

Indiana University Field Camp - Summer 2009

They list a number of courses on their application that are nominally prerequisites, but I hadn't taken Structure, Mineralogy or Petrology. You will be fine, they teach you essentially all the background you need to know during the course. Being able to think on your feet is the most important requirement.

The course starts in Rapid City, SD with a 5 day trip to ease you into the field camp routine. It starts out relaxed and by the time you get to the field station in the Tobacco Root of Montana you are going full bore. Once you get to the field station you are in for an intense five weeks. Breakfast is early (7 AM?) and then you're in the field until 5PM. There is definitely time to relax a little on some evenings, but often you are working to finish things for 10PM deadlines. You will work hard, but they set everything up so that you still get enough sleep.

They have a bunch of different buildings that people are assigned to sleep in. Some are bunkhouse style with everyone in one room, and others have little 2-person rooms. Same with the food, nothing fancy, but it works.

The course is set up to encourage and require you to work independently. There are four or five "Independent Exercises" where you are given air photos and a topo map and must create a geologic map on top of it during the course of the day. You are required to work more and more independently as the course progresses. This can be challenging and frustrating, but you really learn how to map.

One other side note: alcohol is not allowed at the field station. You get every Sunday off, Saturday night there is a trip into town to go to the bar. The lack of drinking caused some people to be mighty disgruntled. Indiana's field camp was a great time, with great people, but it wasn't a party.

If you want to be a geologist and want to learn how to map Indiana is the place to go. This field camp is phenomenal. The only downside is that it is during the middle of the summer.