

Basic Optics for the  
**ASTRONOMICAL  
SCIENCES**



# Basic Optics for the ASTRONOMICAL SCIENCES

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# Contents

<b>Preface</b> .....	<b>xvii</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	<b>xix</b>
<b>List of Acronyms</b> .....	<b>xxi</b>
<b>Chapter 1    Historical Perspective</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1    Introduction .....	1
1.2    Angle Measurements.....	1
1.3    The Evolution of Optics .....	2
References .....	6
Bibliography .....	6
<b>Chapter 2    Astronomical Measurements: Ground and Space</b> .....	<b>9</b>
2.1    Introduction .....	9
2.2    Measurement .....	10
2.3    Comparison of Space- and Ground-based Astronomical Optics .....	10
2.3.1    Introduction .....	10
2.3.2    Wavelength coverage .....	11
2.3.3    Scattered light.....	12
2.3.4    Angular resolution.....	13
2.3.5    Thermal environment .....	13
2.3.6    Gravity.....	13
2.3.7    Accessibility .....	14
2.3.8    Operations .....	14
2.3.9    Summary .....	14
2.4    Mathematical Tools for Optics.....	15
2.4.1    Introduction .....	15
2.4.2    Geometrical optics (first-order optics) .....	15
2.4.3    Scalar diffraction .....	15
2.4.4    Vector diffraction .....	15
2.4.5    Radiometric analysis (radiometry) .....	16
2.4.6    Statistical theory.....	16
2.4.7    Quantum theory.....	16
2.4.8    Summary .....	17
2.5    Analysis and Synthesis of Optical Systems .....	17
References .....	18

<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>First-Order Optics .....</b>	<b>19</b>
3.1	Introduction .....	19
3.2	Interaction of Light and Matter .....	19
3.2.1	Index of refraction .....	19
3.2.2	Snell's law .....	20
3.2.2.1	Snell's law for reflection from a mirror .....	20
3.2.2.2	Total internal reflection .....	21
3.2.2.3	Temperature sensitivity .....	22
3.2.3	Glass and crystal types .....	22
3.2.3.1	Optical materials .....	22
3.2.4	Ray deviation and dispersion: prisms .....	23
3.2.4.1	Achromatic prism pair .....	25
3.2.4.2	Direct-vision spectroscopy .....	25
3.3	Image Location and Sign .....	26
3.3.1	Conventions and signs .....	26
3.3.2	Simple single lens .....	27
3.3.3	Object, pupil, and image plane .....	28
3.3.4	Paraxial optics .....	30
3.3.4.1	Collinear transformations and Gaussian image formation .....	30
3.3.4.2	The paraxial approximation .....	31
3.3.5	Cardinal points .....	34
3.3.6	Thick-lens multiple elements and matrix raytracing .....	36
3.3.7	Combining two systems .....	36
3.3.7.1	Reflective surfaces .....	38
3.3.7.2	Combining two optical power surfaces .....	38
3.3.8	Matrix methods for raytracing paraxial optics .....	40
3.3.9	Magnification .....	41
3.3.9.1	Lateral or transverse magnification .....	42
3.3.9.2	Longitudinal magnification .....	42
3.3.9.3	Angular magnification .....	43
3.3.9.4	Magnification in visual systems .....	43
3.3.10	Chromatic aberration .....	44
3.3.10.1	Introduction .....	44
3.3.10.2	Thin-lens chromatic aberration .....	44
3.3.11	Image orientation .....	46
3.3.11.1	Prism devices used for shifting images .....	48
3.4	F-Number .....	50
3.5	Numerical Aperture .....	50
3.6	Summary .....	50
	References .....	50
	Bibliography .....	51

