Lecture 19 - Semiconductor Devices

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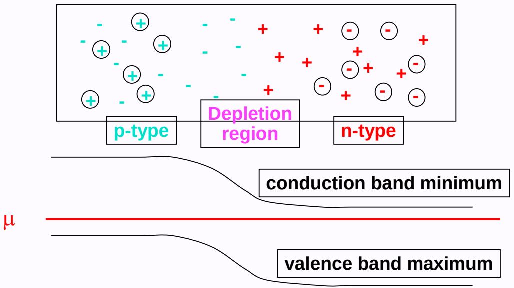
Kittel Ch. 17, p. 503 - 512
+ extra material in lecture notes



Comment

- If the universe were a homgeneous crystal, it would be a very dull place
- It is the inhomogeneities that create our interesting world
- Sun - earth - …
- Metals - insulators together to make useful circuits
- The power of semiconductors is the ability to control their electrical (and optical) properties to make devices

Outline

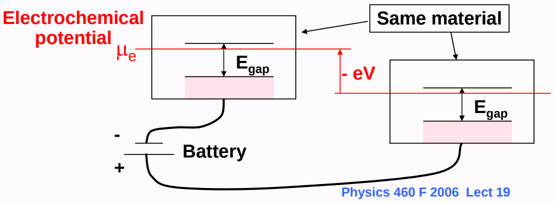
- What is a semiconductor device?
- Key point 1 - Bands and Fermi energy
  Bands Relative to Fermi energy
- Key point 2 - inhomogeneous material or doping
  Variation in concentrations of electrons and holes by controlled doping profiles
- p-n junctions - rectification- forward - reverse bias
- Metal-semiconductor junctions
  Schottky barriers - rectification
- Solar Cells
- Light emitting diodes
- Bipolar transistor n-p-n p- n-p
- Kittel Ch. 17, p. 503 - 512 + added materials in the lecture notes

What determines the Band Energies and the Fermi Energy?

- Recall that the product
  $n\ p = 4 (k_B T/ 2 \pi^2)^3 (m_c m_v)^{3/2} \exp(-(E_c - E_v)/k_B T)$
  is independent of the Fermi energy
- BUT the concentrations n and p vary depending on the Fermi energy relative to the band energies
- $n = 2(m_c k_B T/ 2 \pi^2)^{3/2} \exp(-(E_c - \mu)/k_B T)$
  $= N_0 \exp(- (E_c - \mu)/k_B T)$
- $p = 2(m_v k_B T/ 2 \pi^2)^{3/2} \exp(-(\mu - E_v)/k_B T)$
  $= P_0 \exp(-(\mu - E_v)/k_B T)$

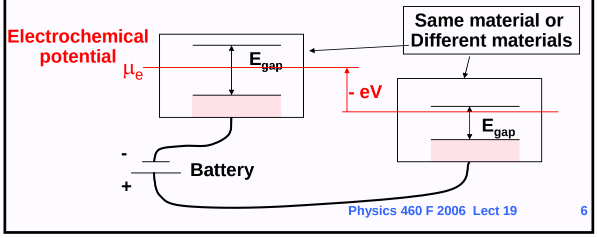
Band Energies and the Fermi Energy

- Key Points:
- 1A: Band energy differences, e.g., $E_{gap} = E_c - E_v$ are intrinsic properties of a material
- 1B: The absolute energy of the bands is NOT an intrinsic property. The electron band energies all shift by -eV(r) due to an electrostatic potential V(r).



Band Energies and the Fermi Energy

- Key Points:
- 1C: The Fermi energy μ is the energy to add or remove an electron, which is everywhere the same if the system is in equilibrium. One can either work with μ or with the “electrochemical potential” $\mu_e = \mu + eV(r)$ due to an electrostatic potential V(r).



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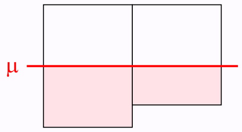
What determines the Band Energies and the Fermi Energy?

