GEOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Undergraduate Program Information

A degree in geology leads to a wide variety of career choices. Students can access careers in the geosciences through one of three concentrations in the BS Geology degree. The first concentration is Geology. This is a traditional geology curriculum, in which students take geology classes, augmented with calculus, physics, and chemistry; this concentration leads to graduate study in the geosciences and careers in industry, academia, government, and policy. The second concentration is Earth and Environmental Systems. Students take geology classes, augmented with a variety of environmental, economic, and political classes; this concentration leads to careers in the environmental industry. The third concentration is Earth Science Education. Students take geology and education classes, and are certified to teach science at New Mexico middle and high schools after completing the BS and one year of graduate work in the College of Education.

Students earning the BS in Geology, any concentration, may also earn the Undergraduate Research Certificate in the Department of Geological Sciences. Completion of the Undergraduate Research Certificate includes completion of an undergraduate research project, participation in the department’s undergraduate research meetings and one of the following:

1. a senior thesis;
2. a manuscript submitted for a publication; or
3. an oral or poster presentation at a national or regional meeting.

Undergraduate Research Certificates are presented at the department’s annual awards ceremony.

The Department of Geological Sciences also cooperates with the Department of Physics in offering a BS degree in physics with a concentration in geophysics. Requirements are listed in the Department of Physics section of this catalog.

Graduate Program Information

The Department of Geological Sciences offers graduate study leading to the Master of Science degree in geology. The department offers excellent laboratory facilities for research in mineralogy, igneous petrology, geochemistry, stratigraphy, geochronology, and sedimentology. Available are a large, fully equipped rock preparation laboratory, mineral separation laboratory, plus computer, geochemical and petrographic labs. Major equipment includes a Gemeni heavy mineral separation table, Laser-Induced Breakdown Spectroscopy (LIBS), a class 1000 clean lab, Thermal Ionization Mass Spectrometry (TIMS) and Laser-Ablation Multi-Collector Inductively Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometry (LA-MC-ICP-MS). The department maintains its own fleet of field vehicles. Also available are computing facilities that include an HP color plotter and GIS system.

Financial support is available to graduate students in geology through teaching and research assistantships and scholarships. Inquiries regarding financial aid should be directed to the graduate advisor.

Admission to the program is in accord with the general regulations of the Graduate School. The Graduate Record Examination (verbal, quantitative, and analytical writing only) is required.

Degrees for the Department

Bachelor Degree(s)
- Geology (Geological Sciences) - Bachelor of Science
- Geology (Earth and Environmental Systems) - Bachelor of Science
- Geology (Earth Science Education) - Bachelor of Science

Master Degree(s)
- Geology - Master of Science

Minors for the Department

- Geology - Undergraduate Minor

Professors
- N. J. McMillan, Department Head
- Amato, McMillan, Ramos

Associate Professors
- Hampton; Burgette, Johnson

Assistant Professors
- G. Brown, K. Davis, J. Witcher; Emeritus Faculty Lawton, Mack

Emeritus Faculty

Geology Courses

- GEOL 1110G. Physical Geology
  4 Credits (3+3P)
  Physical Geology is an introduction to our dynamic Earth introducing students to the materials that make up Earth (rocks and minerals) and the processes that create and modify the features of our planet. The course will help students learn how mountains are formed, how volcanoes erupt, where earthquakes occur, and how water, wind, and ice can shape landscapes. Students will also develop a basic understanding of the ways humans have altered the planet including our impact on natural resources and global climate change.
- GEOL 1150. Introduction to Rocks and Minerals
  3 Credits (2+3P)
  This course is an introduction to the characteristics and the formation of the three main types of rocks, the rock-forming minerals, and important ore minerals. An outline of Plate Tectonics will give students the basis to understand how many of these rocks and minerals form. In laboratory exercises, students will gain practice in describing and identifying hand-specimens of the main types of rocks and minerals.

Prerequisite(s)/Corequisite(s): GEOL 1110G.
GEOL 2120. Introduction to Oceanography
4 Credits (3+3P)
This course covers aspects of geology, chemistry, physics, climatology, environmental science, and biology as they apply to the oceans. Oceanography explores the ocean in the Earth system with special emphasis on the flow and transformation of weather and energy into and out of the ocean, the physical and chemical properties of seawater, ocean circulation, marine life and its adaptations, interactions between the ocean and the other components of the Earth system, and the human/societal impacts on and response to those interactions. This course provides the foundation needed for students to intelligently participate in important societal discussions that involve environmental issues. Community Colleges only. Consent of Instructor required.

GEOL 2130. Introduction to Meteorology
4 Credits (3+3P)
Introduction to Earth's atmosphere and the dynamic world of weather as it happens. Working with current meteorological data delivered via the Internet and coordinated with learning investigations keyed to the current weather, and via study of select archives.

