Astrophysics? You might want to switch to Home Depot September 2nd, 2009, 11:45am: two MIT students involved in “Project Icarus” launched an object into space from Sturbridge, MA. Rather than using their engineering prowess to facilitate the help of rockets, boosters, and control systems, Lee and Yeh used nothing more than a Styrofoam beer cooler and a weather balloon filled with helium. The cooler was used to carry an inexpensive Canon A470 compact camera while the boys used nothing less than hand warmers to keep batteries and camera from freezing. The goal: design a low-budget rig which could fly a camera high enough into the atmosphere to photograph the curvature of the earth.

Wind proved to be a major concern for this fragile contraption, so that boys travelled to the center of the sate to prevent the winds from blowing the balloon into the Atlantic Ocean. Nevertheless, they still had to be able to find the contraption once it returned to earth, so they placed a prepaid GPS-equipped cell phone inside the cooler. The entire cost of the endeavor, including duct tape: $148.

The balloon and camera reached a height sufficient to photograph “the black sky curling around our blue planet.” The camera had been hacked with the Canon Hacker’s Development Kit (CHDK) open-source firmware, which enhances Canon’s cameras with several special features: an intervalometer (interval timer) was set to shoot a picture every five seconds; the 8-GB memory card held photos for the five-hour duration of the flight. The picture below was shot from about 93,000 feet, just under 18 miles high. To put all of this into perspective, when the balloon burst, the beer-cooler took 40 minutes to fall back down to Earth.
Deadline for Leverett House Newsletter submissions is Thursday at 11:59pm. Please e-mail Leverettnews@gmail.com

Thanks!

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Important Campus Dates

• Last day to add/drop without a fee: Mon 9/21

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Best of the Q

• I would not suggest taking this class unless you want to be bored out of your mind and become frustrated beyond all belief due to the simplicity and redundancy of the content.
• It's full of fluff that you get tested on--not a good combo
• I'm sorry this is a requirement.
• Be prepared for hell.
• This course takes in stuttering and insecure sophomores and churns out deep-thinking, fast-talking, atheist intellectuals.
• This class is good for you like eating steel-cut oats with blueberries is good for you. It's like intellectual fiber and antioxidants. It may be hard to make yourself eat it instead of deep-fried HUDS-brunch french toast with extra syrup, but it is SO worth it.
• [I would recommend this class] But only if you have a passion for total intellectual engagement without caring about your GPA
• your classmates will more than likely be pompous Social Studies concentrators who think they're smarter than you because they can drop names like Habermas and Weber (unless, of course, you're a social studies concentrator yourself -- then you're fine.)
• This is a poor introduction to Environmental Science. You will learn how to make a lot calculations, but you will not learn what you are calculating. You will learn close to nothing about how the environment works. Also, you will horribly bored all the time.
• Steer clear!
• Don't take this course unless you'd rather take a nap in Lecture Hall A than your own bed.
• If you like flashcards, this is the course for you

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Submit to the flare Today!
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