<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Aberration Theory: Image Quality .....</b>	<b>53</b>
4.1	Introduction .....	53
4.2	Conic Sections: Surface of Revolution .....	54
4.3	Coordinate System for Geometric Aberration Analysis.....	54
4.4	Relationship between Rays and Geometric Waves .....	56
4.5	Geometric-Wave Aberration Theory.....	60
	4.5.1 Seidel aberrations .....	61
	4.5.1.1 Tilt.....	61
	4.5.1.2 Defocus .....	61
	4.5.1.3 Seidel terms.....	61
	4.5.2 Zernike polynomials.....	62
4.6	Ray Errors in the Vicinity of the Image Plane .....	63
	4.6.1 Spot diagram .....	64
4.7	Chromatic Aberrations: First-Order Color .....	64
	4.7.1 Optical-path-distance error and focus error sign convention .....	66
4.8	Third-Order Monochromatic Error Terms .....	66
	4.8.1 Spherical aberration.....	67
	4.8.2 Astigmatism and field curvature .....	72
	4.8.3 Petzval curvature (field curvature).....	74
	4.8.3.1 Sagittal focus.....	75
	4.8.3.2 Tangential focus.....	75
	4.8.3.3 Medial focus.....	76
	4.8.4 Coma .....	76
	4.8.5 Wavefront errors combined.....	80
	4.8.6 Distortion.....	81
4.9	Optical Design.....	82
4.10	Tolerancing an Optical System .....	82
4.11	Applications of Aberration Theory .....	84
	4.11.1 Introduction.....	84
	4.11.2 Plane-parallel plate aberrations.....	85
	4.11.3 Aberrations for a thin lens.....	86
	4.11.4 Thin lens, stop at the center .....	88
	4.11.5 Relationship between spherical and coma .....	90
	4.11.6 Single-lens aberration with stop shift.....	91
	4.11.7 Application of the stop-shift equations .....	93
	4.11.8 Structural aberration coefficients for a spherical mirror .....	93
	4.11.9 Magnification factors of interest .....	94
	4.11.10 The Schmidt camera .....	95
	4.11.11 Field curvature from a spherical mirror .....	97
4.12	Telecentric Optical Systems .....	97
4.13	Summary .....	98
	References .....	98
	Bibliography.....	99

<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Transmittance, Throughput, and Vignetting .....</b>	<b>101</b>
5.1	Introduction .....	101
5.2	System Transmittance .....	101
5.3	System Throughput (Étendue).....	103
	5.3.1 Invariant on refraction.....	103
	5.3.2 Invariant on transfer .....	104
	5.3.3 Conservation of the area–solid-angle product.....	105
5.4	Vignetting.....	106
5.5	Image Contrast .....	108
5.6	Unwanted Radiation and Scattered Light.....	108
	5.6.1 Baffling an optical system.....	109
	5.6.2 Ghost images .....	111
5.7	Summary .....	113
	References .....	113
	Bibliography.....	113
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Radiometry and Noise .....</b>	<b>115</b>
6.1	Introduction .....	115
6.2	Nomenclature .....	116
6.3	Radiant Power from a Source.....	117
6.4	Geometric Properties of Radiation .....	119
6.5	Fundamental Equation of Radiative Transfer.....	120
6.6	Lambertian Emitters .....	121
6.7	Specular Reflection .....	122
6.8	Reflectivity, Emissivity, and Absorption .....	123
6.9	Signal and Noise Calculation .....	123
	6.9.1 Power on the detector from the source.....	124
	6.9.2 Background or noise power.....	124
	6.9.3 Simplification .....	125
6.10	Kirchoff’s Law .....	126
6.11	Uniform Illumination .....	126
6.12	Bidirectional Emission and Reflectance.....	128
6.13	Throughput or Étendue and Power.....	128
6.14	Astronomical Magnitudes .....	128
6.15	Noise .....	130
	6.15.1 Signal-to-noise ratio .....	130
	6.15.2 Detectors .....	131
	References .....	132
	Bibliography.....	132
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>Optics of the Atmosphere .....</b>	<b>135</b>
7.1	Introduction .....	135
7.2	Turbulence.....	135
	7.2.1 Quantitative atmospheric optical propagation.....	136



