The following is an informal (and, of course, voluntary) survey of all aspects of our inaugu-
ral attempt at giving this course on the history of the cosmos in western culture. Your
feedback will be very valuable to us in assessing the ups and downs of this effort with a
view to improving it in the future. We would be very grateful if you would take some time
to give us your views, especially if you did not add comments in the official course evalua-
tion (or if you did not submit it at all); if you did give feedback on that form, we would
still appreciate any extra information you would like to add here. Replies can be sent by
mail (2680 Woodlawn Drive, Honolulu 96822) or email (acowie@ifa.hawaii.edu;
joseph@ifa.hawaii.edu). Thanks for your time and insight.

1. Textbooks
What did you think of our choice of textbooks? Specifically:

Did they provide adequate coverage of the material in the lectures?
Did they seem to mesh well with the subject material of the lectures?
Did you find them to be out of date?
Was the amount of required reading about right/too much/too little?
Should there be more assigned textbooks to cover more aspects of the course?
Would it be helpful to place more books on reserve in the libraries?
Were you able to find relevant texts in the university libraries if necessary?
Do you have specific recommendations for additional or replacement textbooks?

2. Source texts & classroom discussions
Assigning readings from original source text was, frankly, an experiment. We would be
very interested to hear how it went. Specifically:

Did you find the readings to be relevant to the subject of the course?
Was the frequency of reading/discussion sessions about right?
Did the discussions interrupt the flow of the course?
Did you find that reading the source material added valuable insight?
Was the amount of reading assigned in each case about right, or too onerous?
Was it helpful to assign reading questions with the texts?
Did the discussion of the texts in class actually help you with interpreting them?
Would you have been willing to buy source texts in book form?
Do you have suggestions for additional or replacement source texts?
Do you have suggestions for improvements in the format of the discussions?
3. Lectures & lecture notes

These questions address the format of lectures and everything related to lecture notes. Specifically:

Would you have preferred more breaks for discussion in the middle of lectures?
Was the use of prepared lectures in Keynote helpful?
Was Keynote or the blackboard more helpful in the more technical subjects?
Was there adequate advance notice of the subject of the upcoming lecture?
Were the lecture notes useful?
Do you have specific recommendations for improvements to the lectures?
Do you have specific recommendations for improvements to the lecture notes?

4. Homework, exams & term paper

Fair assessment of student efforts is obviously a crucial feature in any course, but we are also interested in your views on the helpfulness or otherwise of the homework, exams and term paper. A specific issue here is that homework was designed to be related to the class discussions of source texts. Specifically:

Did you find the homework useful for assimilating the discussion material?
Did the homework adequately reflect class discussions of texts?
Do you specific suggestions for improving the relevance of the homework?
Were the exam questions a fair representation of the material of the course?
Did the exams help you to assimilate the course material?
Were exams too long/too short/just right?
Would a second midterm exam have been helpful?
Did you have adequate time to write your term paper?
Was there enough guidance in finding a term paper topic?
What are your views on the length of the term paper?
Did researching and writing the paper help you to understand the course material?
Do you have specific suggestions for improvements in these areas?

5. Scope of the course

The principal area where your feedback would be extremely useful is the scope of the course as a whole. As with any new course, it was obviously not really possible in advance to assess what we would be able to cover, and in what depth, and clearly things got a bit too rushed toward the end. And, with such a huge subject, there were obviously huge compromises in the final syllabus. Every suggestion you have to improve the syllabus will be immensely valuable to us. Some specific issues are:
Was there an adequate mixture of scientific explanation and history?
Were scientific issues presented clearly enough & in a comprehensible way?
Did the course assume too much background in science?
Do you specific suggestions for improving explanations of the science?
Did the course as actually presented turn out to be relevant to the subject?
Can you pinpoint any areas that seemed (close to) irrelevant?
Did the course concentrate too much on specific issues?
Did the course concentrate too much on specific historical periods?
Should the scope of the course as a whole have been wider? Narrower?
Do you have specific suggestions for inclusions and/or replacements?

6. Website & communication
This is just asking for feedback on the use of the website as a communication medium. Specifically:

Was material posted to the website quickly enough? Any specific lapses?
Did you use the “topic” pages to access material?
Were the links to external websites useful? Should there have been more of them?
Was the website useful in alerting you to notices and deadlines?
Do you have specific suggestions for additional content on the website?
Do you specific suggestions to improve the flow of information on the website?