- If there are inhomogeneous variations in the concentrations n and p as a function of position, the relations can be written
- $n = N_0 \exp(-(E_c - eV(r) - \mu)/k_B T) = N_0 \exp(-(E_c - \mu_e)/k_B T)$
- $p = P_0 \exp(-(\mu - E_v + eV(r))/k_B T) = P_0 \exp(-(\mu_e - E_v)/k_B T)$
- Either form is correct and the relations obey the law of mass action:

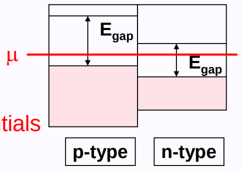
$$n\,p = N_0 P_0 \exp(-(E_c - E_v)/k_B T) = N_0 P_0 \exp(-E_{gap}/k_B T)$$

Band Energies and the Fermi Energy

- Examples
- Line up of Fermi energy of two metals in contact



- Two semiconductors in contact

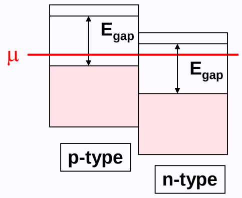


- Band are shifted by -eV(r) so that is the same.

This means that there must be electrostatic potentials V(r) to make this happen

Inhomogeneous Semiconductors

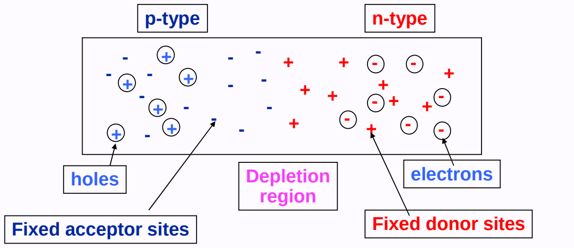
- First Example: one material doped differently in different regions
- How can this happen?



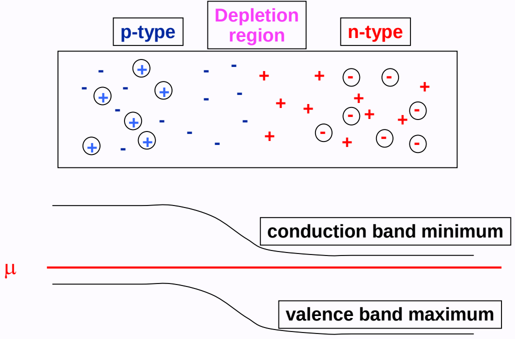
- Key assumption:
  variations are slow on the atomic scale
  - can treat as smoothly varying

Inhomogeneous Semiconductors

- First Example: one material doped differently in different regions
- Looking more closely at the doping near the boundary:

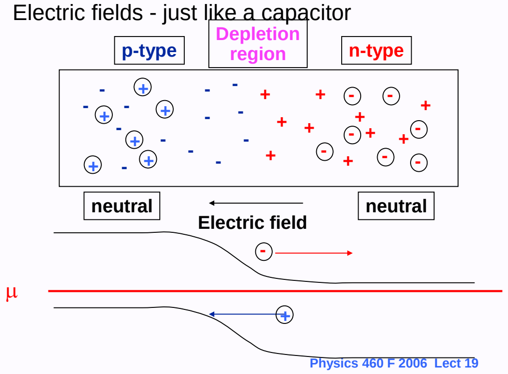


p-n junction



What causes bands to shift?

- Electric fields - just like a capacitor



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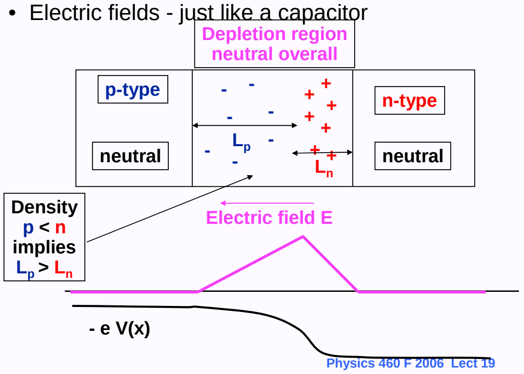
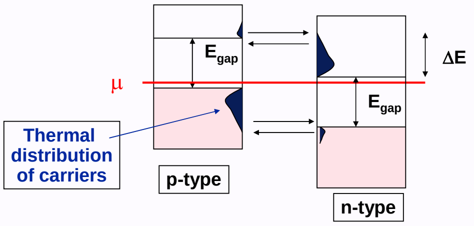
What causes bands to shift?

