

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

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

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; Fineblgl pp. 23t7ngl pp.

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

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.