

## **UWO geology professor among prolific podcasters on iTunes**

by Kat Pecora - Thursday, January 27, 2011

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/8672/uwo-course-podcast-most-popular-of-kind-on-itunes/>

The subject matter is as old as stone. Literally.

But that hasn't stopped a University of Wisconsin Oshkosh professor from lecturing about it in 21st Century style.

UW Oshkosh professor Eric Hiatt's interactive geology podcasts are featured alongside counterparts' from Berkeley to 'Bama on iTunesU's Geology cover pages. Spotlights in a digital repository for geology lectures, Hiatt's iTunesU-posted podcasts have proven popular not only with UWO students but students around nation. They are among a growing number of archived digital lectures housed within UW Oshkosh's iTunesU HQ.

Secondary education major John Nejedlo was taking Hiatt's physical geology course during the fall 2009 semester when he discovered Hiatt's hovering around the more popular geology podcast downloads on the media player.

"It was a little surprising to see this geology podcast from an Oshkosh professor was the second one that pops up when you look for podcasts on geology on iTunes," said Nejedlo.

What makes Hiatt's course podcast so unique are his use of external links and images so students can interact with the material outside of the classroom.

"It's a wonderful and amazing source that some people don't know about, but those that do find it an amazing place to learn," Hiatt said.

Podcasts have grown in popularity as a teaching medium with UW Oshkosh professors and others around the globe with the advent and growth of digital audio and video technology, iPods and iTunes platforms. Students are able to view links while listening to the recordings as well as view scanned in drawings from class.

"(Hiatt) is an excellent communicator," Nejedlo said. "Let's be honest, (geology) can be a dry subject. He has a way of making it interesting."

Hiatt's podcasts were first made in 2009 when UW Oshkosh administration was looking for options in case the University needed to close down because of H1N1.

The podcast course was a way for students to catch up if they missed a day of class or to go over the course material a second time. Hiatt said students will often listen to the podcasts on the way to school or while they walk their dogs.

Nejedlo said listening a second time helped him retain the material, and he could listen when and where he wanted by downloading the podcasts to his iPhone.

“The point is that listening to the lectures a second time helped the information sink in,” Nejedlo said. “Isn’t that what it’s all about?”

Listeners from across the country have contacted Hiatt with positive feedback on his course. Hiatt said one community college teacher told him his students used the podcasts to study for his course. Another listener was a graduate student from Virginia who was using the course to brush up on her geology in pursuit of a degree in environmental science.

While he’s employing new technology, Hiatt doesn’t completely ditch old-fashioned scientific approaches to teaching. He does a lot of drawings in his course because he said students are more focused and take better notes when they interact with the material. While technology is an important addition to the classroom, sketching and writing instead of typing notes helps the learning process, Hiatt said.

“We’ve got this ingrained in us using our hands to talk and work, but our brains are hardwired to manipulate things with our hands,” Hiatt said.

Hiatt said he will continue to do podcasts for the physical geology course, but will not do it for any of his other courses because of the time consuming process to create his unique podcasts.

Hiatt said he tries to make the course fun for students and is known for adding sound effects quirks like chirping crickets into his podcasts during the pause in the lecture when he waits for students to answer a question.

Nejedlo said adding those effects help students focus and that Hiatt explains things in a way that is easy to understand.

“A good science class like this changes how you see the world,” Nejedlo said. “I put him on the same level as Bill Nye.”

View Hiatt’s physical geology course website by visiting [www.uwosh.edu/faculty\\_staff/hiatt/Teaching/102.html](http://www.uwosh.edu/faculty_staff/hiatt/Teaching/102.html).