	7.2.2	Strehl ratio .....	139
	7.2.3	Wind .....	139
7.3		Atmospheric Transmission with Wavelength .....	140
7.4		Observatory Location .....	141
7.5		Conclusion .....	141
		References .....	142
		Bibliography .....	143
<b>Chapter 8</b>		<b>Scalar and Vector Waves: Polarization .....</b>	<b>145</b>
	8.1	Introduction .....	145
	8.2	Vector Waves .....	146
	8.2.1	Linear polarization .....	147
	8.2.2	Circular and elliptical polarization .....	147
	8.3	Methods to Describe Polarized Light .....	148
	8.3.1	Introduction .....	148
	8.3.2	The Jones calculus .....	148
	8.3.3	The Stokes vector .....	150
	8.3.4	The Mueller matrix operator .....	153
	8.4	Source of Polarization in Instruments .....	154
	8.5	Polarization at the Interface of Dielectrics .....	154
	8.6	Polarization at the Interface of Dielectrics and Metals .....	158
	8.7	Powered (Curved) Optics Introduce Polarization .....	161
	8.7.1	Mueller matrices for various devices .....	163
		References .....	167
		Bibliography .....	169
<b>Chapter 9</b>		<b>Scalar Diffraction and Image Formation .....</b>	<b>171</b>
	9.1	Introduction .....	171
	9.1.1	Image formation .....	171
	9.2	The Coordinate System .....	172
	9.3	Introduction to Diffraction and Image Formation .....	173
	9.3.1	The Huygens–Fresnel principle .....	173
	9.3.2	The Fresnel approximation .....	175
	9.4	The Fraunhofer Approximation .....	176
	9.5	The Airy Diffraction Pattern .....	177
	9.6	Rayleigh Criterion .....	177
	9.7	Diffraction for a Cassegrain Telescope .....	178
	9.8	Phase-Transforming Properties of a Lens .....	179
	9.9	The Fourier Transforming Properties of Lenses .....	182
	9.9.1	Fraunhofer diffraction pattern .....	184
	9.10	Fourier Transforms and Applications to Optics .....	185
	9.10.1	Shorthand notation for Fourier transform applications .....	185
	9.10.1.1	The rectangle function .....	186

9.10.1.2	The sinc function.....	186
9.10.1.3	The sgn function .....	187
9.10.1.4	The triangle function.....	187
9.10.1.5	The delta function .....	188
9.10.1.6	The comb function.....	188
9.10.1.7	The circ function.....	189
9.10.1.8	The Gaus function.....	190
9.10.1.9	Shorthand notation for Fourier transforms..	190
9.10.2	The Fourier transforms of two-dimensional functions.....	190
9.10.3	Fourier-transform theorems and shorthand notations .....	191
9.10.4	Similarity theorem.....	191
9.10.5	Shift theorem.....	191
9.10.6	Parseval's theorem .....	192
9.10.7	Convolution theorem.....	192
9.10.8	Autocorrelation theorem .....	192
9.10.9	Representation of pupil functions (apertures) .....	193
9.11	Optical Transfer Function (OTF) .....	195
9.11.1	Introduction .....	195
9.11.2	Summary .....	199
9.12	Digital Images .....	199
9.12.1	Detector resolution .....	201
9.12.2	Pixels per point spread function .....	201
9.12.3	Astronomical applications: summary.....	201
9.13	Image Processing.....	202
9.13.1	The inverse filter .....	203
9.13.2	The least-mean-square error filter (Wiener filter).....	205
9.14	Apodization .....	206
9.14.1	Example.....	207
9.15	Encircled Energy.....	208
9.16	Strehl Ratio.....	208
9.17	Image Quality and Wavefront Error.....	209
9.17.1	Cumulative wavefront error .....	209
9.17.2	Power spectrum of wavefront errors .....	209
9.17.3	Root-mean-square wavefront error .....	210
9.18	Diffraction Optical Elements.....	210
9.18.1	The Fresnel lens .....	210
9.18.2	The photon sieve .....	211
9.19	Diffraction-Grating Spectrometers.....	212
9.19.1	Diffraction gratings .....	212
9.19.2	Resolving power of a diffraction grating .....	214
9.19.3	The Littrow spectrometer .....	215
9.19.4	The concave-grating spectrometer .....	216
9.19.5	The convex-grating spectrometer.....	217