- Electric fields - just like a capacitor



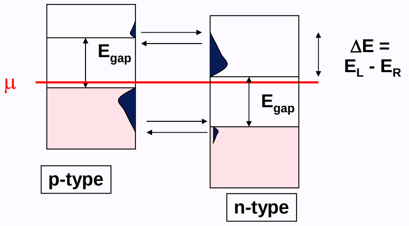
Equilibrium

- In equilibrium with no applied voltage there is no net current, but there is always a generation and absorption of holes and electrons across the interface.
- Electrons on p side (n_p) easily go to n side at rate An_p
- Electrons on n side go to p side at rate C $\exp(-\Delta E/k_BT)$



Equilibrium

- In equilibrium the current density of electrons is given by the difference of terms for left ⇒ right and right ⇒ left
  $$j = C\exp(-\Delta E/k_BT) - An_p = 0$$
- Similarly for holes

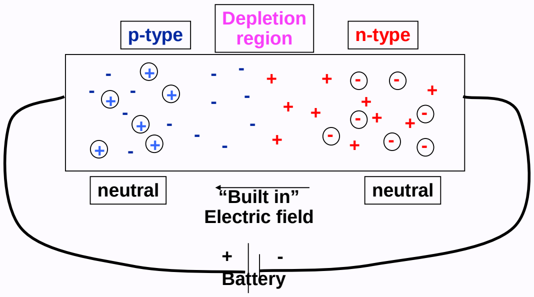


How can a pn junction be used to make a diode?

- **A device that passes current easily in one direction**
- **Low resistance for voltage applied in one direction (the forward direction)**
- **High resistance for voltage applied in the other direction (the reverse direction)**

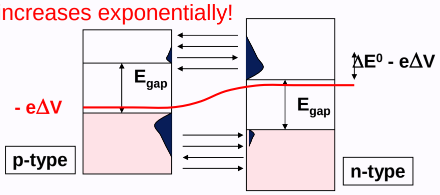
Forward bias

- Apply a voltage V to reduce the difference between the two sides to $\Delta E - e\Delta V$ ($\Delta V > 0$) ($\Delta E = E_L^0 - E_R^0$)



Forward bias

- Reduce the difference between the two sides to $\Delta E = E_L^0 - E_R^0 - e(V_L - V_R) = \Delta E^0 - e\Delta V$ (with $\Delta V > 0$)
- The net electron current is
  $$j = C\exp(-(\Delta E - e\Delta V)/k_BT) - An_p$$
  $$= An_p\,[\,\exp(+e|\Delta V|/k_BT) - 1]$$
- Similarly for holes
- Current increases exponentially!



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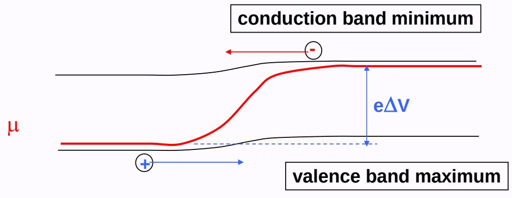
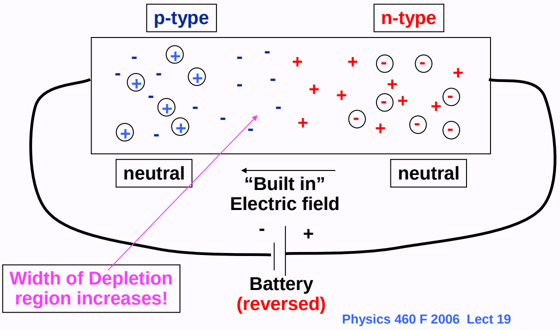
Forward bias

- The difference between bands on the left and right increases
- Below is figure of band energies near the “flat band” condition
- Current flows easily



Reverse bias

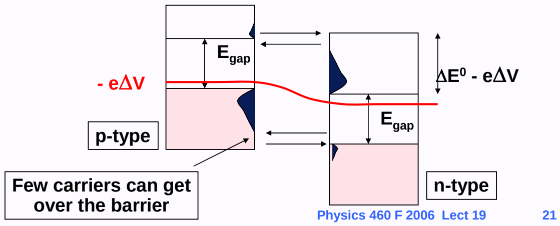
- Apply a voltage V to increase the difference between the two sides to $\Delta E + eV$ ($V > 0$)



