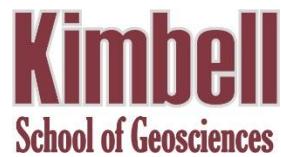


# Geosciences Seminar (GEOS 4001)

McCoy College of Science, Mathematics, and Engineering  
Spring 2026



## General Course Information

- Lecture Meetings: Friday | 1:00 pm – 1:50 pm | Bolin Hall 125
- Course D2L Site: We will only use the main course site for the lecture section, there will be no content in the laboratory section sites.
  - [Link to the Seminar D2L Site](#)

## Instructor Information

- Professor
  - Dr. Steven J. Rosscoe | [steven.rosscoe@msutexas.edu](mailto:steven.rosscoe@msutexas.edu) | 940.397.4448  
Office Hours: MTWRF 10:00 am – 11:00 am | Bolin Hall 101 A  
Virtual Office Hours: By Appointment | [Zoom Office Hours Link](#)

## Course Description

Seminar is the capstone course of your geosciences education here at Midwestern State University. As you prepare to move on, we would like to take this opportunity to prepare you for the next steps in your career as a geoscientist. Whether you are entering into a career or furthering your education, there are skills and concepts that we can strengthen now to give you a step up on your competition.

## Course Learning Objectives

The successful completion of this course will be evaluated around the following course learning objectives. Each of these course learning objectives include aspects of both content knowledge and skills development. Students will:

1. Prepare for career and educational success in learning how best to represent yourself in resumes, applications, interviews, and other critical steps in advancement.
2. Develop your abilities to think critically about issues of science and geoscience.
3. Enhance your skills in both verbal and written communications.
4. Be effective evaluators, communicators, and contributors to the field of geoscience.

## Instructional Materials

There is no required textbook for this course. You will be expected to be able to effectively use the internet to find and scientifically accurate information regarding a variety of topics throughout the semester and will need access to standard software.

## Required Software Applications

- Microsoft Office: Word, PowerPoint [Free Access to Microsoft Office 365](#)
- PDF Reader

## Grading Information

The formal grade for this course is determined by your performance on presentations, assignments, and participation. Your grade is calculated by dividing the points you earned during the semester by completing assignments by the total number of points possible in the semester. The letter grade for the course follows the traditional university style.

### **Table 1: Allocation of Points by Assignment Type**

The table below shows the total number of points for each major category of assignment that are possible this semester. For more details about the assignments see the section for that assignment in this portion of the syllabus.

Assignments (Quantity)	Points
Presentations (2 @ 50)	100
Assignments (5 @ 20)	100
Participation	020
Total Points	220

### **Table 2: Points, Percentage, and Letter Grade Values**

The table on the following page shows the point-value and percentage-value required to reach a particular letter grade in the course. The table reflects the optimal running of the course where there are no missed days or activities. The instructor reserves the right to change the point distributions to reflect such changes. The percentage requirements will remain unchanged throughout the semester. Percentage grades are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

Grade	Points	Percentage
A	198 and up	90% and up
B	176 to 197	80% to 89%
C	154 to 175	70% to 79%
D	132 to 153	60% to 69%
F	Less than 132	59% or less

## **Presentations**

During the semester you will present two scientific papers to your peers and, of course, to me. These must be peer-reviewed published papers in respected scientific or technical journals. You will prepare an 11-to-13-minute PowerPoint presentation that you will deliver to the class on the scheduled dates that shares the paper's contents and your analysis of the work. We will dedicate one session, early on, to discussing the elements of a good scientific presentation. When we discuss presentations, you will be provided with the assessment rubric that I will use to evaluate your presentations. Your first presentation will be on any topic in Earth Science that you are passionate about. Your second presentation will be on any topic in Earth Science that you have no passion or interest in, something that you would normally avoid even thinking about. You have to present both with enthusiasm and to the best of your ability!