9.19.6	Image-plane multiplex spectrometers .....	218
9.20	Scalar Diffraction and Image Formation: Summary .....	219
	References .....	219
	Bibliography .....	222
<b>Chapter 10</b>	<b>Interferometry .....</b>	<b>225</b>
10.1	Introduction .....	225
10.2	Historical Perspective .....	225
10.2.1	Young's double-slit experiment .....	225
10.2.2	High-angular-resolution astronomy: stellar diameters .....	227
10.2.3	Spectrometers .....	228
10.3	Complex Representation of Real Polychromatic Fields .....	228
10.4	Temporal-Frequency Interferometer .....	229
10.4.1	Polarization in interferometers .....	236
10.5	Fourier Transform Spectrometer .....	238
10.5.1	The interferogram .....	238
10.5.2	Recording and processing interferograms .....	239
10.6	Tilt-Compensated Fourier Transform Spectrometers .....	240
10.7	Fabry-Pérot Interferometry .....	243
10.8	Spatial Interferometry: The Rotational Shear Interferometer .....	244
10.9	Michelson Stellar Interferometer (MSI) .....	247
10.10	Image Formation and Interferometry .....	250
10.11	Contrast and Coherence .....	250
10.12	Imaging through Turbulence .....	251
10.12.1	Astronomical speckle interferometry .....	252
10.12.2	Tilt anisoplanatism .....	254
10.12.3	Chromatic anisoplanatism .....	254
10.12.4	Recording speckle patterns .....	254
10.12.5	Applications to double stars .....	255
10.13	Coherence Interferometry Imaging .....	255
10.13.1	Introduction .....	255
10.13.2	Coherence interferometry .....	256
10.13.3	Analysis .....	259
10.13.4	Imaging through atmospheric turbulence .....	262
10.13.5	Fringe measurements .....	263
10.13.6	Alignment for white light .....	266
10.13.7	Signal-to-noise ratio .....	266
10.14	Heterodyne Interferometry .....	267
10.14.1	Introduction .....	267
10.14.2	Heterodyne spectrometer .....	267
10.14.3	Application to stellar interferometry .....	269
10.15	Intensity Interferometry .....	269
10.16	Interferometric Testing of Optical Systems .....	269
10.16.1	Introduction .....	269

10.16.2	Optical testing .....	270
10.17	Assessing System WFE: Tolerancing .....	271
10.18	Quasi-optics of Gaussian-Beam Propagation.....	272
10.19	Summary .....	273
	References .....	274
	Bibliography.....	278

## **Chapter 11 Optical Metrology and Wavefront Sensing and Control..... 281**

*Siddarayappa Bikkannavar*

11.1	Introduction .....	281
11.1.1	Wavefront error.....	282
11.2	Optical Metrology: Mechanical Structure Alignment.....	283
11.2.1	Introduction .....	283
11.2.2	Athermalization.....	284
11.2.2.1	Analyses: sensitivity and tolerance.....	285
11.2.2.2	Mechanical structure.....	285
11.2.2.3	Athermalization of the structure .....	286
11.2.3	Active control for optical metrology .....	287
11.2.4	Edge sensors.....	289
11.3	Wavefront Sensing .....	290
11.4	Hartmann Screen Test.....	292
11.5	Shack–Hartmann Sensor .....	293
11.5.1	Introduction .....	293
11.5.2	Lenslet model for sensing local phase gradients.....	295
11.5.3	Shack–Hartmann OPD reconstruction .....	297
11.6	Curvature Sensing .....	298
11.7	Phase Retrieval.....	298
11.7.1	Introduction .....	298
11.7.2	Iterative-transform Fourier mathematics.....	299
11.7.3	Modifications to the basic Gerchberg–Saxton phase retrieval .....	301
11.7.4	Limitations of phase retrieval.....	305
11.8	Phase Diversity.....	305
11.8.1	Introduction .....	305
11.8.2	Relationship between object and phase aberrations ...	306
11.8.3	Phase-diversity objective function (maximum-likelihood estimation).....	307
11.9	Wavefront Control Principles.....	308
11.10	Influence Functions and the Sensitivity Matrix.....	309
11.11	Deformable Mirror Technology and Configurations .....	311
11.12	Linear Wavefront Control .....	312
11.13	Nonlinear Wavefront Control.....	313
11.14	Laser Guide Star Adaptive Optics.....	314