Reverse bias

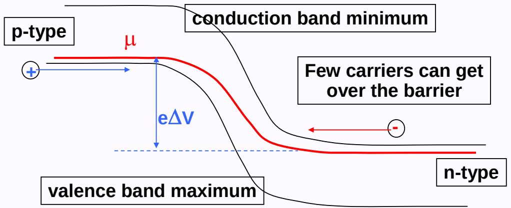
- Current obeys same formula but with $\Delta V < 0$
- Now the net electron current is (Similarly for holes)

  $J = An_p [\exp(-e|\Delta V|/k_BT) - 1]$
- Current saturates at small value!
- Acts like capacitor with increased depletion width



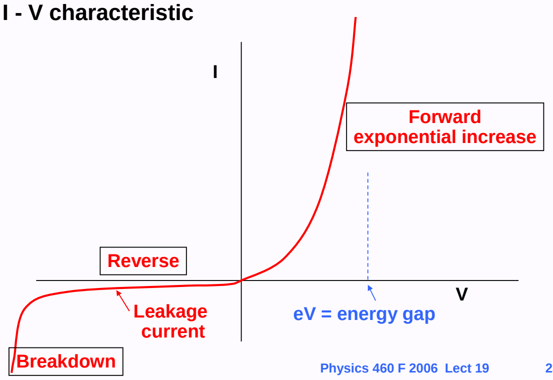
Reverse bias

- The difference between bands on the left and right increases
- Current saturates at small value!
- Acts like capacitor with increased depletion width



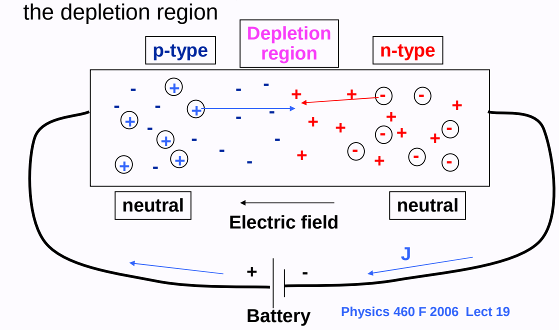
Rectification

- **I - V characteristic**



Forward bias (again)

- How does the current actually flow?
- Electrons flow from right, holes from left - combine near the depletion region

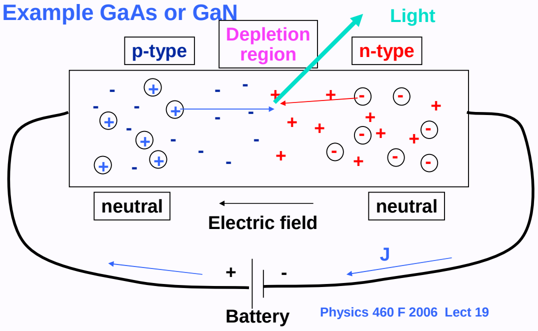


How can a pn junction be used to convert electric current into light?

- A device in which a current leads to emission of light

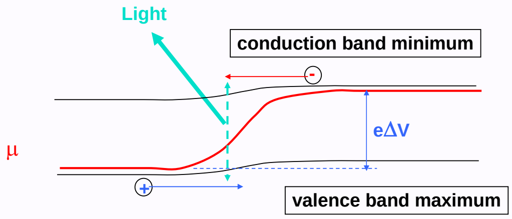
Light Emitting Diode

- Forward biased junction in a system where the combination of the electrons and holes creates light
- Example GaAs or GaN



Forward bias (again)

- Forward biased junction in a system where the combination of the electrons and holes creates light
- Example GaAs or GaN

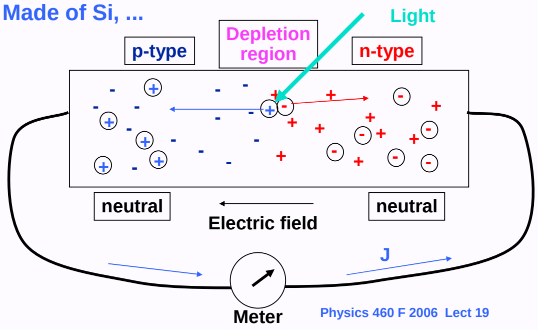


How can a pn junction be used to convert light into electric current?

- A device in which absorption current leads of electric current

Solar Cell

- Light absorbed in depletion region creates electron-hole pairs
- Made of Si, ...



