

PHYS 698: Physics Seminar

W 3:30 – 4:30 PM, Physics 401

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Course Description

The weekly department seminar is a valuable opportunity for you to hear first-hand what is currently going on across several branches of physics. You will not understand everything that is presented – no one understands everything that is presented – but you might be surprised later at what you absorbed even while confused. And remember, this seminar is largely for you, the grad students, so DO NOT be afraid to ask questions!

A secondary purpose of this seminar is that you should take note of what does and does not work in a technical presentation to a broad audience. It will not be long before you are the one standing up front, giving your PhD proposal or thesis defense or conference talk. Learn what tortures an audience and avoid doing it. Pay attention to what engages an audience and make it part of your own style. This is crucial to your professional future.

Reports

Within 48 hours of each seminar, you must turn in a brief report containing:

- Your name
- Seminar information (title, speaker, date)
- Broad perspective (e.g., “Thanks to the small DeBroglie wavelength of atoms, an atom interferometer could be used as a very sensitive gravity gradiometer for oil exploration.”)
- Most interesting technical thing you learned (e.g., “Doppler cooling is limited by the natural linewidth of the atoms, rather than the recoil energy of a single photon.”)
- Note on presentation style (e.g., “The speaker effectively used slight pauses after major points to add emphasis. However, his frequent switching back and forth between slides was difficult to follow.”)

For each item, no more than a sentence or three is necessary. Email is an acceptable way to turn in a report.

Grades

This course is graded on a pass/fail basis. You **must** attend all regular department seminars, sign the attendance sheets, and turn in your reports on time in order to pass. I don't require much, so there are no allowances for not doing it. Of course, there may be circumstances that require you to miss a seminar, in which case you must notify me asap so I can certify that your absence is legitimate.