Physics

Degrees Offered

- Master of Science
- Doctor of Philosophy

Nature of the Program

The graduate program is designed to provide a solid background in classical and modern physics, a broad understanding of major research fields, and concentrated research experience in one area. Applicants normally enter with a bachelor of science degree in physics. A student whose background is weak in a particular area is encouraged to register for the appropriate undergraduate course. The normal first-year courses include PHYS 611, PHYS 651, PHYS 631, and PHYS 633 plus possible electives. In the courses, no distinction is made between those students who intend a terminal M.S. degree and those who intend a Ph.D. degree. The minimum grade for credit in graduate courses is C, and a grade point average of 2.75 must be maintained. A GPA of 3.0 is required for graduation with either a M.S. or Ph.D. degree. Progress of all graduate students is reviewed annually by the graduate advisor or their PhD committee.

Financial Aid

With rare exceptions, all students who are admitted receive financial support. Beginning students usually receive teaching assistantships; more advanced students receive research assistantships. Several fellowships are available for outstanding students, allowing full-time concentration on coursework and research and a more rapid progress toward the degree.

FACULTY

CHAIR

- Earl Scime - Ph.D. (University of Wisconsin-Madison)
  Oleg D. Jefimenko Professor, Plasma Physics

PROFESSORS

- Wathiq Abdul-Razzaq - Ph.D. (University of Illinois - Chicago)
  Physics Education
- Leonardo Golubovic - Ph.D. (University of Belgrade)
  Condensed Matter Physics and Statistical Physics
- Matthew B. Johnson - Ph.D. (California Institute of Technology)
  Condensed Matter Physics
- Mark E. Koepke - Ph.D. (University of Maryland)
  Plasma Physics
- James P. Lewis - Ph.D. (Arizona State University)
  Condensed Matter Physics
- Lian Li - PhD (University of Arizona)
  Carroll Professor, Condensed Matter Physics
- Duncan Lorimer - Ph.D. (University of Manchester)
  Astrophysics/Astronomy
- Maura McLaughlin - Ph.D. (Cornell University)
  Eberly Family Professor, Astrophysics/Astronomy
- Earl E. Scime - Ph.D. (University of Wisconsin - Madison)
  Oleg D. Jefimenko Professor, Plasma Physics
- Gay Stewart - Ph.D. (University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign)
  Eberly Professor of STEM Education

ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS

- Loren Anderson - Ph.D. (Boston University)
  Astrophysics/Astronomy
- Alan Bristow - Ph.D. (University of Sheffield)
  Condensed Matter Physics
- Paul Cassak - Ph.D. (University of Maryland)
  Plasma Physics
• Mikel Holcomb - Ph.D. (University of California - Berkeley)  
  Condensed Matter Physics
• Paul Miller - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)  
  Physics Education Research
• D.J. Pisano - Ph.D. (University of Wisconsin - Madison)  
  Astrophysics/Astronomy
• Aldo Romero - Ph.D. (University of California - San Diego)  
  Condensed Matter Physics
• Tudor Stanescu - Ph.D. (University of Illinois)  
  Condensed Matter Physics
• John Stewart - Ph.D. (University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign)  
  Physics Education Research

ASSISTANT PROFESSORS
• Sarah Burke Spolaor - Ph.D. (Swinburne Institute of Technology)  
  Astrophysics/Astronomy
• Cheng Cen - Ph.D. (University of Pittsburgh)  
  Condensed Matter Physics
• Edward Flagg - Ph.D. (University of Texas - Austin)  
  Condensed Matter Physics
• Sean McWilliams - Ph.D. (University of Maryland)  
  Astrophysics/Astronomy
• Weichao Tu - Ph.D. (University of Colorado-Boulder)  
  Space Plasma Physics
• Kathryn Williamson - Ph.D. (Montana State University)  
  Astronomy Education Research

RESEARCH PROFESSORS
• Vladimir Demidov - Ph.D. (St. Petersburg University)  
  Plasma Physics and Plasma Chemistry

RESEARCH ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS
• Amy Keesee - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)  
  Experimental Plasma Physics

RESEARCH ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
• Julian Schulze - Ph.D. (Rurh University - Bochum)  
  Plasma Physics
• Qiang Wang - Ph.D. (University of Colorado - Boulder)  
  Condensed Matter Physics

PROFESSORS EMERITI
• Larry Halliburton - Ph.D. (University of Missouri - Columbia)  
  Condensed Matter Physics
• Arthur S. Pavlovic - Ph.D. (Columbia University)  
  Condensed Matter Physics
• Mohindar S. Seehra - Ph.D. (University of Rochester)  
  Condensed Matter Physics
• Richard Treat - Ph.D. (University of California - Riverside)  
  General Relativity
• H. Arthur Weldon - Ph.D. (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)  
  Particle Physics

Admission
Applicants are expected to have a bachelor’s degree in physics with upper-division courses in electricity and magnetism, mechanics, quantum mechanics, thermodynamics, and mathematical methods. Students lacking some of these courses may be admitted provisionally and will be allowed to remedy the deficiencies by taking the appropriate undergraduate courses. The GRE General Test is required. The GRE Physics Subject Test is
strongly recommended, particularly for students from non-US institutions. If English is not the student’s native language, TOEFL or IELTS scores are also required. The application deadline is January 15. Contact the department for additional information.

