

## Learning Minerals Through Minecraft

Minecraft | Teaching Geology During COVID-19



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Watch how students learned about geology field work from home.

## Geology Faculty Turn to Online Technologies to Teach Field Course

Geologists don't usually run across fields wearing Spiderman costumes. At least, not unless that person is taking University of Idaho's new online geology field course. When the COVID-19 pandemic led to the cancelation of their summer 2020 field course, Assistant Professor [Erika Rader](#) and Instructor [Renee Love](#) moved their lessons online. Meant to take place in Montana, their course needed to teach students how to read a map, move about the landscape safely and interpret rock formations.

To reach these learning goals, the two faculty from the [Department of Geography and Geological Sciences](#) built worlds in Minecraft, a video game focused on exploration and construction. In the program, the students' used their avatars to learn about navigation and rock formations. They also incorporated an app designed by senior Steven Frank — a student in the [Virtual Technology and Design](#) program. The app generates 3-D rock formations. In addition, they employed Google Earth and a program called Leapfrog that professional companies use for projects in mining, exploration, groundwater contamination and geothermal energy. Erika Rader and Renee Love are excited to continue improving the course, which they hope opens the field of geology to students with disabilities, full-time jobs or childcare commitments and others who may not be able to attend a six-week-long field course.

The geology field course team would like to thank the Idaho Geological Survey, Hecla Mining Co., the British Geological Survey, Seequent, Midas Gold and Imago for their generous contributions of time and data for this project.

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