

Course Syllabus: Exploring Earth

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Please check the online course for the most up-to-date version of course materials and assignments.

If the online materials differ from this print study guide, the online materials take precedence.

Course Information

Course Description

From majestic mountains and volcanoes, to expansive oceans and scenic plateaus and canyons, the landforms of earth are diverse and awe-inspiring. In this course, you will explore the character, distribution, and evolution of landforms as they reflect millions of years of complex change involving both earth's surface and internal processes. Upon completion of this course you will have an essential understanding of earth's landforms, their geologic history and the physical and chemical processes that sculpt them. You will be able to explain connections between earth's physical features, natural resource distribution, and the quality of human life. As an outcome of this course, you will have an expanded appreciation for the aesthetic splendor of earth's landforms.

Learning in this course will be accomplished through text readings, bountiful online learning resources, and an online discussion board. (See page 3 of this guide for instructions on the location and use of the Discussion Board.) Assessed written work will include a research paper that follows a scientific paper format, virtual lab and fieldtrip reports, and a self-directed fieldtrip report interpreting an actual landform, using scientific methods. Principal topics covered will include: plate tectonics, erosion and weathering, sedimentation, rock types, earthquakes, mountains, volcanoes, plateaus, coasts, the plains, deserts, glaciations, and the economics of earth's physical features. Particular emphasis will be placed on understanding the evolution of earth's geologic features using specific landform examples from North America and elsewhere.

Course Learning Goals

General Outcomes: Upon successful completion of this course, you are expected to be able to:

- Apply the principles of scientific analysis to investigate natural phenomena.
- Articulate a working knowledge of the major physical features of the earth, including a discussion of their origin.
- Explain development and change in earth's physical features, as expressed in the geological record.
- Articulate an understanding of the interconnections between earth's physical features and natural resource distribution.

- Describe how the physical features of the earth pattern and influence human and other biological activities and contribute to the “quality of life” on different parts of the earth.

Course Resources

To buy your books, go to <http://www.mbsdirect.net>.

Hint: type “DePaul” for name of the school.

Required Textbook

Wyckoff, J. 1999. Reading the earth: Landforms in the making. Adastra West, Inc. Publishers, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 352p. ISBN #0-9674075-0-8

This book covers the earth’s landforms in a comprehensive, straightforward, and visually rich way. In addition to its fine illustrations, it has a discerning treatment of the geological processes that create landforms. Online resources will supplement the text.

Homepage for the National Park Service Geology Tours

<http://www2.nature.nps.gov/grd/tour/>

Grand Canyon Pages:

<http://www.nps.gov/grca/index.htm>

http://www.kaibab.org/geology/gc_geol.htm

Course Competencies

Corresponding to your registration choices, you will develop one or two of the following competencies:

Competence	Competence Statement
S-1-A	Can explore natural phenomena or the world of everyday experiences using scientific methods, and can use theories to interpret observations.
S-2-B	Can describe, differentiate, and explain form, function, and variation within physical systems.
S-2-C	Can describe, categorize and explain development or change within physical or biological systems.
S-4	Can describe and explain connections among diverse aspects of nature.

Relationship of Exploring Earth’s Physical Features to the competencies offered

The investigation of earth’s landforms encompasses many areas of science including physical geology, geomorphology and geography. Landforms vary greatly in

scale from a small pond to an ocean, from a hill left by a glacier to a mountain range occupying several continents. Likewise, landforms may arise in a moment as a feature left by a flood or may take millions of years to form, as would a mountain range or a canyon. This course will look at the various scales and evolution of landforms. The connection of this learning at the course level to the competencies offered in this course is summarized below.

S-1-A: Earth's landforms are natural phenomena of a rich variety. This course will promote direct examination and interpretation of a landform(s) using scientific theories and methods.

S-2-B: In order to understand the enormous variety and complex origins of earth's physical features, geologists observe, describe, and then differentiate landforms into groups. This course will examine how scientists distinguish landforms by their features and discern the physical processes generating the landforms.

S-2-C: Core to understanding the evolution of certain of earth's landforms requires an understanding of how energy, climate, and time act together to alter and sculpt the surface of the earth. This course will review the characteristics of geological record to describe, categorize and explain development and change in earth's physical features.