Solar Cell

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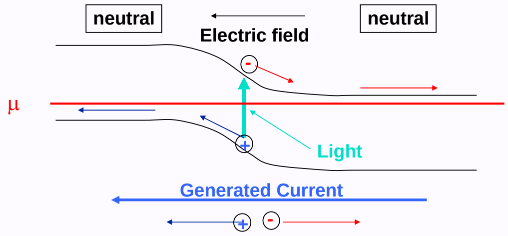

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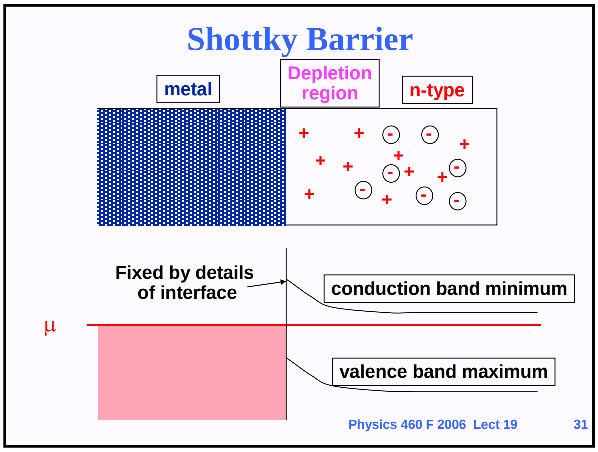
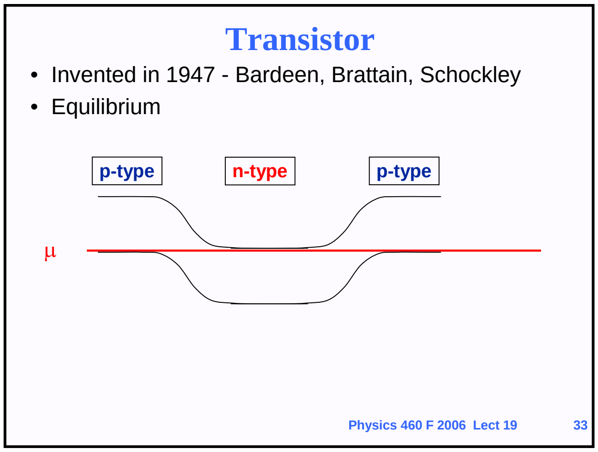


Shottky Barrier

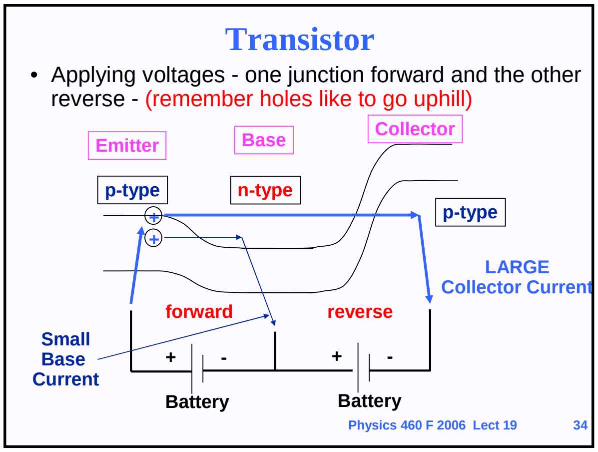
Rectification in Shottky Barrier

- Similar to p-n junction
- Current increases exponentially (until it saturates) for forward bias that tends to make the semiconductor bands bend less (in the case of n-type semiconductor the potential is negative on semiconductor)
- Reverse bias acts like capacitor with increased depletion width