11.15	Wavefront Sensing and Control for Ground and Space .....	315
	References .....	315
	Bibliography .....	318
	Author Biography .....	318
<b>Chapter 12</b>	<b>Segmented-Aperture Telescopes .....</b>	<b>319</b>
12.1	Introduction .....	319
12.2	Two-Stage Optics Applied to Continuous Primary Mirrors.....	320
	12.2.1 Monolithic mirrors .....	320
	12.2.2 Correcting the Hubble Space Telescope .....	325
12.3	Two-Stage Optics Applied to Segmented Primary Mirrors .....	327
	12.3.1 Introduction .....	327
	12.3.2 Large deployable reflector .....	329
12.4	Alignment and Manufacturing Tolerances for Segmented Telescopes .....	330
	12.4.1 Curvature manufacturing tolerance .....	330
	12.4.2 Segmented wavefront corrector .....	334
12.5	Image Quality with a Segmented Telescope .....	334
	12.5.1 Image quality .....	334
	12.5.2 Correcting errors in a segmented telescope with two-stage optics .....	334
	12.5.2.1 Piston error .....	335
	12.5.2.2 Field-angle errors .....	336
	12.5.2.3 Tilt errors .....	338
	12.5.2.4 Lateral image displacement .....	340
	12.5.2.5 Focal shift .....	340
12.6	Effects of Gaps on Image Quality .....	341
12.7	The James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) .....	342
12.8	Giant Ground-based Telescopes .....	343
	References .....	343
	Bibliography .....	345
<b>Chapter 13</b>	<b>Sparse-Aperture Telescopes .....</b>	<b>347</b>
13.1	Introduction .....	347
13.2	Pupil Topology: Filled, Segmented, Sparse, and Interferometer Apertures .....	348
	13.2.1 Redundant and nonredundant apertures .....	348
	13.2.2 Angular resolution from a sparse aperture .....	349
13.3	Sparse-Aperture Equivalent Resolution .....	351
13.4	Image Reconstruction .....	351
13.5	Partially Filled Apertures .....	353
	13.5.1 Modulation transfer function of a sparse aperture .....	353
	13.5.2 Nonredundant pupils .....	355
	13.5.3 Rotating the sparse aperture to fill the $\xi, \eta$ plane .....	356

13.6	Methods for Recombining Beams in Sparse-Aperture Telescopes .....	356
	13.6.1 Introduction .....	356
	13.6.2 Multiple-telescope telescope .....	356
	13.6.3 The Fizeau telescope .....	356
	13.6.4 The coherence interferometer.....	358
13.7	Sparse-Aperture Advantages .....	358
13.8	Space-based Fizeau Telescope Design Considerations .....	358
	13.8.1 Mechanical connection .....	358
	13.8.2 Free-formation flying Fizeau telescopes .....	360
13.9	Signal-to-Noise Ratio in Sparse-Aperture Imaging: Theory .....	361
13.10	Performance Modeling for Sparse-Aperture Telescopes .....	362
	13.10.1 Analysis.....	362
	13.10.2 Integration time and scene contrast: CCD full well limits the exposure at three contrast levels .....	366
	13.10.3 Method for determining the relative exposure times by matching the RMS residual from a filled aperture with that of a sparse aperture .....	368
13.11	Pupil Topographies .....	369
	13.11.1 Processing 20% contrast images .....	369
	13.11.2 Processing 10% contrast images .....	370
	13.11.3 Conclusions.....	371
13.12	Signal-to-Noise Ratio for Sparse-Aperture Images.....	372
13.13	The Future of Sparse-Aperture Telescopes in Astronomy .....	373
	References .....	374
<b>Chapter 14</b>	<b>Astrometric and Imaging Interferometry .....</b>	<b>377</b>
14.1	Introduction .....	377
14.2	Principles of Stellar Interferometry .....	378
14.3	Astronomical Applications of Spatial Interferometry .....	382
	14.3.1 Introduction.....	382
	14.3.2 Astrometry .....	384
14.4	Instrument Parameters: Subsystem Requirements .....	385
14.5	Technologies .....	386
	14.5.1 Polarization .....	387
14.6	Interferometer Observatories.....	388
14.7	The Center for High-Angular-Resolution Astronomy (CHARA) Interferometer .....	390
	14.7.1 Optical phase delay lines.....	392
14.8	The Infrared Spatial Interferometer (ISI) .....	393
14.9	The Very Large Telescope Interferometer (VLTI) .....	394
14.10	Astrometric Interferometry .....	395
	14.10.1 Introduction.....	395

