

PROJECT 1: RESEARCH A NASA MISSION

As you may know, NASA manages hundred of missions that explore the universe we live in. Many of these involve robotic probes that get sent to specific destinations in the solar system such that we might learn more about those places. Indeed, it is such missions that provide scientists with some of the most valuable data in the field. Consider, for example, having *actual* Mars dust to study rather than photographs of the surface taken from Earth. To more fully understand what goes into one of these missions, please consider the following:

1. *What mission should I choose?*

Each and every NASA mission has its own website. To help you pick your favorite, check out NASA's Lunar and Planetary Sciences site:

<http://nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/planetary/>

There, you will find links for each planet, and on each planet's page, links that lead to heaps of information on missions to that planet. Once you've decided on one, go wild and search the web for info like it's nobody's business.

2. *What are its science goals?*

Generally, a science mission has a handful of specific goals it is trying to achieve. This helps focus the mission, which is a good thing for scientists, NASA, and tax payers. Determine what exactly your mission seeks to discover.

3. *Who's in charge?*

Despite being robotic missions, there are still real people involved. Look up one of the lead scientists on your mission and research his/her background, job, and interests. Think about answering questions like: Where does this person work? What sort of work do they do? What did they do to get there? Have they done any notable or impressive things in the past?

4. *Why is this mission important?*

Yes, astronomy is the coolest science ever. But why do we care about this particular mission? This can be related back to the mission's goals. Consider why those were the goals chosen and how they fit into the larger scheme of the field.

After you've completed your research, please **type** and **staple** a **3-page paper** that summarizes your findings on each of the four issues listed above. Papers that are not typed or stapled will have points deducted. Please also provide a brief **bibliography** noting all sources used in your research. The projects are due in class on **Thursday, July 6th**. If you need help with any aspect of the project, please feel free to contact me.