

Chien-Peng Yuan ▾ (Course Coordinator) **PHY215, Spring 2026 -**  Messages Roles Help Logout**Thermodynamics and****Modern Physics****Main Menu** | **Contents** | **Course Editor** | **What's New** | **Chat** | **Grades ▾** | **People ▾** |**Settings ▾** | **Public ▾** | **Switch role ▾** |Course Contents » **Syllabus**

Notes



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Last updated: Wed Jan 14 12:23:38 pm 2026 (EST) by [Chien-Peng Yuan](#)**PHY215, Spring 2026 - Thermodynamics and Modern Physics****Michigan State University****Personnel****Course Coordinator:** [Chien-Peng Yuan](#)**Teaching Assistant:** [Jiazhi Chen](#)**Instructor Information**

Professor C.-P. Yuan

Room: BPS 3213

Email: [yuanch@msu.edu](mailto:yuanch@msu.edu)Web: <https://web.pa.msu.edu/people/yuan/>**Course Description**

PHY 215: Thermodynamics and Modern Physics

Topics: special relativity, thermodynamics, phenomenological quantum physics, quantum mechanics, atomic and molecular physics, nuclear physics, particle physics.

**Prerequisites**

Physics II: (PHY 184 or PHY 184B or LBS 272 or PHY 294H or PHY 234B) and Differential Equations: (MTH 234 or MTH 254H or LBS 220).

**Class Hours**Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday: 3:00-3:50 PM, BPS 1300.  
1/12/2026 - 4/26/2026**Helproom Hours**

TA's schedule

Teaching Assistant: Jiazhi Chen  
Email: [chenj225@msu.edu](mailto:chenj225@msu.edu)

Mondays, 3:00 PM - 3:50 PM. BPS 1300  
 Wednesdays, 12:40 PM - 2:40 PM. BPS 1248  
 Fridays, 12:40 PM - 2:40 PM. BPS 1248

### Exam Information

For the exams each student should bring several #2 pencils, an eraser and a calculator with fresh batteries. Graphing calculators are allowed, but not necessary. A two-sided, hand-written, 8.5 by 11 inch US letter sized help sheet is allowed on each midterm plus the help sheet(s) from the previous midterm(s). On the final exam three, two-sided help sheets - two from the midterm exams plus a third sheet - are allowed.

Students with disabilities or other circumstances that require special arrangements should inform their instructors as soon as possible (ideally in the first two weeks) and well ahead of the exams so that proper arrangements can be made. Please present the instructor with your RCPD form.

Exam #1: February 17, Tuesday, 3:00-3:50 PM.

Exam #2: April 7, Tuesday, 3:00-3:50 PM.

Final Exam: April 29, Wednesday, 3:00-5:00 PM, BPS 1300.

### Grading Information

Percent weights: Homework: 40%. Two midterm exams:  $2 \times 16\% = 32\%$ . Final Exam: 28%. Total: 100%. Homework questions: Every homework question is worth 1 point. Maximum score on a midterm exam: 50 points. Maximum score on the final exam: 100 points. The midterm exams will have corrections as a homework: 30% of the positive difference between the correction and the exam will be added to your exam score as bonus. The corrections are optional. The corrections can only raise your scores, they CANNOT lower your score. The exam and the Correction scores are combined together to the Total test score as follows: If  $C > X$ , then  $T = X + 0.30 \cdot (C - X)$ , otherwise  $T = X$ . For example, if you got 31 points on the midterm and got 46 points on the correction exam, you new total will be  $31 + 0.30 \cdot (46 - 31) = 31 + 4.5 = 35.5$ . In this example, if you get less than 31 points on the correction exam, then your total exam score would still be 31. Maximum score on the final exam: 100 points. The final exam doesn't have correction.

Grading scale:

4.0  $\geq$  92%,  
 3.5  $\geq$  84%,  
 3.0  $\geq$  76%,  
 2.5  $\geq$  68%,  
 2.0  $\geq$  60%,  
 1.5  $\geq$  52%,  
 1.0  $\geq$  44%.

This grading scale might be lowered, but it will not be raised.

The Spartan Code of Honor: As a Spartan, I will strive to uphold values of the highest ethical standard. I will practice honesty in my work, foster honesty in my peers, and take pride in knowing that honor is worth more than grades. I will carry these values beyond my time as a student at Michigan State University, continuing the endeavor to build personal integrity in all that I do.

### Readings

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 Wk | Chapter and Topic

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 01 | Ch.1, Ch.2 Sec.1-9 Special Relativity 1  
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02 | Ch.2 Sec.10-14 Special Relativity 2  
 -----

03 | Thermodynamics 1: Temperature  
 -----

04 | Thermodynamics 2: Heat  
 -----

05 | Thermodynamics 3: The Laws of Thermodynamics  
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06 | Exam #1: February 17, Tuesday

06 | Ch.3 Sec. 1-5 Basis of Quantum Physics I.  
 -----

07 | Ch.3 Sec. 6-9 Basis of Quantum Physics II.  
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\*\*\*\*\* Spring Break \*\*\*\*\*  
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08 | Ch.4 Structure of the Atom  
 -----

09 | Ch.5 Quantum Mechanics I  
 -----

10 | Ch.6 Quantum Mechanics II  
 -----

11 | Ch.7 The Hydrogen Atom  
 -----

12 | Exam #2: April 7, Tuesday

12 | Ch.8 Atomic Physics  
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13 | Ch.12 The Atomic Nucleus  
 -----

14 | Ch.13 Nuclear Interactions and Applications  
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15 | Final Exam: April 29, Wed, 3:00-5:00 PM, BPS 1300  
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## Textbook

Title: Modern Physics for Scientists and Engineers

Author: Stephen T. Thornton, Andrew Rex, Carol Hood

ISBN: 9781337919456

Publisher: Cengage Learning

Edition: 5th

Copyright/Published Date: 2021

Required Material: Yes

Used During: Both

Previous Edition OK: Yes

Material Part of a Bundle: No

Copies on Reserve in Libraries: No

Comments: An eBook, or the 2nd, 3rd, or 4th Editions are also sufficient.

Title: Custom eBook "PHY215"

Author: Gary Westfall, Wolfgang Bauer

ISBN: 9798219000980

Publisher: McGraw-Hill Education

Binding: McGraw-Hill Create™ eBook

Required Material: Yes

Used During: Both

Previous Edition OK: Yes

Material Part of a Bundle: No

Copies on Reserve in Libraries: No

Comments: This is a custom eBook for PHY215 that only includes Chapters 17 - 20 of Bauer & Westfall's book University Physics, 3rd Edition. Purchasing it is only necessary if you don't already have Bauer & Westfall's book from previous courses. Students can locate and purchase the book online by following these steps: 1. Go to

<https://www.mheducation.com/highered/custom/product/9798219000980.html> 2. Add the book to your cart and pay using a credit card or access code. 3. Follow on screen instructions to checkout.

We will use LON-CAPA, MSU's own web-based course management system. If your book has a course management system bundled with, don't open it and don't try to access it, because we will not use it.

Scientific calculator. Graphing calculators are allowed, but they are not required. The recommended calculator is the TI-30X IIS for \$10-14.