14.10.2	Applications of interferometry to exoplanet science.....	396
14.10.3	The Space Interferometry Mission (SIM).....	398
14.11	Interferometric Imaging: Phase Retrieval .....	398
14.12	Summary .....	400
	References .....	400
<b>Chapter 15</b>	<b>Coronagraphy: Control of Unwanted Radiation .....</b>	<b>405</b>
15.1	Introduction .....	405
15.2	Background .....	405
15.3	Corograph Design Concept .....	407
15.4	Using Masks to Control Unwanted Radiation: Apodization ...	409
15.4.1	Introduction .....	409
15.4.2	Apodization and masks .....	409
15.4.2.1	Image-plane masks.....	410
15.4.2.2	Pupil-plane masks .....	410
15.4.2.3	Occulters .....	410
15.4.2.4	Imaging thermal sources .....	410
15.4.3	Inner working angle .....	411
15.4.4	Degrees of mask freedom.....	411
15.5	Pupil-Mask Effectiveness.....	412
15.5.1	Unapodized aperture with star and planet .....	413
15.5.1.1	Image-plane PSF profile with different amplitude apodizations .....	414
15.5.1.2	Results of apodization.....	414
15.5.1.3	Comment .....	415
15.6	Fresnel Diffraction .....	415
15.7	Summary .....	415
	References .....	416
<b>Index</b> .....		<b>419</b>





# Preface

Astronomical science advances use the following research cycle: measure parts of the universe, develop theories to explain the observations, use these new theories to forecast or predict observations, build new telescopes and instruments, measure again, refine the theories if needed, and repeat the process. Critical to the success of this cycle are new observations, which often require new, more sensitive, efficient astronomical telescopes and instruments.

Currently, the field of astronomy is undergoing a revolution. Several new important optical/infrared windows into the universe are opening as a result of advances in optics technology, including systems using high angular resolution, very high dynamic range, and highly precise velocity and position measurements. High-angular-resolution systems, which incorporate adaptive optics and interferometry, promise gains of more than  $10^4$  in angular resolution on the sky above our current capabilities. Advanced coronagraphs enable very high-dynamic-range systems that enable astronomers to image an exoplanet in the presence of the blinding glare from its parent star that is more than  $10^{12}$  times brighter.

Optical science is the study of the generation, propagation, control, and measurement of optical radiation. The optical region of the spectrum is considered to range across the wavelength region of  $\sim 0.3$  to  $\sim 50$   $\mu\text{m}$ , or from the UV through the visual and into the far infrared. Different sensors or detectors are used for covering sections of this broad spectral region. However, the analysis tools required to design, build, align, test, and characterize these optical systems are common: geometrical raytracing, wavefront aberration theory, diffraction theory, polarization, partial coherence theory, radiometry, and digital image restoration. Advances in allied disciplines such as material science, thermal engineering, structures, dynamics, control theory, and modeling within the framework of the tolerances imposed by optics are essential for the next generation of telescopes.

This text provides the background in optics to give the reader insight into the way in which these new optical systems are designed, engineered, and built. The book is intended for astronomy and engineering students who want a basic understanding of optical system engineering as it is applied to telescopes and instruments for astronomical research in the areas of astrophysics, astrometry, exoplanet characterization, and planetary science. Giant ground-based optical telescopes such as the Giant Segmented Mirror Telescope, the Thirty Meter Telescope, and the Extremely Large Telescope are currently under development.