S-4: The stability of life on planet earth and the specific quality of life afforded to the human species depends on the distribution and kinds of landforms, as they impact climate, food supply, and natural resources. This course will examine the important interconnections between earth's physical features, natural resource distribution, and the quality of human life.

Competence-Specific Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the selected competence, you will be able to:

S-1-A: Evaluate the major landforms of earth applying the current scientific theories and principles that describe them.

S-2-B: Describe and differentiate the character of a major group of landforms of their choice (e.g., mountain ranges, cave systems, plateaus, rivers, etc.). When this has been accomplished, you will then assess the forms, function, and variation within this group of landforms.

S-2-C: Describe, categorize, and explain development and change in earth's physical features through geologic time as a function of rock type, energy, climate, and time.

S-4: Explain and illustrate the interconnection of landform distribution and origins to a specific natural resource (water, metal ores, gold, silver, coal, oil, diamonds, soils, etc.). When this has been accomplished, you will then describe and analyze the corresponding quality of life afforded by the landform and natural resource.

Learning Experience

Students will be introduced to major principles and issues regarding landforms through readings, links to internet resources, structured discussions, virtual labs and fieldtrips, a self-guided fieldtrip to a significant landform, and an original research paper(s) on a major physical feature of the Earth.

Course Structure

The course is subdivided into five (5) primary modules that are themselves divided into topical units (see Table below). For each of the five (5) modules, you will be introduced to new concepts and examples through readings and Internet links. You will be responsible for regular participation in class discussions (see expectations below) originating from the readings and course materials. Discussion topics will be indicated in the module assignment sections. Most module units have a laboratory exercise that applies the principles describing the earth's physical features learned that week.

You will also select a significant landform of your choice and conduct a self-directed fieldtrip. You will also research a landform group of your choice and write a paper(s). The research paper(s) will be consistent with the competencies you are fulfilling. If you are taking two competencies you can address both of them by developing two distinct research papers or a longer integrated paper that addresses both competencies.

The suggested time to complete each of the five (5) modules of the course is two weeks with each unit taking one week. The assignment submission deadlines are based on that weekly pace.

To view the course schedule, click on the [Schedule](#) link on the left-hand navigation bar. This page contains the most recently updated listing of the topics and assignments due for each week of the course.

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Assessment

Assessment of Learning

Assessment of your learning will be based on participation in the discussion forums, lab and fieldtrip reports, and a concise research paper(s) on a current issue regarding a physical feature of earth. The research paper(s) will follow a scientific journal format.

Exploring Earth's Physical Features is a graded course and is not offered for a Pass/Fail option. Your final grade in this course will be based on your progress towards completing the activities and deliverables listed and weighted below. The learning outcomes for the course indicated above will be used as a baseline to assess how well you have achieved the competencies you are fulfilling.

Evaluation Weighting:

Category	Percentage of Grade	# Of Deliverables
Participation in discussions	15%	N/A
Virtual Laboratory Reports	20%	4
Virtual Field Trip Reports	10%	4
Self-directed Field Trip Report	10%	1
Original research paper(s)	45%	* 1 or 2

*Students taking two competencies will undertake two research papers or a longer research paper addressing and integrating both competencies.

Resubmission of work

The *Exploring Earth's Physical Features* course has been designed with the philosophy that iterative learning (just like the process of science itself) is a very useful way to gain a greater depth and range of knowledge. Therefore, if a thoughtful and thorough first attempt has been submitted for a class deliverable (e.g., fieldtrip and lab reports), but does not meet the instructor's expectation of quality and/or content, you may resubmit your work following the guidance provided within the first review.

For research papers specifically, the instructor will provide revision guidance on drafts through week 8 of the course. However, if you do not take advantage of an early review of your research paper, you will not be allowed to resubmit paper revisions and the first submission will be the version assessed for a grade. Therefore, you are strongly encouraged to engage the instructor regularly with progress reports and questions regarding your research papers.