- Presentation 1: Passion Topic
  - Topic Choice Due: February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2026, 2 pm
  - Presentation Upload Due: February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2026, 10 am
  - Presentation Date/Time: February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2026, 1 pm
- Presentation 2: Unpassion Topic
  - Topic Choice Due: April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2026, 2 pm
  - Presentation Upload Due: April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026, 10 am
  - Presentation Date/Time: April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026, 1 pm

### **Assignments**

There are several assignments you will complete throughout the semester to grow important skills necessary to scientists, geoscientists, and to surviving post college. You will learn to be able to summarize and scientifically critique the work of others, and you will develop a plan for your next five years and the resume to get you there.

- Presentation Summaries (1 and 2) – On the two presentation days in the course you will be responsible for writing a summary of each of your peers' presentations. The only presentation you are exempt from writing about is your own.
- Resume and Five-Year Plan – You will submit a formal resume as a word document that you would use to get hired by a potential employer or accepted by a graduate program. In addition, you will submit a flow chart with a five-year plan for the next five years of your life. You will need to show where you are, where you want to be, all the steps to get there, and as many alternate pathways as you can develop. In a tough economy, you need to approach your future from multiple directions!
- Scientific Paper Dissection – After discussing the features of a good scientific paper, you will use the paper you presented for your first presentation to dissect and evaluate how effective the author(s) was at preparing a good scientific paper.
- Celebration of Scholarship Evaluations – On April 15<sup>th</sup>, and April 16<sup>th</sup>, the university will hold its Celebration of Scholarship. You must attend at least three of the presentations by geoscience students. You will fill out a provided form that will ask you to summarize their project, evaluate their science, and evaluate their overall presentation. You may attend all posters, all presentations, or a mix of both formats.

### **Participation**

Participation in the seminar will be assessed using the following criteria. Students will need to attend each seminar session. Students must ask one question of each of their peers on presentation days. Students must actively participate in open discussions for each seminar session. Be present, be engaged, and push the class in a positive direction and you'll do fine.

### **Late Work Policy**

This is a once-per-week course with a very tight schedule; we need to keep on schedule. **\*No late work will be accepted.**

### **Make-Up Work/Tests**

For legal, paper-documented excuses make-ups for labs and examinations can be completed. Make-up work should be arranged for in advance wherever possible. The instructor will give you a new deadline that is reasonable for the course timeline. **\*No make-up work will be allowed beyond 10 days past the original deadline.**

### **Instructor Classroom Policies**

The following policies are the policies that are integral for our successful completion of the course and should be read thoroughly. If you have any questions, please see the instructor.

#### **Academic Honesty Policy**

Academic dishonesty is considered cheating, collusion, and plagiarism. Any unauthorized assistance during the completion of assignments, using on aids beyond those authorized for an assignment, or the use of other people or services to complete assignments is considered cheating. Working with others in a way that is not authorized by the instructor to complete assignments is considered to be collusion. Plagiarism is the use of another person's materials (by paraphrase or direct quotation) without giving them full and clear acknowledgement. The use of material prepared by another person or agency selling term papers and academic materials is also considered plagiarism.

The use of any artificial intelligence (AI) in completing course assignments is NOT allowed. AI in this sense is any technology that summarizes, writes, or answers questions on its own. Recent court rulings have allowed lawsuits to go forward against Chat GPT and other AI operators because it directly plagiarizes the use of others. College is about you learning to write, you developing your voice, and you learning how to process, summarize, and properly cite information. Any use of AI is considered a violation of this academic honesty policy.

If a student is caught cheating, colluding, or plagiarizing on any assignment the assignment grade will automatically be a zero. Two or more violations will result in failure of the course.

#### **Classroom Civility Policy**

Learning, especially in science, can be a very challenging process. Learning often requires putting yourself out there and being vulnerable. Science also happens to be at the forefront of information which may conflict with personal beliefs. Your beliefs are yours and nothing will change that, though those beliefs may not get you credit on the exam. We are focused on science and what understandings have been developed in the field. Additionally, no scientist thinks the same way as every other scientist. To develop the best understandings of our universe, we must seek input from all people in the field.

