

Political Science 462/Northern Studies 662
ALASKA GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
Spring semester, 2009

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Office hours: 12:00-2:00 p.m. WF
and by appointment

COURSE SYLLABUS

The primary objective of this course is to provide a comprehensive introduction to government and politics in Alaska, at the state and local level. By the end of the semester, you will understand better the environment of politics and government, institutions at both state and local levels, political processes, and selected policies.

Secondary objectives of the course are to present the two broad contexts of Alaska government and politics: American state and local politics and the subnational governments and politics of circumpolar northern nations. Our interest is to establish the respects in which Alaska government and politics are similar to those of other states, provinces, and regions, and to focus on areas of difference (including analysis of why Alaska is dissimilar). To accomplish these objectives, the course uses the methodology of comparative politics.

Course Readings

Most of the common readings for the course are found in three books:

McBeath and Morehouse, *Alaska Politics and Government* (1994)

Harrison, *Alaska's Constitution: A Citizen's Guide*, 4th edition (2002)

Thomas, ed., *Alaska Public Policy Issues: Background and Perspectives* (1999)

In addition, authors of a new book, *The Political Economy of Oil in Alaska: Multinationals versus the State* (2008), invite you to read their work—available in Blackboard and listed below along with several other readings. Since 1988 the instructor has prepared an annual report on the Alaska budget process, which includes information on issues in state-federal relations, state political/economic/demographic changes, and budget outcomes. To view reports from 1997 to 2008, direct your browser to: www.cppa.utah.edu and look for *Annual Western States Budget Review*.

Please pay attention to state and local government developments on a daily basis. Alaska is one of the leading states in making information about government and politics available on the Internet. Each branch of government has a dedicated web page (www.gov.state.ak.us, www.legis.state.ak.us [including Gavel-to-Gavel coverage, and www.legis.state.ak.us/basis for tracking bills]; and www.state.ak.us/courts.) Departments and agencies have websites (for example, the Department of Natural Resources at www.dnr.state.ak.us), as do important state corporations, such as the Permanent Fund: www.apfc.org. To balance your sources of information, try to read newspapers from different regions of the state, watch state and local news on TV, and browse the blogs

Course Requirements

There are four types of requirements for the course: participation, examinations, a short observation assignment, and a policy analysis paper. The requirements for graduate students are substantially greater than those for undergraduates.

1. Class participation is required. To be prepared for class, please complete the assigned readings before the class meeting at which the related topic is discussed. Then, during the semester, prepare at 10 questions (15 for grad students) on topics and readings of your choice, where possible relating them to current events. Post your questions on Blackboard near the time the topic is discussed. Also, please read and provide constructive comments on the draft term papers of two of your classmates. Participation counts for 15 percent of the course grade.

2. Two exams will be given during the semester: a) midterm examination, March 19th, 15 percent of course grade, and b) final examination, Thursday, May 7th, 1-3 p.m., 25 percent of course grade. Each exam will be based on assigned readings, lectures, and class discussions. Most of the exams will consist of identification of terms and concepts and essays.

3. **Observation Report.** The report should be a structured observation and analysis of a public meeting. The assignment is to a) attend a **regular** local government decisional meeting in the Fairbanks area, and b) write a comprehensive report on your observations.

The first part of the report should be **descriptive**. If, for example, you attend a borough assembly meeting, you should describe 1) the officials present (administrators, assembly members, invited official guests), 2) size and composition of audience (comment on distribution of genders, ages, ethnic groups, lifestyles, interest groups, to the extent this can be observed), 3) issues discussed (policies, including intensity of interest in the topics), and 4) actions taken (ordinances debated, tabled, passed; committees/task forces created, requests for further study, etc.).

The second part of your report should be **analytical**, pointing out the important aspects of political processes revealed in the course of the meeting, such as the interaction between 1) members of the assembly or council, 2) administrators and elected officials, 3) members of interest groups and elected or appointed officials, or 4) individuals in the audience and elected or appointed officials.

The kind of meeting you attend will determine to a great extent the kinds of interaction you observe, so you may want to check on the agenda in advance. Agendas of local government meetings are published in the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* before the meeting. Other possibilities include local government meetings in other cities/villages (North Pole, Nenana) of Alaska or sessions of the state legislature. Please be sure that the meeting you select is a **regular** meeting, where voting on laws (ordinances, policies) takes place, and not a special meeting or a work session.

I encourage you to compare your observations to teleconference or gavel-to-gavel hearings of a legislative committee, legislative constituents' meetings, or floor sessions of the Alaska House or Senate. Legislative constituent teleconferences are held often during the session. For a schedule of legislative teleconference hearings, call the Legislative Information Office, 452-4448. The report, of around 5 pages (preferably typewritten) is due by March 31. It counts for 15 percent of the course grade.

