At Play in the Cosmos

Introduction: This semester, you will have the opportunity to beta-test a new video game designed to improve student learning in astronomy courses. Throughout the game, you will learn to use various astronomical tools to help you complete missions, fulfill contracts, and solve an alien mystery. The first few missions will be guided by your spacecraft navigator who will gradually release more control to you as you become more proficient.

I will award up to **100 extra credit points** (valued at 5% of the total course grade) for any student who wants to participate in this experiment. In order to earn the extra credit points, you will need to complete all of the following steps:

(1) Take the pre-test that is available at the link below;
(2) Download and register the game so that it collects your gameplay data;
(3) Advance through all the available missions (1 – 8);
(4) Take the post-test that will be provided later in the semester;
(5) Provide any additional feedback about the game, gameplay, and features that could improve it.

Note that this is an optional exercise for extra credit. It is not mandated for the course, and your grade will not be impacted if you elect to not participate.

Pre-Test Link: Before you can download and play the game, we must collect some baseline data about your video game experience, your current knowledge of astronomy, and some demographic information. Please complete the short pre-test available at the following link:

https://uwmadison.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_3qL8pOW9pK0ut3T

Download the Game: You may download the videogame at one of the following links. You will need to unzip it to a folder on your computer. The executable file is safe.
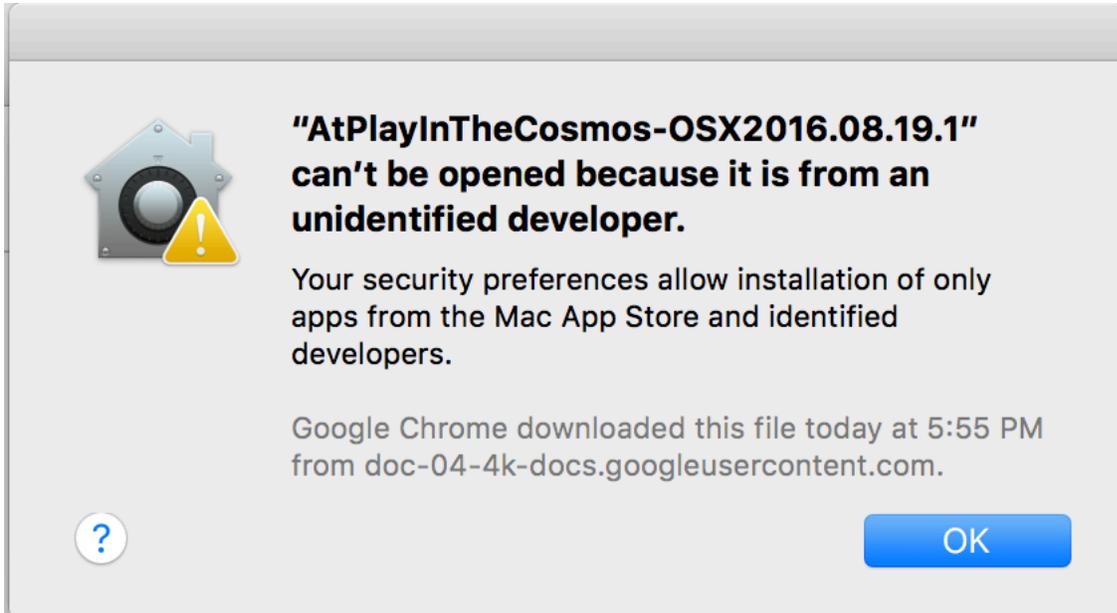
For Windows machines:
Use the link on the class web page under "windows"