GEOL 2996. Special Topics
1-3 Credits
Specific subjects to be announced in the Schedule of Classes. Community Colleges only. May be repeated for a maximum of 12 credits.

GEOL 305V. Fossils and the Evolution of Life
3 Credits (3)
Examination of the fossil record within the context of geologic time. Special emphasis on critical evaluation of possible terrestrial and extra-terrestrial causes for the evolution of plants and animals and for periods of mass extinction.

GEOL 310. Mineralogy
3 Credits (2+3P)
Crystallography and the physical and chemical aspects of minerals. Prerequisite(s): GEOL 1110G and CHEM 1216G.

GEOL 312. Mineralogy and Optics
3 Credits (2+3P)
Principles of crystallography, optical mineralogy, and mineral chemistry as applied to the identification and characterization of rock-forming minerals. May be repeated up to 3 credits. Prerequisite(s): GEOL 1110G, GEOL 1150.

GEOL 320. Special Topics
1-3 Credits
Specific subjects to be announced in the Schedule of Classes. May be repeated for a maximum of 12 credits.

GEOL 335V. Earthquakes, Volcanoes, Hurricanes, and Floods: The Role of Natural Hazards in Civ Past and Present
3 Credits (3)
This class will provide an introduction to geologic hazards and natural disasters, their effects on society and the attempts at preparation and mitigation for these events. Hazards to be covered include earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, landslides, hurricanes, tsunamis and others.

GEOL 353. Geomorphology
3 Credits (2+3P)
Same as GEOG 353. May be repeated up to 3 credits.

GEOL 356. General Geochemistry
3 Credits (3)
The chemistry of the earth and its parts, with emphasis on geochemical systems and cycles, distribution of the elements, and mineral equilibria. Crosslisted with: CHEM 360
Prerequisite(s): CHEM 1216G or CHEM 1120G.

GEOL 399. Igneous and Metamorphic Petrology
3 Credits (2+3P)
Mineralogical composition, classification, and genesis of igneous and metamorphic rocks. Prerequisite(s): GEOL 312 for geology majors, GEOL 310 for majors other than geology.

GEOL 401. Geology Colloquium
1 Credit (1)
Presentations by visiting speakers and students. May be repeated up to 6 credits.

GEOL 420. Stratigraphy and Sedimentology
3 Credits (2+3P)
Identification and interpretation of sedimentary rocks with emphasis on classification, deposition, and stratigraphic geometry. Prerequisite: GEOL 310.

GEOL 424. Soil Chemistry
3 Credits (3)
Same as SOIL 424, CHEM 424.

GEOL 441. Tutorial Geology
2 Credits (1+3P)
Participation in teaching lower-division laboratories and conducting tutorial sessions. May be repeated for a total of 4 credits. Prerequisite: junior or above standing and nomination by faculty.

GEOL 442. Zuhl Collection Internship
1-3 Credits (3-9P)
Applied experience with the NMSU Zuhl Collection, under supervision of the Zuhl Collection Director. Possible activities include developing displays, giving tours, developing outreach materials, etc. May be repeated up to 6 credits. Consent of Instructor required.

GEOL 444. GIS for Geology
3 Credits (3)
Tools-based introduction to using GIS software for solving problems in geology. Emphasis on effectively portraying and analyzing geologic maps. One required field trip. Crosslisted with: GEOG 544. Prerequisite(s): GEOL 470.

GEOL 449. The Geological Profession
1 Credit (1)
Outcomes assessment exit exams. For graduating seniors only. May be repeated up to 1 credits. Prerequisite(s): Graduating seniors only.

GEOL 452. Geohydrology
4 Credits (3+2P)
Origin, occurrence, and movement of fluids in porous media assessment of aquifer characteristics. Development and conservation of ground water resources, design of well fields. May be repeated up to 4 credits. Crosslisted with: ENVS 452 and C E 452.

GEOL 455. Undergraduate Research
1-3 Credits
Geological research and field projects for the advanced student. May be repeated for a total of 6 credits. May be repeated up to 6 credits. Consent of Instructor required. Prerequisite(s): Consent of instructor.
GEOL 465. Isotope Geochemistry
3 Credits (3)
Geochemistry of stable and radiogenic isotopes and its application to a wide range of problems in the earth and planetary sciences.
Prerequisite(s): CHEM 1226G, GEOL 360, GEOL 399.

GEOL 470. Structural Geology
3 Credits (2+3P)
Deformation of rocks of the earth. Prerequisite: GEOL 310

GEOL 471. Volcanology
3 Credits (3)
Identification and interpretation of volcanic deposits (including air fall, ash flow tuffs, surges, lava flows), with focus on how the characteristics of these deposits can reveal eruption styles and eruption dynamics. Other topics covered include: magma migration and storage, volcanic hazards, volcano monitoring and volcanoes and climate. Crosslisted with GEOL 571.
Prerequisite(s): GEOL 399.

