

FALL 2026

FIRST YEAR FAQ

ERTH 1200

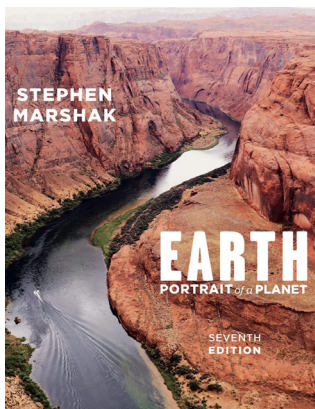
Understanding The Earth



Professor: Dr. Mitchell Kerr

The Course Textbook

"Earth: Portrait of a Planet," by Stephen Marshak, 7th edition, ISBN-13: 978-0393882742, Norton Publishing. **This book is highly recommended but not mandatory.** It is also available as an e-text from the SMU bookstore. The same book is used for EARTH1201. We will also use a variety of open texts that are freely available such as openpress.usask.ca.



Is It Okay to Buy an Older Edition of the Textbook?

There are usually only small changes made to successive editions of particular textbooks, so if you can get an older version of the Marshak (Norton) book or any version of "Earth: An introduction to Physical Geology" (Pearson) by Tarbuck et al, then feel free to do so.

Labs and Lab Materials

There are two sections of EARTH 1200. For both sections, **all classes, tests and labs will be held in person**, and students must attend on these scheduled days, as outlined in the course syllabus provided.

The course syllabus contains a list of labs. Earth Science is a field-based discipline, so at least one lab will be held outside (weather permitting), either on campus or nearby at Point Pleasant Park. Wear suitable clothing and footwear, including a jacket and shoes with non-slip soles.

Other labs are held in a teaching lab space in the Science building (S411 or S408). These labs focus on (1) investigating hand samples of rocks, minerals and fossils, and (2) studying geological maps, which display rock types, geological structures, ore deposits, and geological ages. Studying hand samples in detail requires making use of a hand lens (loupe). You can borrow an inexpensive x10 magnification loupe from your lab instructor for use during the lab, but if you plan on taking more Earth Science courses, you should consider buying a professional-quality loupe. You can purchase one online for a few tens of dollars. Earth Science labs often make use of high magnification stereomicroscopes as well.

You should bring a ruler, protractor, pencil and eraser to map-based labs. Square protractors are much better for our purposes than half-moon ones.

Some labs depend on making some calculations as well, so a calculator is encouraged, or the use of a phone calculator is often sufficient.

The majority of Earth Science labs are formatted such that personal protective equipment (PPE) is not required; there is no need for a lab coat or safety glasses.



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