HANDOUT

Families of Clouds

1) **High** (C_H) * - cirriform (L: cirrus - lock of hair) - composed almost entirely of ice crystals & base above 6 km (20K ft)
   - **a) Cirrus (Ci)** (aka mares' tails) - thin, feather-like, in narrow bands
   - b) **Cirrocumulus (Cc)** - thin, appearing as patches
   - **c) Cirrostratus (Cs)** - thin, whitish, like a sheet

2) Middle (C_M) * - composed of water & ice, much being super cooled (water that exists in liquid form at temperatures below freezing) & base bet. 2-6 km (6.5-20K ft)
   - **a) Altostratus (As)** - bluish layer
   - **b) Altocumulus (Ac)** - white or gray layers or patches, may appear wavy

3) **Low** (C_L) * - composed almost entirely of water & base below 2 km (6.5K ft)
   - **a) Stratus (St)** - gray, uniform, sheet-like with low base
   - **b) Stratocumulus (Sc)** - globular masses or rolls
   - **c) Nimbostratus (Ns)** - dark or gray massive layer; continuous precipitation

4) Extensive vertical development - considerable vertical development & billowing tops & base usually below 2 km (6.5K ft) but top can extend to 15km (50K ft)
   - **a) Cumulus (Cu)** - flat bases & domed tops
   - **b) Cumulonimbus (Cb)** (aka thunderheads) - large vertically developed clouds with tops often crowned with veils of cirrus

* are further classified based upon formation

Additional Adjectives

a) castellanus - turreted; applied to cirrocumulus & altocumulus
b) congestus - crowded together in heaps; applied to cumulus
c) fractus - fragmented; applied only to stratus & cumulus
d) humilis - lowly, poorly developed in vertical; applied to cumulus
e) lenticularis - lens shaped; applied to cirrostratus, altocumulus & stratocumulus
f) nimbo or nimbus - raincloud
g) uncinus - hook shaped; applied to cirrus