The windows version should install on any windows machine with no issues; however, you may need to run Windows Update to download all optional updates for your graphics card if you encounter an error.
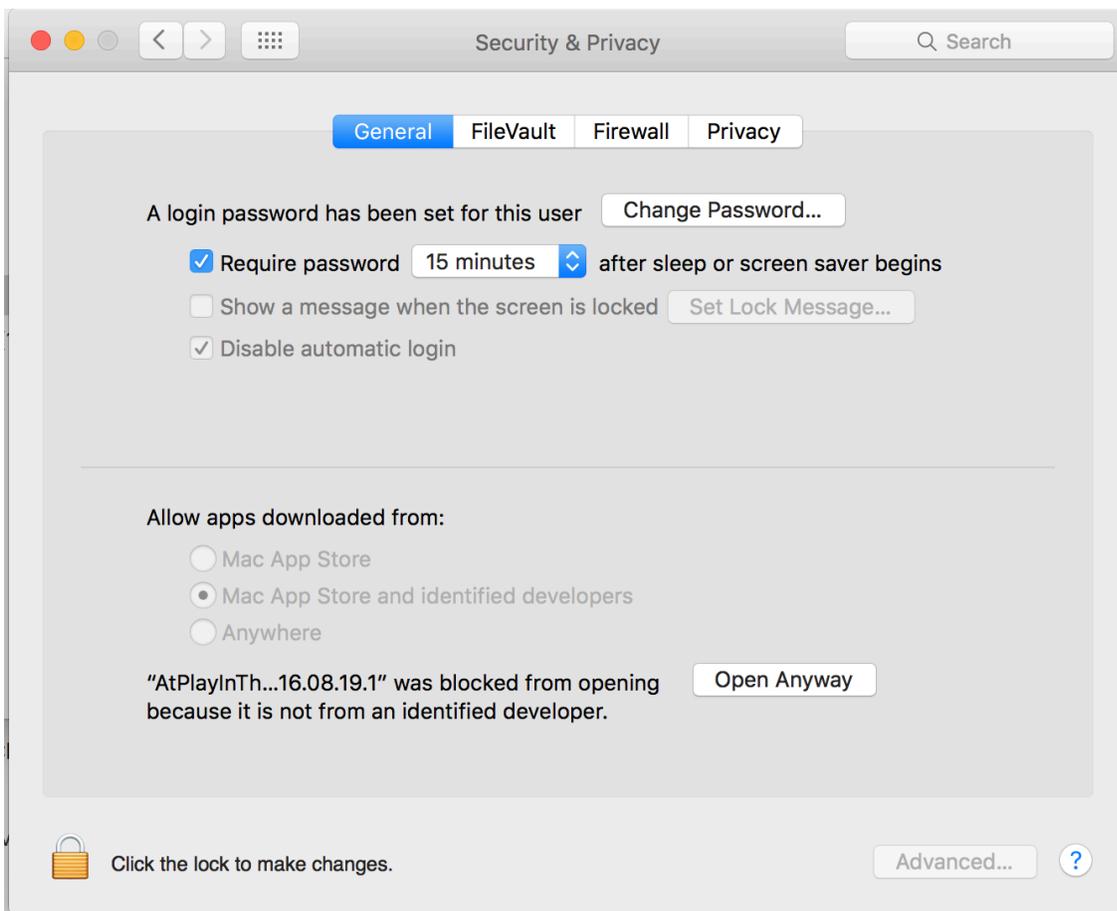
For Macs:
Use the link on the class web page under "mac"

The OSX version will trigger the OSX "Gatekeeper", which will display a warning that the application was downloaded outside of the App Store. A Warning like this will show:

This can be resolved on the machine by going to System Preferences > Security & Privacy, then clicking the button to "Open Anyway":

Register the Game: When you login to the game for the first time, you will be asked to register it. Use the following group code based upon which class you are in:

TR 9:30 AM class: **norton.beta.gtaylor1**

Technical Support: If you have any problems installing the game or encounter errors during gameplay, please contact the game's technical support at cosmosgamehelp@gmail.com. This email is monitored by the game design team, and they will be in the best position to help you resolve your technical issues.

Post-test and Feedback: You will have all semester to progress as far into the game as you like. The game contains an exploration mode that you can use to visit numerous destinations on your own. At some point later in the semester, you will be asked to complete a post-test (not for a grade) to assess what you have learned about astronomy through gameplay. You will also be asked to provide feedback to the game designers who will contact you for two 10-minute interviews and one 10-minute survey. At the end of the semester, they will provide me with a list of student participants, and those students will receive extra credit points earned while playing the game.

The post-test link is here:

https://uwmadison.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_7PrAf7VyCuDlcbz