How your work will be assessed by the Instructor

For virtual fieldtrips you are asked to briefly describe what you observed and/or read about during your fieldtrip. You are also asked to briefly discuss, as a self-assessment section, how this fieldtrip helped you to gain a better understanding of the module/unit topic. A thorough response will usually require the maximum lines allowed. Use specific examples from the materials in your report to demonstrate your learning. Your instructor will assess the quality and completeness of your answers as expressed in your fieldtrip report. If the submission was thoughtfully prepared, but does not meet the instructor's expectations of quality of writing, depth of analysis and/or articulation of content, it will be returned for revision and resubmission.

For laboratories you are asked to briefly summarize the common elements of scientific inquiry including your observations, your methodology to address the objectives, and your conclusions. A thorough response will usually require the maximum lines allowed. Use specific examples from the materials in your lab report to demonstrate your learning. Your instructor will assess the quality and completeness of your answers as expressed in your fieldtrip report. If the submission was thoughtfully prepared, but does not meet the instructor's expectations of quality of writing, depth of analysis, and/or articulation of content, it will be returned for revision and resubmission. The Lab Report Form is the primary deliverable assessed with the lab activity, although the original worksheets will be reviewed for completeness and will be considered in the full assessment.

The research paper will be evaluated in the last weeks of this course. Paper grading will be based on the quality of content, connection to your targeted competence, grammatical considerations, adherence to the required format, and comparison of these features in your paper to those of your classmates.

In addition to laboratory report conclusions summing up your learning, you will complete a composite midterm self-assessment for modules 1-3 provided in Module 3 and a short composite self-assessment exercise for modules 4-5 provided in Module 5. You should be able to correctly apply the various units' information to the correct situation, individual, or component given. The self-assessment reviews should be retaken until you are confident in your understanding of the information.

Your instructor will also assess your contributions to the discussion forums based upon

the expectations for discussion forums described for the course.

Online Discussions

There will be several discussion forums set up for your use in *Exploring Earth™s Physical Features*. A discussion forum's purpose and use is described in the table below. The key here is to use the most effective forum location for matters that are not directly related to the topical discussion forums set up by the instructor.

Discussion Forums

Forum Title	Appropriate Activities
Introductions	A place to tell us a little about yourself and your connection to the course subject matter.
Course Information	A place for general postings and updates to course materials by the instructor (beyond weekly letters).
Course Question and Answers	A place for student's to ask process questions about the course activities.
EEPF's social club	A place for students to freely develop conversations of their own including developing ad hoc teams or groups.

Online Participation Guidelines

All the discussion that would ordinarily take place in a classroom takes place in the Discussion Boards in your online course. Just as you are expected to attend a course scheduled to take place in a classroom, so you must attend to your online course, **at least four times a week**. This is done by going to the Discussion Board area to read what is written there and to contribute to the ongoing discussion.

When you login to your course, click on "Discussion Board." You will use your same course username and password to login to the Discussion Boards as you do to login to your course.

If you are taking an SNL Online course for the first time, you must update your profile on the Discussion Board. You do this by clicking on the "MORE" option on the discussion board. Please complete all the requested information. If you do not do so, you will appear as a **deleted user** when you post a message.

Please do not change your username and password in the "Discussion Board" section of the course or you will be locked out of the Discussion Boards.

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Policies

Academic Integrity

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their

forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html> for further details.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a major form of academic dishonesty involving the presentation of the work of another as one's own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following:

- The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else's.
- Copying of any source in whole or part with only minor changes in wording or syntax, even with acknowledgement.
- Submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment that has been prepared by someone else. This includes research papers purchased from any other person or agency.
- The paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgement.

Plagiarism, like other forms of academic dishonesty, is always a serious matter. If a instructor finds that a student has plagiarized, the appropriate penalty is at the instructor's discretion.

Disability Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with disabilities on an individualized and flexible basis. The Office of Students with Disabilities (OSD) determines appropriate accommodations through consultation with the student. For certain learning disabilities and/or attention deficit disorders, the Productive Learning Strategies Program (PLuS) determines the appropriate accommodations. See the instructor for more information or call OSD at 773-325-7290 (phone) or 773-325-7296 (TTY); or call PLuS at 773-325-1677.