4. **Policy Analysis.** The major writing assignment is an analysis of a problem or issue in Alaska government and politics, at the state or local level. Examples of problems you may wish to write about include: a) should a spending cap be placed on annual legislative appropriations? b) should the state dedicate a part of the earnings of the Permanent Fund to support state government operations, an education endowment, or resource development projects? c) should

the state of Alaska have a full government-to-government relationship with Native governments? d) should the state constitution be amended to provide for a rural (or Native) subsistence preference in hunting and fishing on federal and state lands? e) should the state income tax be reinstated? f) should a railroad be built from Fairbanks to Nome, or the Yukon, or Barrow? g) should mandatory boroughs be created in the unorganized borough?

Your report should state briefly the background of the problem or issue, describe the pros and cons, and analyze them, with your recommendation, fully justified, for a course of action. This is a research paper requirement, and I expect that you will go beyond the assigned works in the course and use the ample sources of data on Alaska government and politics. An outline of your paper (including preliminary sources of information) is due in class on March 1; and a draft should be posted on Blackboard by April 12th. The paper (10-15 pages for undergraduates, 20-25 pages for graduate students) is due on April 30th. This assignment counts for 30 percent of the course grade.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING SCHEDULE

Readings listed directly under topics are common for both undergraduate and graduate students. Additional readings for graduate students are prefaced by “G”. Also, for most topics, I have listed a number of “recommended” readings, which will enrich your knowledge of the subject.

I. The Setting of Government and Politics in Alaska

A. Introduction; Alaska’s Political Culture (January 22)

McBeath & Morehouse, *Alaska Politics and Government* (hereafter M&M), Introduction, ch. 1, pp. 1-28.

G: McBeath & Morehouse, *Alaska State Government and Politics*, ch. 3, pp. 53-82, and Cuba, *Identity and Community on the Alaska Frontier*.

Recommended: Hanrahan & Gruenstein, *Lost Frontier*, pp. 1-41, 82-122; Joe McGinnis, *Going to Extremes*, scan; and Rosenberg, “Oil, Political Economy, and Alaska,” in PE of Oil (BB), pp. 1-22.

B. Alaska’s Political History (January 27, 29)

“Creating Alaska,” video, in class, January 27

M&M, ch. 2, pp. 29-50; McBeath & Morehouse, *Alaska State Government*, ch. 1, pp. 3-26.

G: Naske & Slotnick, *Alaska*, chs. 3-5, pp. 57-109; selections from Thomas, ed., *Alaska Public Policy Issues* (hereafter, reader), ch. 1, “Understanding and Evaluating Alaska Issues and Public Policies,” pp. 1-16.

Recommended: McBeath, “A Brief History of Oil in Alaska,” in PE of Oil (BB), pp. 23-56; Haycox, *Alaska: An American Colony and Frigid Embrace* (2002).

C. The Alaska Political Economy (February 3, 5)

M&M, ch. 3, pp. 51-74; selections from reader: ch. 2, “The Alaska Economy and Economic Issues,” by George Rogers and ch. 6, “The Economics and Politics of the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend Program” by Gordon Harrison; Harrison, *Alaska’s Constitution*, 4th ed. pp. 127-60. Recommended: Berman, “Petroleum Revenues and Tax Policy,” Rosenberg,

“Oil Supply, Budgets, and Expenditures,” and McBeath, “Managing the Wealth,” in PE of Oil (BB), pp. 83-144, 171-96.

G: Selections from reader: ch. 3, “The Contemporary and Future Alaska Economy” by David Reaume, ch. 4, “The Economy of Rural-Bush Alaska,” by Marshall, ch. 5, “State Revenues and the State Budget” by Protasel, ch. 6, and ch. 7, “Alaska and International Commerce” by Douglas Barry, pp. 33-79, 93-106.

Also recommended: Morehouse, ed., *Alaskan Resources Development*, articles on land policy, oil economy, nonfuel minerals, and renewable resources, chs. 2-5, pp. 13-134; Strohmeier, *Extreme Conditions: Big Oil and the Transformation of Alaska* (1993) and Roderick, *Crude Dreams* (1997).

D. Federal-State Relations; the Special Relationship (February 10)

M&M, chs. 4-5, pp. 75-115; selection from reader: ch. 19, “Native Sovereignty” by Korsmo, pp. 263-74.

G: McBeath & Morehouse, *Alaska State Government*, ch. 4, pp. 83-107; Alaska Statehood Commission, “More Perfect Union;” Case & Voluck, *Alaska Natives and American Laws* and Mitchell, *Take My Land Take My Life* (2001).

E. The Alaska Constitution (February 12, 17)

M&M, ch. 6, pp. 116-134; McBeath, *The Alaska State Constitution: A Reference Guide*, part I, pp. 1-22; Harrison, *Alaska’s Constitution: A Citizen’s Guide*, 4th edition, pp. 1-42, 175-84, 193-97, 219-22.

G: McBeath & Morehouse, *Alaska State Government*, ch. 2, pp. 27-52; Fischer, *Alaska’s Constitution Convention*, chs. 1-4, 9-10; Harrison, pp. 121-25, 185-92, 201-17. Recommended: Bowkett, *Reaching for a Star*.