**Master of Science**

**MAJOR REQUIREMENTS**

Minimum grade of C or higher is required in all courses applied toward degree.

**Major Requirements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHYS 611</td>
<td>Introduction to Mathematical Physics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS 631</td>
<td>Advanced Classical Mechanics 1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS 633</td>
<td>Electromagnetism 1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS 651</td>
<td>Quantum Mechanics 1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS 761</td>
<td>Statistical Mechanics</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
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Select either non-thesis or thesis option

**Non-Thesis Option:**

Physics Electives

**Thesis Option:**

Physics Elective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHYS 697</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td></td>
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Total Hours 24

**Doctor of Philosophy**

The Ph.D. requires 36 hours of courses at the 600 or 700-levels. These twelve courses must include seven of the following basic courses:

**MAJOR REQUIREMENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>PHYS 631</td>
<td>Advanced Classical Mechanics 1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS 633</td>
<td>Electromagnetism 1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS 634</td>
<td>Electromagnetism 2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS 651</td>
<td>Quantum Mechanics 1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS 652</td>
<td>Quantum Mechanics 2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS 761</td>
<td>Statistical Mechanics</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>

Select at least two from the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
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<th>Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHYS 772</td>
<td>Semiconductor Physics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS 773</td>
<td>Collective Phenomena in Solids</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS 774</td>
<td>Optical Properties of Solids</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS 783</td>
<td>Advanced Kinetic Theory of Plasmas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS 784</td>
<td>Advanced Magnetohydrodynamic Theory of Plasmas</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

and/or

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHYS 791</td>
<td>Advanced Topics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASTR 702</td>
<td>Stellar Structure and Evolution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASTR 703</td>
<td>Galactic Astronomy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASTR 704</td>
<td>General Relativity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Plus three additional graduate courses in physics or astronomy

Total Hours 36

Comprehensive Examination

Dissertation Proposal

Dissertation

Dissertation Defense

Total Hours 36
PH.D. CANDIDACY EXAMINATIONS

To be admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D., a student must pass both a written and an oral candidacy examination. The written examination consists of three parts: quantum mechanics, electromagnetism, and classical mechanics. The exam is given twice a year, in August and in January. To be eligible to take any candidacy exam, the student must be in good standing (see below).

The oral part of the candidacy exam is a presentation to the faculty on the student’s doctoral committee. The student gives a lecture on some published research that has been assigned by his or her research advisor.

The doctoral committee has four members. Three or more members must be members of the WVU graduate faculty. Three members must be from the faculty of the Department of Physics and Astronomy. The fourth member may be internal or external to WVU. If external to WVU, the fourth member must hold a PhD in a field related to the candidate's dissertation research. If internal to WVU, the fourth member must be from a department other than Physics and Astronomy. All members must have a PhD.

RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS

Research is the central focus of the degree and is directed by a faculty advisor over a period of several years. When the research is completed, the student must write a dissertation and defend it before the doctoral committee of four faculty. The average completion time for the Ph.D. is five years beyond the B.S. Research specialties within the department include astrophysics/astronomy, condensed matter physics, physics education research, and plasma physics.

Major Learning Goals

PHYSICS AND ASTRONOMY

The central missions of the Graduate Program in Physics and Astronomy are to train the next generation of Physicists and Astronomers for productive careers in the global economy and to expand the scientific boundaries of physics and astronomy.

Students earning a M.S. or Ph.D. in Physics and Astronomy will be able to:

• Explain physics and astronomy principles as they pertain to their specific field of research.
• Demonstrate the ability to understand and critically evaluate the existing literature published within their field.
• Independently design and execute new experimental, theoretical, or computational studies that can address important scientific questions in physics and astronomy.
• Effectively communicate their research in oral and written formats, including the ability to author manuscripts suitable for publication in peer reviewed scientific journals.
• Understand the ethical impact of personal and professional behavior.

Academic Standards

To be a graduate student in good standing requires the following:

• Maintain a GPA of 2.75 or better in graduate physics courses taken at WVU, excluding PHYS 797.
• A GPA of 3.0 or better is required for graduation.
• All entering PhD students are required to take all three written graduate exams at the beginning of, or immediately prior to, their first semester.
• Following the initial exam, as needed, PhD students can retake exams up to three times, but no later than the beginning of their fourth semester of graduate studies.
• PhD students must pass two sections of the written candidacy examination by the end of three years.
• PhD students must pass the remaining third section of the written candidacy examination by the end of four years.
• PhD students must select a Ph.D. committee of four faculty after passing the written exams.
• PhD students must complete the oral candidacy examination within three semesters (after completing the third section of the written candidacy examination).
• Students admitted as M.S. degree candidates are not expected to take the graduate qualifying exams but must maintain at GPA of 2.75 and complete their M.S. degree within three years.