The overall goal was to get you to think about the bigger picture of what it means to represent the world, but also to try to help to put an historical context to the physics. Did this work? If so, why? If not, why not?
3. Should I continue to develop this? Or drop the art in favor of just physics?

C. Presentation

1. What did you like about the presentation? (Please comment on: lectures, readings, slides in class, slides on web, the course web site generally, demonstrations)

2. What did you dislike and why?

D. Work, jobs, projects, etc

1. Comment on the projects, exams, quizzes, etc.
2. Any ideas for what I might do in addition, or instead of what was assigned?

E. Mathematics.

I’m particularly frustrated at the lack of mathematics…I don’t know whether an adequate appreciation for the physics is possible without mathematical argument. I don’t know whether I am close to getting enough of a sense of what the math might say, if I could only say it!

1. What is your level of comfort with the mathematics that I used.

2. If uncomfortable, what would fix that?

3. Should I ratchet up the mathematical rigor? Should I assign problems, and consequently do problems in class?
4. Should I ratchet up the prerequisites? Require physics? Require calculus?

F. General comments

1. Do you have any overall comments, suggestions on how I can make this better?

2. Here’s where the rubber meets the road: would you recommend this course to a friend? Or to an enemy?

Thanks. All the years that I was chairman of the department I solicited annual, anonymous reviews of my performance from faculty, staff, and students. While sometimes painful, it made me a better leader. My goal here is to do a better job in this very unusual course.