GEOL 477. Special Problems
1-3 Credits
Selected advanced topics of current interest or importance. May be repeated for a total of 6 credits.
Prerequisite: consent of instructor.

GEOL 478. Petroleum Systems and Stratigraphy
3 Credits (2+3P)
Sedimentation, stratigraphy, depositional environments, and tectonics in relation to the occurrences and exploration of hydrocarbons. Course includes two off-campus field trips. May be repeated up to 3 credits.
Prerequisite(s): GEOL 420.

GEOL 480. Seminar
1-3 Credits
Supervised study of a subject not covered by regular courses. For organized group meetings treating selected advanced topics. May be repeated for a maximum of 6 credits.
Prerequisite: consent of instructor.

GEOL 482. Zuhl Collection Internship
1-3 Credits (1-3)
Applied experience working with the Zuhl Collection of rocks, minerals, fossils, and petrified wood, supervised by the Director of the Zuhl Collection. Activities include tours, display development, research on aspects of the collection, and other work in the museum. May be repeated up to 6 credits. Consent of Instructor required. Restricted to GEOL majors.

GEOL 490. Field Geology
3 Credits (9P)
Mapping, instrumentation, and interpretation of geology in the field.
Prerequisites: either GEOL 420 and GEOL 470.

GEOL 491. Tectonic Evolution of North America
3 Credits (3)
Current ideas regarding the plate-tectonic evolution of North America from Archean through Holocene time, emphasizing the use of regional stratigraphy and structural geology to interpret mountain building, magmatism, and basin development.
Prerequisites: GEOL 1110G, GEOL 399, GEOL 420 and GEOL 470.

GEOL 495. Geology Field Camp
4 Credits (12P)
Three week intensive summer course. Geologic mapping in a site-based setting, emphasizing spatial relations, cross-section construction, and preparation of geologic reports. Prerequisite: GEOL 490

GEOL 499. Senior Thesis
1-3 Credits
Writing a formal paper describing original geologic research conducted under supervision of a faculty advisor. Restricted to majors.
Prerequisite: consent of instructor.

GEOL 501. Geology Colloquium
1 Credit (1)
Presentations by visiting speakers and graduate students.

GEOL 520. Selected Topics
1-3 Credits
Selected topics in geology. May be repeated for unlimited credit.
Prerequisites: graduate standing and consent of instructor.

GEOL 534. Tectonics of Sedimentary Basins
3 Credits (3)
Origin of sedimentary basins with emphasis on subsidence mechanisms, geometry of basin fill, depositional systems and tectonic setting. Course includes two off-campus field trips. Restricted to GEOL majors.
Prerequisites: GEOL 420 or equivalent or consent of instructor.

GEOL 537. Topics in Volcanology
3 Credits (3)
A seminar-style class exploring volcanic processes. Course topics vary by semester and include: magmatism and volcanism at different tectonic settings (subduction zones, intraplate) and plumbing systems and eruptions of volcanoes (calderas, monogenetic volcanoes).

GEOL 544. GIS for Geology
3 Credits (3)
Tools-based introduction to using GIS software for solving problems in geology. Emphasis on effectively portraying and analyzing geologic maps. One required field trip. Crosslisted with GEOL 444.
Prerequisite(s): GEOL 470 or equivalent.

GEOL 558. Neotectonics
3 Credits (3)
Recognition, measurement, and dating of deformation related to earthquakes in the Quaternary geologic record.

GEOL 562. Analytical Geochemistry
3 Credits (3)
Techniques used to determine the major element, trace element and isotopic composition of rocks and minerals and the determination of mineral structure.

GEOL 565. Isotope Geochemistry
3 Credits (3)
Trace element partitioning and isotope systematics applied to problems in petrology and ore genesis.

GEOL 571. Volcanology
3 Credits (3)
Identification and interpretation of volcanic deposits (including air fall, ash flow tuffs, surges, lava flows), with focus on how the characteristics of these deposits can reveal eruption styles and eruptions dynamics. Other topics covered include: magma migration and storage, volcanic hazards, volcano monitoring and volcanoes and climate. Crosslisted with GEOL 471.

GEOL 578. Petroleum Systems and Stratigraphy
3 Credits (2+3P)
Sedimentation, stratigraphy, depositional environments and tectonics in relation to the occurrences and exploration of hydrocarbons. Course includes two off-campus field trips.
GEOL 582. Plate Tectonics
3 Credits (3)
Plate tectonics as a fundamental model for geological activity on a
dynamic earth. Focuses on plate tectonic theory development and
mechanisms, plus modern analogs of ancient processes.

GEOL 585. Geochronology
3 Credits (3)
The principles, analytical methods, and interpretation of the most
common geochronologic methods.

GEOL 598. Special Research Programs
1-3 Credits
Investigations into contemporary geological problems. May be repeated
for unlimited credit.
Prerequisites: graduate standing and consent of instructor.

GEOL 599. Master's Thesis
15 Credits
Thesis research.

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