Course Syllabus: Physical Geology
McCoy College of Science, Mathematics, and Engineering
GEOS 1134 Section X1A
Fall 2026

Contact Information

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Course Description

Welcome to Physical Geology! In this course, you'll discover that geology is more connected to your everyday life than you might expect. You'll learn about the building blocks of our planet—its minerals and rocks—which also make up the resources we depend on to improve our lives and advance our technology. We'll explore how Earth's processes create geologic features like the Grand Canyon, deserts like Death Valley, the Basin and Range, and vast rift zones such as the East African Rift. You'll also see how Earth's inner and outer forces drive earthquakes, volcanoes, and mountain building. Together, we'll uncover the story of our dynamic planet, how it has changed over the vast expanse of geologic time, and how this knowledge can raise our awareness of geologic hazards and environmental concerns, guiding what we can do to mitigate them collectively and individually.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

Physical Geology by Charles (Carlos) Plummer, Diane Carlson, and Lisa Hammersley. 17th Edition. Use Connect (digital access).

Study Hours and Tutoring Assistance

Student Handbook

Refer to: Student Handbook

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of

work not the individual's to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct. Office of Student Conduct

Grading

There will be three lecture exams. The first two will each count for 15% of your final grade, and the third, the "Final Exam," will count for 20% of your course grade. All lecture exams are cumulative and comprehensive. Homework assignments, discussion questions, and lab assignments will account for 40% of your course grade. The remaining 10% will be assigned to a research paper. The use of AI tools in preparing the research paper is not permitted. Submission of an appropriate research paper is required to earn an A in the course. A rubric for the research paper will be provided at the time of the assignment.

Table 1: Points allocated to each assignment.

Graded Items	Contribution to the Final Course Grade
Exam 1 and 2 (each)	15%
Exam 3 (Final Exam)	20%
Homework Assignments	10%
Research Paper	10%
Discussion Questions	5%
Lab Assignments	25%

Table 2: Total points for final grade.

Grade	Points
A	Greater than 90
B	80-90
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	Less than 60

Homework

Homework will be assigned during or after the completion of each topic. All assignments will be posted in D2L with due dates. The questions are comprehensive and may be drawn from any of the materials covered. Late submissions will be accepted with a penalty: 10% for one week past due, 20% for two weeks past due, and after three weeks, a grade of zero may be recorded for the missed homework.

Discussion Questions

Geology is all around us and affects our lives in many ways. Topics covered in lectures, as well as topics in the news, will be raised for discussion. Everyone must contribute to each discussion thread opened in D2L.

Exams

See the "Grading" section for details – **all exams** are provided online in **D2L.** The first two exams must be completed within 50 minutes. The Final Exam can be 110 minutes long. The exam will be open for a minimum of 48 hours. Students who have worked with DSS will be given additional time to complete exams.

Research Paper

Students will be asked to submit topics of interest on which they will write a 2- to 3-page research paper. A go by will be posted in D2L along with a grading rubric.

Mid-Term Exam

See the "Grading" section for details. There will be two mid-term exams. Both are cumulative and comprehensive.

Final Exam

See the "Grading" Section for details. There will be two review sessions before the Final Exam. The Final Exam is 110 minutes long. Students who have worked with DSS will be given additional time to complete exams.

Extra Credit

Extra credit assignments are not accepted in this course. The instructor may make revisions if deemed necessary.

Late Work

The following penalties will apply in all cases of late submissions (unless other arrangements have been made in advance): 10% for one week past due; 20% for two weeks past due; 30% for three weeks past due. Submissions more than three weeks overdue may receive a grade of zero.

Make Up Work/Tests

Students who have missed assignments because of serious and difficult circumstances may reach out to the instructor with evidence, and their request may be accommodated if found convincing.

Important Dates

Change of Schedule & Late Registration: August 24-27, 2026. Refer to:Academic Calendar
Deadline for December graduates to file for graduation: September 21, 2026. Refer to:Academic Calendar
Last Day for "W" for Fall 2026 Long Semester: November 23, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. Refer to:Academic Calendar
Refer to: Drops, Withdrawals & Void

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general

course information. You can log into D2L through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Online Computer Requirements

Taking an online class requires you to have access to a computer (with Internet access) to complete and upload your assignments. It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer in this class. ***Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.*** Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. ***Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!!** There are many places to access your class! Our online classes can be accessed from any computer in the world which is connected to the internet. Contact your instructor immediately upon having computer trouble If you have technical difficulties in the course, there is also a student helpdesk available to you. The college cannot work directly on student computers due to both liability and resource limitations however they are able to help you get connected to our online services. For help, log into D2L**.**

Instructor Class Policies

As we initiate discussions in D2L, please be polite and respectful in your engagement. Do not use AI for your Research Paper project.

Change of Schedule

For Fall 2026, a student dropping a course while remaining enrolled in another course for the same semester is eligible for a 100% refund through September 8, 2026. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. HOWEVER, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability

Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to Disability Support Services.

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies
Refer to: Campus Carry Rules and Policies

Smoking/Tobacco Policy
College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy
To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibits the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Campus Carry
Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes has prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit Campus Carry.

Active Shooter
The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit MSUReady – Active Shooter. Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled "*Run. Hide. Fight.*" which may be electronically accessed via the University police department's webpage: *"Run. Hide. Fight."*

Grade Appeal Process

Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the MSU Catalog

*__Notice:__ Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Schedule:

We will be covering 23 topics of Physical Geology in 15 weeks. These topics are interrelated in many ways. The assignments, the lab activities, and the discussions we will have in D2L will help us relate the various topics and appreciate Earth's system.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic
Week - 1	Monday, August 24, 2026	Introducing Geology, the Essentials of Plate Tectonics and Other Important Concepts
Week - 1	Wednesday, August 26, 2026	Atoms, Elements, and Minerals I
Week - 1	Friday, August 28, 2026	Atoms, Elements, and Minerals II
Week - 2	Monday, August 31, 2026	Igneous Rocks, the Origin and Evolution of Magma, and Intrusive Activity I
Week - 2	Wednesday, September 2, 2026	Igneous Rocks, the Origin and Evolution of Magma, and Intrusive Activity II
Week - 2	Friday, September 4, 2026	Volcanism and Extrusive Rocks I
Week - 3	Monday, September 7, 2026	Labor Day Holiday - No Class
Week - 3	Wednesday, September 9, 2026	Volcanism and Extrusive Rocks II
Week - 3	Friday, September 11, 2026	Weathering and Soil I
Week - 4	Monday, September 14, 2026	Weathering and Soil II
Week - 4	Wednesday, September 16, 2026	Sediment and Sedimentary Rocks I
Week - 4	Friday, September 18, 2026	Sediment and Sedimentary Rocks II
Week - 5	Monday, September 21, 2026	Metamorphism and Metamorphic Rocks
Week - 5	Wednesday, September 23, 2026	Time and Geology I
Week - 5	Friday, September 25, 2026	Time and Geology II
Week - 6	Monday, September 28, 2026	Mass Wasting
Week - 6	Wednesday, September 30, 2026	Exam - 1
Week - 6	Friday, October 2, 2026	Streams and Floods I
Week - 7	Monday, October 5, 2026	Streams and Floods II
Week - 7	Wednesday, October 7, 2026	Groundwater I
Week - 7	Friday, October 9, 2026	Groundwater II
Week - 8	Monday, October 12, 2026	Glaciers and Glaciation
Week - 8	Wednesday, October 14, 2026	Deserts and Wind Action
Week - 8	Friday, October 16, 2026	Waves, Beaches, and Coasts
Week - 9	Monday, October 19, 2026	Geologic Structures I
Week - 9	Wednesday, October 21, 2026	Geologic Structures II
Week - 9	Friday, October 23, 2026	Earthquakes
Week - 10	Monday, October 26, 2026	Earth's Interior and Geophysical Properties
Week - 10	Wednesday, October 28, 2026	Earth's Interior and Geophysical Properties
Week - 10	Friday, October 30, 2026	Exam - 2
Week - 11	Monday, November 2, 2026	The Sea Floor
Week - 11	Wednesday, November 4, 2026	Plate Tectonics - The Unifying Theory I
Week - 11	Friday, November 6, 2026	Plate Tectonics - The Unifying Theory II
Week - 12	Monday, November 9, 2026	Plate Tectonics - The Unifying Theory III
Week - 12	Wednesday, November 11, 2026	Mountain Belts and the Continental Crust I
Week - 12	Friday, November 13, 2026	Mountain Belts and the Continental Crust II

Week	Date	Topic
Week - 13	Monday, November 16, 2026	Global Climate Change
Week - 13	Wednesday, November 18, 2026	Resources I
Week - 13	Friday, November 20, 2026	Resources II
Week - 14	Monday, November 23, 2026	The Earth's Companions I
Week - 14	Wednesday, November 25, 2026	Thanksgiving Holiday - No Class
Week - 14	Friday, November 27, 2026	Thanksgiving Holiday - No Class
Week - 15	Monday, November 30, 2026	The Earth's Companions II
Week - 15	Wednesday, December 2, 2026	Exam Review I
Week - 15	Friday, December 4, 2026	Exam Review II
Week - 16	TBA	Exam - 3

Note: Labor Day is September 7, 2026. Thanksgiving break begins Wednesday, November 25, 2026, and continues through Friday, November 27, 2026.