

Assignment #3 The Great Planet Debate – An Investigation

This assignment can be used as **summative** coursework.

The final deadline for the activity portfolio is December 18, 2015

Associated with Lecture 5 – the Outer Planets

Background: On August 24, 2006 the 26th General Assemble of the International Astronomical Union (IAU) passed a resolution to formally set the definition of a planet. The final definition has caused controversy in both the astronomical community as well as the general public and is still debated to this day.

Instructions:

Using any type of source material (web resources, books, periodicals, video, etc.), investigate the reasons for formally defining a planet and the controversy and debate surrounding this definition. Answer the questions below.

Suggestions of possible resources:

- <http://gpd.jhuapl.edu/>
- <http://gpd.jhuapl.edu/debate/audio.php>
- <http://gpd.jhuapl.edu/debate/debateStream.php>
- <http://www.psi.edu/news/press-releases/2008/scientists-debate-planet-definition-and-agree-disagree>
- <http://www.iau.org/news/pressreleases/detail/iau0601/>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IAU_definition_of_planet - Check the reference section for additional resources

Please turn in:

1. This sheet as your cover sheet.
2. Your typed or neatly written answers to the following questions:
 - a) Why did the IAU feel it was necessary to formally define the word planet?
 - b) What is the formal definition?
 - c) What were the consequences of setting the definition of a planet?
 - d) Describe the controversy surrounding the formal definition.
 - What were the arguments of the scientific and astronomical community?
 - What were the arguments of the general public?
 - e) What is your opinion?
 - How would you defend your position?