The James Webb Space Telescope is under construction, and the Space Interferometer Mission has successfully completed its technology program. The astronomical sciences are, indeed, at the threshold of many new discoveries.

Chapter 1 provides an historical perspective on the development of telescopes and their impact on our understanding of the universe. Chapter 2 reviews the optical measurements astronomers record and identifies the attributes for ground and space observatories. Chapter 3 provides the tools used for obtaining image location, size, and orientation and presents the geometrical constraints that need to be followed to maximize the amount of radiation passed by the system. Chapter 4 presents geometrical aberration theory and introduces the subject of image quality. Chapter 5 provides methods to maximize the amount of radiation passing through the optical system: transmittance, throughput, scattered light, and vignetting. Chapter 6 provides a basic introduction to radiative transfer through an optical system and identifies several factors needed to maximize the signal-to-noise ratio. Chapter 7 provides an introduction to the optics of the atmosphere necessary for ground-based astronomers. Chapter 8 introduces the scalar and vector wave theories of light and identifies sources of instrumental polarization that will affect the quality of astronomical data.

Using the Fourier transform, Chapter 9 provides an in-depth analysis of the propagation of scalar waves through an optical system as the basis of a discussion on the effects of astronomical telescopes and instruments on image quality. Chapter 10 provides a discussion of interferometry within the framework of partial coherence theory. The Fourier transform spectrometer, the Michelson stellar interferometer, and the rotational shear interferometer are used as examples and are analyzed in detail. Chapter 11, coauthored with Siddarayappa Bikkannavar, discusses the important new role that optical metrology and wavefront sensing and control play in the design and construction of very large ground- and space-based telescopes.

These 11 chapters have formed the basis of the Optical System Engineering class given by the author at CALTECH. Chapter 12 provides an analysis that is fundamental to the understanding of segmented-aperture telescopes and how they enable the next-generation, very large ground- and space-based telescopes. Chapter 13 presents an analysis of sparse-aperture telescopes, describes how they are used for extremely high angular resolution, and identifies their limitations. Chapter 14 discusses astrometric and imaging interferometry within the framework of basic optics. Chapter 15 develops basic concepts for extreme-contrast systems such as coronagraphs for the characterization of exoplanet systems.

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# List of Acronyms

BFD	back focal distance
BFP	back focal point
CAD	computer-aided design
CGH	computer-generated hologram
CHARA	Center for High Angular Resolution Astronomy
CTE	coefficient of thermal expansion
dp	detected photons
DM	deformable mirror
E-ELT	European Extremely Large Telescope
EFL	effective focal length
ESO	European Southern Observatory
FFL	front focal length
FOV	field of view
FP	Fabry–Pérot
FTS	Fourier transform spectrometer
GMT	Giant Magellan Telescope
GSMT	Giant Segmented Mirror Telescope
GTC	Gran Telescopio Canarias
HET	Hobby Eberly Telescope
H-R	Hertzprung–Russel
HST	Hubble Space Telescope
ICESat	Ice, Cloud, and land Elevation Satellite
ISI	Infrared Spatial Interferometer
JWST	James Webb Space Telescope
LBT	Large Binocular Telescope
LDR	large deployable reflector
MACAO	multi-application curvature adaptive optics
maresec	milli-arcseconds
MCF	mutual coherence function
MSI	Michelson stellar interferometer
MTF	modulation transfer function
MTT	multiple-telescope telescope
OPD	optical path difference
OTA	optical telescope assembly
OTF	optical transfer function
PSF	point spread function

rms	root-mean-square
rss	root of the sum of squares
SDSS	Sloan Digital Sky Survey
SIM	Space Interferometer Mission
SLR	single-lens reflex
SNR	signal-to-noise ratio
STIS	Space Telescope Imaging Spectrograph
TMT	Thirty Meter Telescope
TPF-C	Terrestrial Planet Finder Coronagraph
VCM	variable-curvature mirror
VLA	Very Large Array
VLTI	Very Large Telescope Interferometer
WFC	wavefront correction
WFE	wavefront error
WF/PC	Wide-Field/Planetary Camera
WFSC	wavefront sensing and control
WISE	Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer