Course Syllabus: Physical Geology
McCoy College of Science, Mathematics, and Engineering
GEOS 1134 Section 101
Fall 2025

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).

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Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of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

Quizzes

See the "Grading" section for details – quizzes will be given randomly. Students are encouraged to attend all sessions so they do not miss any of the quizzes.

Exams

See the "Grading" section for details – **all exams** are provided in-person, unless otherwise specified. The first two exams must be completed within 50 minutes. The Final Exam can be 110 minutes long. 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 2-3 pages long 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 maybe accommodated if found convincing.

Important Dates

Last day for term schedule changes: August 26th, 2025 Check date on Academic Calendar.
Deadline to file for graduation: September 22nd, 2025. Check date on Academic Calendar.
Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:" November 24th, 2025. 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.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Quizzes will be given randomly. Students are encouraged to attend all sessions.

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

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. 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) exists 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
Update as needed. Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University 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 25, 2025	Introducing Geology, the Essentials of Plate Tectonics and Other Important Concepts
Week - 1	Wednesday, August 27, 2025	Atoms, Elements, and Minerals I
Week - 1	Friday, August 29, 2025	Atoms, Elements, and Minerals II
Week - 2	Wednesday, September 3, 2025	Igneous Rocks, the Origin and Evolution of Magma, and Intrusive Activity I
Week - 2	Friday, September 5, 2025	Igneous Rocks, the Origin and Evolution of Magma, and Intrusive Activity II
Week - 3	Monday, September 8, 2025	Volcanism and Extrusive Rocks I
Week - 3	Wednesday, September 10, 2025	Volcanism and Extrusive Rocks II
Week - 3	Friday, September 12, 2025	Weathering and Soil I
Week - 4	Monday, September 15, 2025	Weathering and Soil II
Week - 4	Wednesday, September 17, 2025	Sediment and Sedimentary Rocks I
Week - 4	Friday, September 19, 2025	Sediment and Sedimentary Rocks II
Week - 5	Monday, September 22, 2025	Metamorphism and Metamorphic Rocks
Week - 5	Wednesday, September 24, 2025	Time and Geology I
Week - 5	Friday, September 26, 2025	Time and Geology II
Week - 6	Monday, September 29, 2025	Mass Wasting
Week - 6	Wednesday, October 1, 2025	Exam - 1
Week - 6	Friday, October 3, 2025	Streams and Floods I
Week - 7	Monday, October 6, 2025	Streams and Floods II
Week - 7	Wednesday, October 8, 2025	Groundwater I
Week - 7	Friday, October 10, 2025	Groundwater II
Week - 8	Monday, October 13, 2025	Glaciers and Glaciation
Week - 8	Wednesday, October 15, 2025	Deserts and Wind Action
Week - 8	Friday, October 17, 2025	Waves, Beaches, and Coasts
Week - 9	Monday, October 20, 2025	Geologic Structures I
Week - 9	Wednesday, October 22, 2025	Geologic Structures II
Week - 9	Friday, October 24, 2025	Earthquakes
Week - 10	Monday, October 27, 2025	Earth’s Interior and Geophysical Properties
Week - 10	Wednesday, October 29, 2025	Earth’s Interior and Geophysical Properties
Week - 10	Friday, October 31, 2025	Exam - 2
Week - 11	Monday, November 3, 2025	The Sea Floor
Week - 11	Wednesday, November 5, 2025	Plate Tectonics—The Unifying Theory I
Week - 11	Friday, November 7, 2025	Plate Tectonics—The Unifying Theory II

Week	Date	Topic
Week - 12	Monday, November 10, 2025	Plate Tectonics—The Unifying Theory III
Week - 12	Wednesday, November 12, 2025	Mountain Belts and the Continental Crust I
Week - 12	Friday, November 14, 2025	Mountain Belts and the Continental Crust II
Week - 13	Monday, November 17, 2025	Global Climate Change
Week - 13	Wednesday, November 19, 2025	Resources I
Week - 13	Friday, November 21, 2025	Resources II
Week - 14	Monday, November 24, 2025	The Earth’s Companions I
Week - 15	Monday, December 1, 2025	The Earth’s Companions II
Week - 15	Wednesday, December 3, 2025	Exam Review I
Week - 15	Friday, December 5, 2025	Exam Review II
Week - 16	TBA	Exam - 3