In my classroom, we strive to create an environment where everyone is respected and valued for who they are. We are all here together, learning together, and working toward the same goal. This is not a place for hate of any kind. The use of derogatory language, hate speech, or violence is absolutely unacceptable in this classroom and in any setting related to the course. Learn to work with and value all people. Be civil and treat each other with respect. Do your best to listen

to each other, in any conversation. Use of derogatory language, hate speech, or violence will result in removal to the classroom or the course.

Dr. Rosscoe is available to help if you have any concerns or questions about building a positive classroom environment. The campus also has numerous resources related to a safe and welcoming experience at MSU. Also, don't forget the MSU Safety App.

- [Title IX Misconduct](#): Dating violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, and other forms of sexual misconduct.
- [Bias Incident Reporting](#): Bias and hate incidents related to race, gender, or sexual identity.
- [Disability Grievance Procedures](#): Discrimination on the basis of disability.

### **COVID-19 and Illnesses Policy**

Since COVID-19, classroom health has been a necessary and probably long overdue focus. While there are no longer COVID-19 policies in place by the university the following procedures are scientific best practices. These same principles can be applied to any viral infection (flu, cold, etc.).

- If you become ill and have symptoms, get tested.
- If you are positive for COVID-19, stay home. It's good for your recovery and good for protecting your peers.
- Illness happens and if you absolutely must be in public, wear a mask. Even a cloth mask reduces the chance you will spread the illness to others.
- If you stay home or miss assignments, be sure to get a doctor's note and excuse. It allows the instructor to help you make things up.

In the case of long-term illnesses or medical situations that will prevent you from attending classes regularly, contact the professor as soon as possible. We will work together to make sure that you can succeed, just make sure it is Doctor-documented. I can't do much to help, if I don't know until the day before the semester ends.

### **Electronic Devices Policy**

Use of electronic devices for taking notes is allowed in my classroom. Recording (audio or video) is not allowed unless approved by the instructor for educational purposes. The use of social media or streaming anything is not an appropriate use of technology during class. If your use of technology is non-educational or is being disruptive to your peers, you will be asked to leave. If you're in the back of the room, ear buds in, and smiling as you watch something on your device, I do notice. Don't be that person.

### **Course Grades and Grade Bumps Policy**

In my courses, a grade is earned by accumulating points throughout the semester. The grade you earn in the course is determined by the number of points you earn through the timely completion of assignments. As such, at the end of the semester, there are no grade bumps given out. Do not ask how or if you can be bumped up to the next letter grade, if you haven't earned the points, you will not be able to get that grade.

If you believe there to be an error in the calculation of your grade, whether it is on a specific assignment or the whole course feel free to ask me to re-evaluate and double check. I will do so happily. For specific assignments, be prepared to give me specific reasons you feel the grade is wrong (which wrong answer do you think was right, etc.).

### **Desire-to-Learn (D2L)**

Extensive use of the MSU D2L learning management system is required in 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.

### **Computer Requirements**

Taking this course involves the completion of all lecture exams, reading quizzes, and discussions in the course learning management system (D2L). This 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 a 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.

### **Inclement Weather Policy**

In cases of extreme weather events that delay or close campus and where those delays or closures impact the course:

- If the closure or delay includes lecture meeting time, the lecture will not meet and the lecture schedule for the semester will be modified.
- If the closure or delay includes a laboratory meeting time, the laboratory will not meet and all remaining laboratory meetings for the week will be cancelled to keep the lab sections on the same schedule. Lab due dates and lab quiz dates will be adjusted.
- If due dates are impacted by the delay or closure, they will be rescheduled.
- All changes to the course schedule will be posted, in writing, in D2L.

NOTE: Because all students do not have equal or reliable access to technology and internet, especially in times of inclement weather, we WILL NOT shift to online in cases of inclement weather.

