

REVIEWS

Introduction to Planetary Science: The Geological Perspective. By Gunter Faure and Teresa M. Mensing. Berlin and New York: Springer, 2007. 526 pages, 276 illustrations (76 in color). \$99.00 cloth.

When I was asked to review this textbook, I immediately said yes. I expected that I would enjoy reading the book and that I would undoubtedly learn from it either new facts or methods of presenting facts and their interpretation to students. I was not disappointed; in fact, I was delighted. The book captures the essence of modern planetary science in 24 chapters. The chapters do not overload the reader with an abundance of factual details and their interpretations but instead present issues at a level that can be clearly understood by geology majors and nonmajors alike but without compromising the science. The book is clearly excellent—if not outstanding—for use in a course for nonmajors, and I highly recommend it. To summarize, chapter 1 captures the drama of solar system exploration through various explorers from ancient times to the beginning of the space age. The authors then discuss basic terminology (mass, pressure, etc.) and then move to stars, the birth of the solar system, the dynamic Earth, and how and why bodies move around the sun. The coverage of the solar system then focuses on meteorites, the Earth-Moon system, and the rest of the solar system through comparative planetology. The final chapter explores extrasolar planets and brown dwarf stars, which makes an excellent ending. The book is not organized in what I consider to be a classic approach, which is actually a delightful change, and it works very well. In addition, the “science briefs” at the ends of chapters are a wonderful affirmation of each theme. Overall, the book is excellent. However, one minor disappointment is that the discussion of meteorites and their importance is not entirely up to speed. I have reviewed numerous books over the last few years, and most seem to have the same shortcoming, which makes me ponder the source of the problem. The authors’ effective use of references on this topic, however, allows this chapter to be a valuable contribution as well.

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QUERIES TO THE AUTHOR

1 By majors, I assume you mean geology majors? If not, please correct.

2 Okay that I substituted "terminology" for "communication issues"? Or should this be something like "physical properties (e.g., mass, pressure, etc.)"? Please advise.

3 I changed "punctuation to" to "affirmation of"; is that okay?

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