Physics

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Physics is the science that studies the structure and properties of matter and transformations of energy. With math as the language and experimental verification as a guide, physical study has established the fundamental laws of nature that are the foundation of all natural science and technology. The study of physics includes learning the general principles and the phenomena that have been discovered and developing the skills that enable such knowledge to be advanced through research.

The Department of Physics and Astronomy offers a major in physics with either a Bachelor of Arts or a Bachelor of Science Degree. The BA degree provides a broad coverage of classical and modern physics while permitting a broader liberal arts education. It is normally selected by students who do not envision a professional career in physics, but plan to enter a professional school later in their academic career, e.g., medicine, dentistry or law, or who desire to pursue a teaching certificate. The BS degree in Physics is designed to prepare students for scientific careers immediately upon graduation, for further training in graduate school, or for teaching high school physics. A minor in physics or astronomy is also available.

Physics education plays a pivotal role in such areas of burgeoning and societal importance as biomedical optical imaging/biomedicine, materials science, and homeland security. Therefore, the Department of Physics has introduced several new courses and electives to train undergraduate students in optical sciences, biological physics, materials sciences and nanotechnology.

Faculty

Associate Professor G. King**, W. T. Montfrooj**, H. Yan**
Assistant Professor G. Bian**, D. Singh**
Teaching Professor D. Kosztin*
Associate Teaching Professor Y. Zhang*
Assistant Teaching Professor S. Bompadre*, K. King*
Adjunct Professor S. M. Badalyan, S. Balasubramanian, C. Chicone*, P. Cornish*, F. Y. Hansen, F. Hehl, A. Helfer*, H. Kaiser, A. Neagu, Z. S. Popovic, W. Yelon*
Adjunct Associate Professor X. Fan, J. Farmer**
Associate Professor Emeritus C. J. Peterson

** Doctoral Faculty Member - membership is required to chair doctoral examination or dissertation committees. Graduate faculty membership is a prerequisite for Doctoral faculty membership.

Undergraduate

• BA in Physics (http://catalog.missouri.edu/undergraduate/collegeofartsandscience/physics/ba-physics)
• BS in Physics (http://catalog.missouri.edu/undergraduate/collegeofartsandscience/physics-bs-physics)
  • with emphasis in Astronomy (http://catalog.missouri.edu/undergraduate/collegeofartsandscience/physics-bs-physics-astronomy)
  • with emphasis in Biological Physics (http://catalog.missouri.edu/undergraduate/collegeofartsandscience/physics-bs-physics-bio-physics)
  • with emphasis in Materials Science (http://catalog.missouri.edu/undergraduate/collegeofartsandscience/physics-bs-physics-materials)
• Minor in Physics (http://catalog.missouri.edu/undergraduate/collegeofartsandscience/physics-minor-physics)

Candidates for both degrees must complete 120 credits with an average grade of C or better. For the BA in physics degree, students must complete 30 credits in physics and 19 credits in math and chemistry. For the BS in physics degree, students must complete 45 credits in physics and 25 credits in math and chemistry. Students pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education, emphasis in Physics, have the option of receiving a BS in physics degree by completing 33 credits in physics and 19 hours in math and chemistry. In addition, students must meet all degree, college, and university requirements including University general education. All students who complete the BS degree in Physics automatically also complete a minor in Mathematics.

Departmental Honors

The departmental honors program in physics provides exceptional students with an opportunity to develop skills beyond the normal course work. It also acknowledges those students who have attained a level of achievement beyond what is normally expected of an undergraduate physics major.

To receive an honors degree with a major in physics, a student must meet the following criteria:

• Satisfy the BA or BS degree requirements
• Cumulative GPA of at least 3.30 and minimum GPA of 3.50 in Physics Department courses
• Complete a six credit hours research sequence, by signing up for PHYSCS 4950 / ASTRON 4950 Undergraduate Research in Physics/Astronomy in the first (second) semester junior year and for PHYSCS 4950 / ASTRON 4960 Senior Thesis (or PHYSCS 4950 / ASTRON 4950 again) in the first (second) semester senior year. In PHYSCS 4950 / ASTRON 4950 students will work on a research project, either by doing research in a lab or by doing reading research and completing specific readings under the supervision of a faculty advisor.
• Present the results of the research project in a poster or in a paper prepared in the form of a scientific journal article at a regional or national meeting, to a faculty panel that will consist of no fewer than three Physics Department faculty members, or in a physics seminar.
In order to receive departmental honors recognition, the student must be recommended by the director of undergraduate studies. Upon recommendation, the Office of the University Registrar will be notified that the candidate has earned departmental honors recognition. This acknowledgement will appear on the student’s diploma as well as on the transcript.