## **University Policies and Information**

The following information and policies apply to this course. Please read each of these policies and ask your instructor if you have any questions.

### **Important Dates**

- Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday, No Classes: January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2026
- First Day of Classes: January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2026
- Change of Schedule and Late Registration: January 21-24<sup>th</sup>, 2026
- Last Day to File for May Graduation: February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026
- Spring Break Holiday, No Classes: March 9<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>, 2026
- Holiday Break, No Classes: April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2026
- Last Day for "W" (Drops after this date receive "F"): April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026
- Last Day of Classes: May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2026
- Final Examinations: May 9<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026
- Commencement: May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026 (Graduate), May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2026 (Undergraduate)

### **Attendance**

Students are expected to attend all meetings of the classes in which they are enrolled. Although in general students are graded on intellectual effort and performance rather than attendance, absences may lower the student's grade where class attendance and class participation are deemed essential by the faculty member. In those classes where attendance is considered as part of the grade, the instructor should so inform students of the specifics in writing at the beginning of the semester in a syllabus or separate attendance policy statement. An instructor who has an attendance policy must keep records on a daily basis. The instructor must give the student a verbal or written warning prior to being dropped from the class. Instructor's records will stand as evidence of absences. A student with excessive absences may be dropped from a course by the instructor. Any individual faculty member or college has the authority to establish an attendance policy, providing the policy is in accordance with the General University Policies.

### **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 a 100% 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) 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](#).

### **Campus Carry Rules/Policies**

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 as 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 Rules and Policies](#).

### **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 [Safety / Emergency Procedures](#).

### **Smoking and Tobacco Policy**

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by MSU. 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.

### **Grade Appeal Process**

Following the appropriate procedure for grade appeals requires you to speak to your instructor first, so talk to your instructor. Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [Undergraduate Catalog](#).

## Seminar Topic Schedule

The following is the schedule for the lecture topics we will study during the semester. **\*Note: Changes in the course syllabus, procedures, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.**

Week	Date	Seminar Topic	Assignment(s) Due
1	Jan 23	Introduction <i>Instructor</i>	None
2	Jan 30	What's Your Plan? <i>Class</i>	None
3	Feb 06	Building a Resume <i>Instructor</i>	None
4	Feb 13	Presentation Dos and Don't <i>Instructor</i>	Resume and 5-Year Plan Due by 2 pm
5	Feb 20	Why Presentations Matter <i>Class</i>	Presentation Topic Approved by 2 pm
6	Feb 27	Presentations Day 1 <i>Students</i>	Presentation Uploaded in D2L by 10 am Presentations in Class
7	Mar 06	Feedback Day <i>Instructor</i>	Presentation Summaries 1 Due by 2 pm
SB	Mar 13	<b>No Class</b> <i>Spring Break Holiday</i>	<b>No Class</b> <i>Spring Break Holiday</i>
8	Mar 20	Structure of a Good Scientific Paper <i>Instructor</i>	None
9	Mar 27	The Scientific Style of Writing <i>Instructor</i>	Scientific Paper Dissection Due by 2 pm
10	Apr 03	<b>No Class</b> <i>Holiday Break</i>	<b>No Class</b> <i>Holiday Break</i>
11	Apr 10	The Ethics of Geoscience <i>Class</i>	Presentation Topic Approved by 2 pm
12	Apr 17	Presentations Day 2 <i>Students</i>	Presentation Uploaded in D2L by 10 am Presentations in Class
13	Apr 24	Feedback Day <i>Instructor</i>	Presentation Summaries 2 Due by 2 pm
14	May 01	The Elevator Pitch <i>Class</i>	C.O.S. Presentation Evals Due by 2 pm
15	May 08	Geo Taskmaster <i>Live Trivia Competition – Incredible Prize</i>	None

### Additional Information

- April 15<sup>th</sup> and April 16<sup>th</sup> graduate and undergraduate students from the geosciences will be presenting their research at the Celebration of Scholarship.