USF UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA
COLLEGE OF MARINE SCIENCE

The Geologic History of Florida: Description

This course, open to all without prerequisites, addresses the geologic processes through 700 million years of geologic time that have created Florida as we see it today. Florida did not arrive here yesterday, but started at the Earth's South Pole and has migrated to its present position over hundreds of millions of years. During that time frame, it has built enormously thick limestone formations, dissolved them to create huge sinkholes and gigantic subterranean caves that have catastrophically collapsed, been completely covered with seawater many times during extreme high-stands of sea-level, been broadly exposed to air by extreme low-stands of sea level, crashed into Cuba, been buried with sands arriving from the Appalachian Mountains, been poisoned by low oxygen seawater, accumulated one of the Earth's largest phosphate deposits and built one of the most famous coral reef systems in the world as well as constructing the world-wide, unique Everglades. And, Florida's birth has been intimately linked to the simultaneous formation of three oceans—the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean Sea, and the North Atlantic Ocean.

The course will also address major natural phenomena that affect human habitation such as groundwater supplies, coastal zone management, coral reef development, mining, and offshore oil drilling. Students are expected to stay current with environmental problems affecting Florida and the southeast US and come to class prepared to talk about such issues even at a rudimentary level. The aim is make participants aware of the environmental issues, particularly those based on Florida's geology, affecting the quality of life in Florida.