Presenting Homework and Writing Assignments

All work that you submit should be of collegiate quality: neat and easy to read, well organized, and demonstrating mastery of the subject matter. Future employers and teachers will expect this quality of work. Moreover, although submitting homework of collegiate quality requires “extra” effort, it serves two important purposes directly related to learning.

1. The effort you expend in clearly explaining your work solidifies your learning. In particular, research has shown that writing and speaking trigger different areas of our brain. By writing something down—even when you think you already understand it—your learning is reinforced by involving other areas of your brain.

2. By making your work clear and self-contained (that is, making it a document that you can read without referring to the questions in the text), it will be much more useful as a study guide when you review for a quiz or exam.

The following guidelines will help ensure that your assignments meet the standards of collegiate quality.

- Always use proper grammar, proper sentence and paragraph structure, and proper spelling.
- All answers and other writing should be fully self-contained. A good test is to imagine that a friend is reading your work and asking yourself whether the friend would understand exactly what you are trying to say. It is also helpful to read your work aloud to yourself, making sure that it sounds clear and coherent.

- In problems that require calculation:
  - Be sure to show your work clearly. By doing so, both you and your instructor can follow the process you used to obtain an answer.
  - **Word problems should have word answers.** That is, after you have completed any necessary calculations, any problem stated in words should be answered with one or more complete sentences that describe the point of the problem and the meaning of your solution.
  - Express your word answers in a way that would be meaningful to most people. For example, most people would find it more meaningful if you express a result of 720 hours as 1 month. Similarly, if a precise calculation yields an answer of 9,745,600 years, it may be more meaningful in words as "nearly 10 million years".

- Finally, pay attention to details that will make your assignments look good. (Important: Follow the guidelines below or you will lose points!)
  - Make your work look professional by using a word processor for text.
  - Use standard-sized white paper with clean edges (e.g., do not tear paper out of notebooks because it will have ragged edges).
  - **Staple** all pages together; do not use paper clips or folded corners because they tend to catch on other students’ papers.
  - Use a ruler to make straight lines in sketches or graphs.
  - Include illustrations whenever they help to explain your answer.

**Important:** Always use your SFA e-mail account for network correspondence with Mr. Michaels and for submission of web assignments. Mr. Michaels' SPAM filter will likely block email from other servers (e.g., AOL, Hotmail . . . ).