Elective Tracks

Students have available a variety of courses from which they may select the required credits of physics electives for the BS or BA degree. The department offers tracks that allow students to specialize in astronomy, biological physics, condensed matter physics, energy storage, materials science, nanomaterials, or optoelectronics. Students may wish to pursue one of these tracks, or follow a general track in which they can choose any of the courses that are listed and are not required courses.

Note: Tracks are not indicated on the diploma.

Foreign Language Alternative (BS)

Students who elect an undergraduate program leading to the BS degree with a major in Physics have an option regarding the College of Arts and Science foreign language requirement. This requirement of 12 or 13 credits (depending on the language studied) may be satisfied alternatively by the substitution of an approved specialization. This consists of a minimum of 12 credits at the 2000/3000 level or above and may not include courses normally required of all physics majors. It is to be selected from an area with special relevance to physics and to the student’s own interests and future plans.

Students have selected options in aerospace engineering, atmospheric science/geophysical fluid dynamics, radiation biology, chemistry, computer science, electrical engineering (circuits or computer hardware option), geology, nuclear engineering, material science, math and other areas. The choice and planning of an option must be done under the direction of the departmental undergraduate advisor.

Dual Degrees and Double Majors

Students may wish to pursue two baccalaureate dual degrees simultaneously. For example, this might include a BS in Physics and a BS in Engineering, which is the most common choice. In order to receive two baccalaureate degrees, a student must complete a minimum of 132 credits and complete all the specified requirements for both degrees.

Another degree option is a single baccalaureate degree with two majors (double majors), which may be developed with the concurrence of appropriate advisors in the two departments. A notation of the successful completion of the two areas appears on the student’s transcript. Both departments must be in the College of Arts and Sciences. Double major options often chosen by a physics major are chemistry, mathematics or geology. Mathematics is a particularly viable double major because the extensive mathematics component normally required in the BS degree with a major in physics, if coupled with a specialization area chosen from mathematics, nearly completes the BS degree with a major in mathematics.

Careful planning, started early in the academic career, is required to meet the conditions of dual majors or dual degrees. Students who complete such programs obtain the maximum from their undergraduate experience.

Graduate

- MS in Physics (http://catalog.missouri.edu/undergraduategraduate/collegeofartsandscience/physics/ma-physics)
- PhD in Physics (http://catalog.missouri.edu/undergraduategraduate/collegeofartsandscience/physics/phd-physics)
- Graduate Certificate in Teaching High School Physics (http://catalog.missouri.edu/undergraduategraduate/collegeofartsandscience/physics/gradcertificateteachinghighschoolphysics)

Department of Physics & Astronomy
223 Physics Building
(573) 882-3335
https://physics.missouri.edu/grad/graduate-program

Director of Graduate Studies: Carsten Ullrich
424 Physics Building
(573) 882-2467

About Physics

At the University of Missouri, the physics degrees are offered by the Department of Physics and Astronomy. Because the Department has a moderate size, graduate students are better able to maintain a close relationship with the faculty. Our facilities include various laboratories within the Physics Building as well as the Research Reactor. In certain cases, a student’s work may be done in collaboration with other science and engineering departments.

The largest research area is in experimental and theoretical condensed-matter physics. Graduates in these fields have been very successful in continuing their careers in industry and academics. Other research programs in which thesis work may be accomplished are biological physics and astronomy/astrophysics.

Research Resources

The Department of Physics and Astronomy offers many opportunities for scientific research in internationally recognized programs, some of which are unique at a university and at a level expected only in much larger departments. The main focus of research is in the areas of theoretical and experimental condensed matter physics, biological physics, astrophysics, and alternative energy. These research efforts are fostered by the existence of the University of Missouri Research Reactor (MURR), a 10 MW light-water moderated reactor that is the highest-power university research reactor in the country. Furthermore, many research activities involve facilities at National Laboratories such as Argonne, Oak Ridge, or NIST.

Financial Aid from the Program

Some programs require an extra form or statement from those who wish to be considered for internal assistantships, fellowships or other funding packages. Check the program website or ask the program contact for details.

More Details

For more details on the Physics graduate program please consult the departmental web site: https://physics.missouri.edu/grad/graduate-program

In particular, details about degree requirements, rules and regulations can be found in the Physics graduate handbook.