Incomplete Grades

The intent of the Incomplete grade is to allow students extra time to complete their final assignments. This need arises because, in the closing weeks of the course, they have an event of significant magnitude that adversely affects their ability to complete the course, e.g. serious illness, death in the family, overseas deployment, or natural disaster.

You must request an incomplete grade in writing two weeks before the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades will be considered only after you have satisfactorily completed at least 75 percent of the coursework, and you have such an unexpected, uncontrollable event that prevents you from completing your course. Do not assume that you will qualify for an incomplete. Students who are failing the course at the point where they request an incomplete will not receive one, nor will they be granted after the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades are given at the discretion of the instructor.

If you do receive permission from the instructor to take an incomplete in the course, you

will be required to complete a contract with the instructor, specifying how you will finish the missing work within the next two quarters (excluding summer). Incompletes not finished by the end of the second quarter (excluding summer) will automatically become an F grade on your transcript.

Instructors may not change incomplete grades after the end of the grace period without the permission of a college-based Exceptions Committee.

NOTE: In the case of a student who has applied for graduation and who has been approved for an Incomplete in his or her final term, the incomplete must be resolved within the four week grace period before final degree certification.

Protection of Human Subjects

For more information see: <http://research.depaul.edu/>.

Demonstrating the acquisition of competences in this course can involve "interactions" "interviewing and or observing other people" "discussing those interviews or observations with other class members and writing them up in one or more final report(s). As such, these activities qualify as "research" with "human subjects" and are subject to University and Federal guidelines. Because it takes place in the context of this course, your research is exempt from approval by the School for New Learning's Local Review Board only under the following conditions:

1. The information you collect is EXCLUSIVELY for the purpose of classroom discussion and will NOT be used after the term is over. If there is any possibility that you will EVER use it in further research or for publication, you must obtain approval from the Local Review Board before you begin.
2. You assess and ensure that no "harm" "physical, mental, or social" "does or could result from either your interviews and/or observations or your discussion and/or reports.
3. The privacy and confidentiality of those that you interview or observe must be protected. Unless you receive specific permission, in writing, from the person(s) you interview or observe, please change their names, and make sure that their identity cannot be readily ascertained from the information you provide.
 - a. If you want to use real names and relationships, they must sign an "informed consent" document. For information on creating an "informed consent document" see, for example, <http://www.research.umn.edu/consent>.

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Course Expectations

Time Management and Attendance

SNL's online courses are not self-paced and require a regular time commitment EACH week throughout the quarter.

You are required to log in to your course at least four times a week so that you can participate in the ongoing course discussions.

Online courses are no less time consuming than "face to face" courses. You will have to dedicate some time every day or at least every second day to your studies. A typical four credit hour "face to face" course at SNL involves three hours of classroom

meeting per week, plus at least three to six hours of study and homework per week.

This course will require at least the same time commitment, but your learning activities will be spread out through the week. If you have any problems with your technology, or if you need to improve your reading or writing skills, it may take even longer.

The instructor should be notified if your life events do not allow you to participate in the course and the online discussions for more than one week. This is particularly important when there are group discussions or you are working as part of a team.

If you find yourself getting behind, please contact the instructor immediately.

Your Instructor's Role

Your instructor's role in this course is that of a discussion facilitator and learning advisor. It is not their responsibility to make sure you log in regularly and submit your assignments. As instructor, s/he will read all postings to the general discussion forums on a daily basis but may not choose to respond to each posting. You will receive feedback to assignments.

The instructor may choose to designate "office hours" when s/he will be online and available and will immediately respond to questions. Depending on the instructor, this response may be by e-mail, instant messenger or telephone. Otherwise, you will generally receive a response to emailed or posted queries within 48 hours.

Your Role as a Student

As an online student, you will be taking a proactive approach to your learning. As the course instructor's role is that of a learning guide, your role is that of the leader in your own learning.

You will be managing your own time so that you can complete the readings, activities and assignments for the course, and you will also be expected to take a more active role in peer learning.

Credits

This course was designed and produced by Dr. Kevin Downing and staff of SNL Online at DePaul University.

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