The Sun…the star in the solar system

The Sun provides us with a chance to see a star up close

Question for SGU graduates (or anybody else): what kind of star is the Sun?

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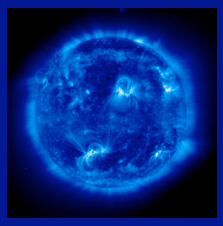
18 Scorpii…

The “solar twin”

One emphasizes (somewhat) different aspects of the Sun in a solar system astronomy class

Reign of Akhenaten and Nefertiti (~1350 BCE)

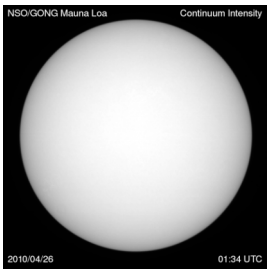
Point to make: when observed in the light of ultraviolet lines, the Sun is not a constant, static object



Because the Sun is the type of star it is…

- It produces the "right luminosity" for us (3.85E26 Watts)
- This luminosity is believed to have been stable for the last several billion years
- It shines at this luminosity long enough for us to arrive on the scene and enjoy it

Let's begin exploring the Sun as a solar system object

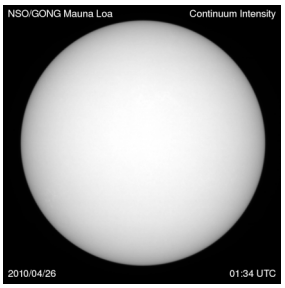


What we see as the disk of the Sun is a layer in its atmosphere called the **photosphere**

The Sun is a beautiful illustration of Wien's Law

The solar spectrum is a good match (although not perfect) to a blackbody spectrum

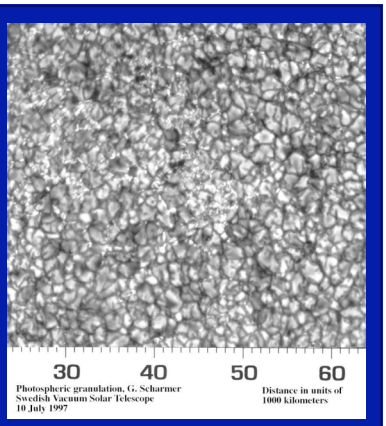
Let's take a closer look at the solar photosphere…it isn't as featureless as it seems



It is particularly interesting if you look in the light of the hydrogen alpha line (656 nanometers)

Granules in the Solar Atmosphere

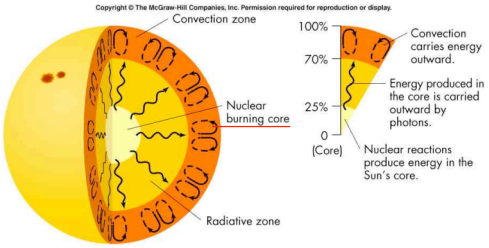
Granules are convection cells; the outer layer of the Sun is carrying heat by "boiling"



The physics of convection is common in nature as a way of moving heat from one place to another

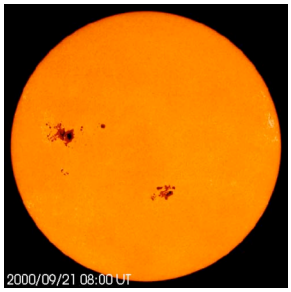
⇨ demo

The observation of convection means the Sun gets hotter the deeper you go



Luminosity (or power output) of 3.85E26 Watts

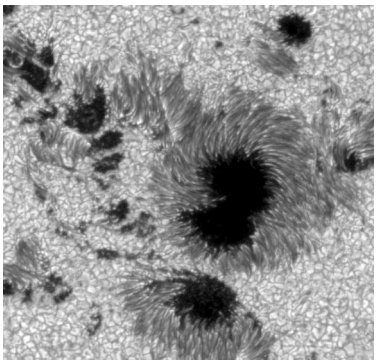
Next topic: solar activity



The Sun doesn't always look like it does today

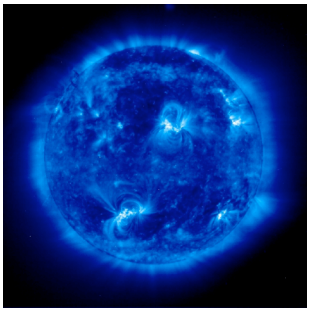
Closeup of a sunspot

Sunspots are regions of strong magnetics fields (0.2 -0.4 Tesla)

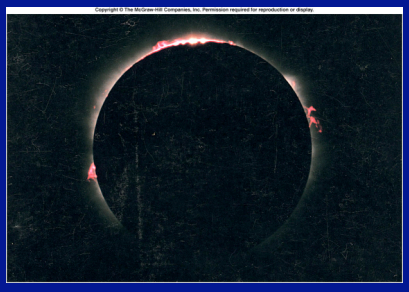


Sunspots and their strong magnetic fields are related to more mysterious aspects of the Sun

Above the photosphere are more rarefied and hotter parts of the solar atmosphere



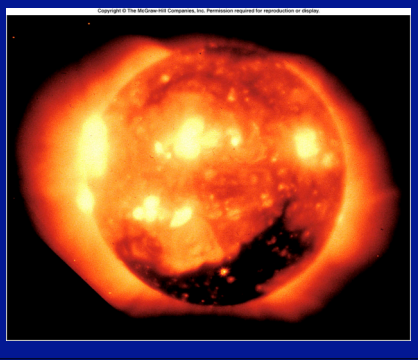
The Chromosphere-region above the photosphere, and substantially hotter



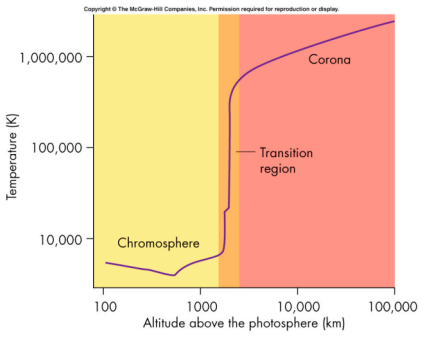
The Solar Corona

What is it? How did it get that way?

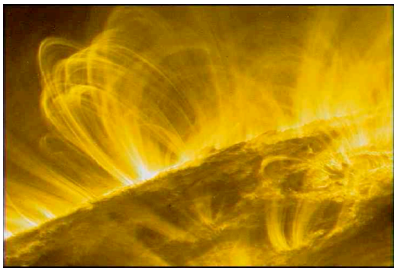
The X-Ray Sun



The Temperature Profile in the Solar Atmosphere



The process or processes responsible for heating the solar corona almost certainly involve the solar magnetic field



We just don't know how

The hot, rarefield, magnetically-dominated parts of the solar atmosphere show continual activity and energy release

erupting solar prominence...April 21, 2010