II. State Government Institutions

A. Legislature (February 19, 24)

M&M, ch. 7, pp. 135-65; Harrison, pp. 43-71

G: McBeath & Morehouse, *Alaska State Government*, ch. 10, pp. 232-60; Fineberg, *Chaos in the Capital*.

Outline of policy analysis paper due, March 3

B. Governor and Administration (February 26, March 3)

M&M, ch. 8, pp. 166-91; Harrison, pp. 73-90

G: McBeath & Morehouse, *Alaska State Government*, chs. 11-12, pp. 261-318; Hammond, *Tales of Alaska’s Bush Rat Governor* (1994) and *Chips from the Chopping Block* (2001); recommended: Beyle, ed., *Gubernatorial Transitions*.

Spring recess (no classes), March 9-13

C. Courts and Judges (March 5, 17)

M&M, ch. 9, pp. 192-211; Harrison, pp. 91-103.

G: McBeath & Morehouse, *Alaska State Government*, ch. 13, pp. 319-34; Judicial Council reports.

Mid-term examination, March 19

III. Political Processes in Alaska

A. Political Organizations (March 24, 26)

M&M, ch. 10, pp. 212-33; McBeath & Morehouse, *Alaska State Government*, chs. 6-7, 9, pp. 145-86, 213-30.

Observation report, due in class, March 31

B. Elections and Political Participation (March 31, April 2)

M&M, ch. 11, pp. 234-53; Harrison, pp. 105-110, 111-19.

G: McBeath & Morehouse, *Alaska State Government*, chs. 5, 8, pp. 111-44, 187-212; Morehouse & Harrison, *An Electoral Profile of Alaska*. Ehrlander, "Campaigns, Elections, and the Influence of Oil," in PE of Oil (BB), pp. 57-82, and McBeath & Lovecraft, "Begich v. Stevens" (2008)

Recommended: Makinson, *Open Secrets* (1986),

IV. State Government Issues

A. Issues of State Government and Agencies (April 7, 9)

Selections from reader: ch. 8, "Education" by Covey, Hill, Lind, and Oldaker; ch. 11, "Corrections" by Campbell & Pugh, and ch. 17, "Reforming Alaska's Political and Governmental System" by McBeath & Morehouse, pp. 109-23, 151-62, 237-48.

G: From reader, ch. 9, "Health," by Goes, ch. 10, "Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence," by Mulle, and ch. 12, "Transportation," by Gerken & Thomas, pp. 125-49, 163-80.

Recommended: McBeath, "Alaska," in *Education Reform in the American States* (2008) (BB).

Post draft of policy analysis paper on Blackboard by April 12; post constructive comments on two papers by April 23.

B. Natural Resource Issues (April 14, 16)

Selections from reader: ch. 14, "Three Case Studies," by Turek, ch. 15, "Subsistence," by Thornton, and ch. 16, "Fisheries," by Gilbertson, pp. 195-233.

G: From reader, ch. 13, "Land, Natural Resource and Environmental Issues," by Gladden & Austin, pp. 183-94. Berman, "Economic Development and State Ownership of Oil and Gas" and McBeath, "Protecting the Environment" in PE of Oil (BB), pp. 145-70, 197-233.

Recommended: Ross, *Environmental Conflict in Alaska* (2000); Coates, *The Trans-Alaska Pipeline Controversy* (1993); and Anahita & Mix, "Retrofitting frontier masculinity for Alaska's war against wolves," *Gender and Society*, Vol. 20, no. 3 (June 2006), 332-53.

V. Local Governments in Alaska

A. Local Government Structures (April 21, 23)

M&M, ch. 12, pp. 254-284; Harrison, pp. 161-73

G: Morehouse, McBeath & Leask, *Alaska's Urban and Rural Governments*, chs. 1-6, pp. 1-100; selection from reader, ch. 18, "The Size and Efficiency of Alaska State Government," by Nakazawa and Thomas, pp. 249-62; McBeath, "Changing forms of governance in the North," in *Globalization and the Circumpolar North* (draft, 2008).

B. Local Government Issue (April 28, 30)

M&M, chs. 13, pp. 285-300; reader, ch. 20, "Rural-Bush Local Government," by Shepro, pp. 275-85.

G: Morehouse, McBeath & Leask, chs. 7-12.

Recommended: Berger, *Village Journey*; McBeath, *North Slope Borough Government and Policymaking*; McBeath & Shepro, "The effects of environmental change on an arctic Native community," in *American Indian Quarterly*, January 2007 (BB).

Policy analysis paper due, April 30

VI. Conclusions (April 30)

M&M, ch. 14, pp. 301-14, and reader, ch. 21, "Alaska Public Policy Issues," Thomas & Burke, pp. 287-98; McBeath, "Conclusion" of PE of Oil (BB), pp. 233-48.

Final examination, May 7, Thursday, 1-3 p.m.