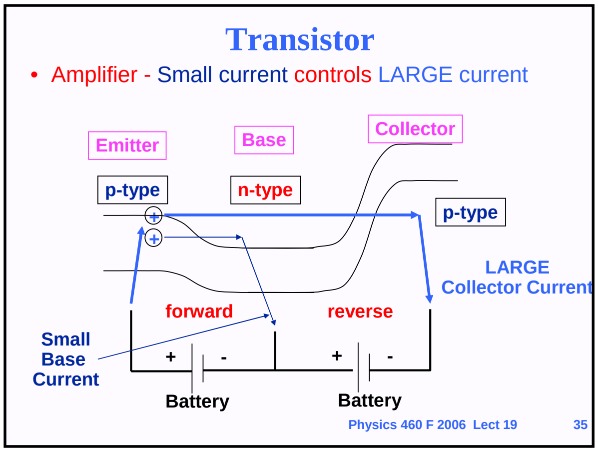
Transistor

- Invented in 1947 - Bardeen, Brattain, Schockley
- Equilibrium



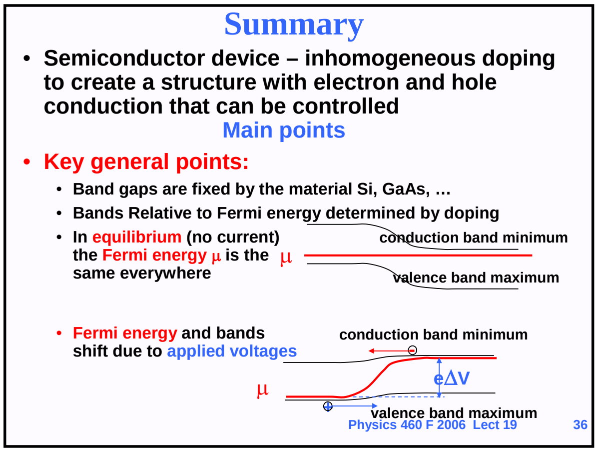
Transistor

- Applying voltages - one junction forward and the other reverse - (remember holes like to go uphill)



Transistor

- Amplifier - Small current controls LARGE current



Summary

- **Semiconductor device – inhomogeneous doping to create a structure with electron and hole conduction that can be controlled**

Main points

- **Key general points:**
  - **Band gaps are fixed by the material Si, GaAs, …**
  - **Bands Relative to Fermi energy determined by doping**
  - **In equilibrium (no current) the Fermi energy μ is the same everywhere**
  - **Fermi energy and bands shift due to applied voltages**

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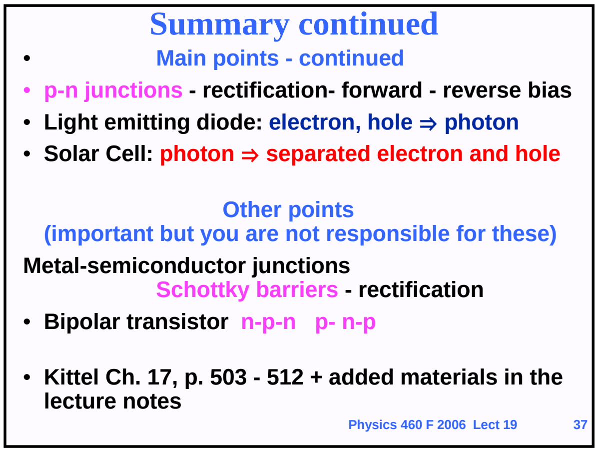


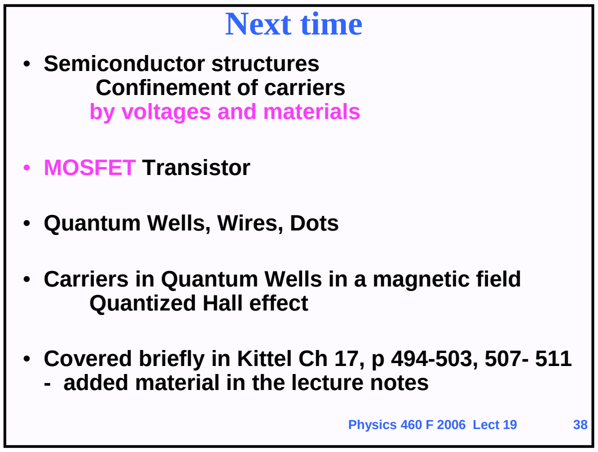
Summary continued

- Main points - continued
- p-n junctions - rectification- forward - reverse bias
- Light emitting diode: electron, hole ⇒ photon
- Solar Cell: photon ⇒ separated electron and hole

Other points
(important but you are not responsible for these)

Metal-semiconductor junctions
Schottky barriers - rectification

- Bipolar transistor n-p-n p- n-p
- Kittel Ch. 17, p. 503 - 512 + added materials in the lecture notes



Next time

- Semiconductor structures
  Confinement of carriers
  by voltages and materials
- MOSFET Transistor
- Quantum Wells, Wires, Dots
- Carriers in Quantum Wells in a magnetic field
  Quantized Hall effect
- Covered briefly in Kittel Ch 17, p 494-503, 507- 511
  - added material in the lecture notes