HNRS 391  Pebble Mine: Talking about Contentious Natural Resource Issues

Fridays, Feb. 1, 8, 15, March 1, 22  9:30 – Noon Allied Health Building Room 108
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Key Concepts

The information below outlines key concepts of the course (the order of the concepts does not reflect priority.)

1. **Legal Framework.** For better or worse, discussions about natural resource development occur within a specific western (and Alaskan) legal framework. To understand the discussion, one must generally understand the system of property rights and permitting laws that govern natural resource decisions. This class is not a course about detailed permitting procedures, mineral laws, or property rights, but it will provide a general understanding of these concepts so that students can understand natural resource discussions. There are also non-traditional (non-western) methods of making natural resource decisions. In Alaska, these are typically Native decision processes. While they are not enshrined in law, it is important to understand Native perspectives and decision processes, as these may influence many Alaskans’ perspectives on natural resource development, and the way that some decisions are made, especially on Native land.

2. **Role of Science.** Scientific information and conclusions are critical in natural resource decision-making. Scientific conclusions are often thought of as perfectly objective, value-free, neutral facts. However, science rarely makes policy on its own. Policy analysis is value-laden and full of analysis. The use of science – what questions to analyze, what endpoints are appropriate, and how science is used to make policy is an important concept. Understanding how science is and should be used in a natural resource decision process (and how it can be abused by opponents and proponents of a project) is important. It is also important to understand how traditional ecological knowledge is integrated (or not) into decisions.

3. **Information Literacy.** It is important to be an educated consumer of information. Even the casual observer of the Pebble Project must note that competing claims about the project cannot all be true. It is important to be able to be an educated consumer of information about natural resource projects. To be able think through competing claims beyond generalities such as “I don’t trust foreign mining companies…the government lies…environmental groups twist information into propaganda…”


4. **Characteristics of Natural Resource Disputes.** Disputes of all kinds share characteristics – from acrimonious divorces to copper mine permitting. Yet natural resources have some unique characteristics of their own. It is useful to recognize some concepts that are important to natural resource disputes.
   a. *Interests v. positions*
   b. *The dispute escalation sequence*
   c. *Distribution of power*
   d. *Distribution of risks and benefits*
   e. *The influence of funding and money*

5. **How to talk to people who vehemently disagree with you, who may not share your values, and who do not share your view of the world.** This skill is the heart of the difficult dialogues program. If you learn how to talk to those who passionately disagree with you, you will have a valuable skill useful in many situations. This skill is listed as a separate learning outcome for the class, but actually this outcome is intertwined with all of the others. It is important to be able to monitor your and others’ language for the hidden meanings and to be able to de-escalate contentious discussion. It is also important to learn techniques for talking through issues that people feel passionate about, which are often underlain by values that they (and you) may not fully understand but are frequently different from your values.

    Lesson Plan for Class 1; February 1
    Introduction: the Basics of the Dispute
    The Status Quo: the Rule of Law and Decision-Making in Natural Resources

    **Reading:** Background on Pebble Dispute by Bob Loeffler *(on Course Guide and emailed to students)*

    **Class Topics**
    Introduction(s), Course Expectations

    Strategies for Ensuring Civil Discourse on Controversial Topics
    - Code of Conduct
    - Language Sensitivity and Bias Monitoring
    - Listening Pairs
    - Ouch Exercise

    Introduction to Mining, Fisheries, Rule of Law and Permitting

    Assignment: Student will be introduced to the National Dialogue and Deliberation website. The assignment is to investigate one of the relevant approaches for public dialogue on contentious issues and prepare 2-page papers describing how that methodology might be applied to the Pebble conflict (due next class period), in preparation for 3-minute presentations introducing the class to one of these methodologies (during the 4th class).
Lesson Plan 2: Critique of the Status Quo
Other Perspectives on Decision Making
February 8

Reading Homework:


To Turn in: 2-page papers describing how the methodology they investigated could be applied to the Pebble conflict in Alaska.

Class Topics

Role of Science in Natural Resource Decisions: Guest Speaker Leslie Cornick (bio on Course Guide)

Alaska Native Dialogue and Deliberation Processes and Perspectives on Western Science, Guest Speaker: Larry Merculieff (bio on Course Guide)

Difficult Dialogues Exercises
- 5-minute rule
- framing
- what do you most fear?

Information Literacy

Assignments for Classes #2 and 5
Development of non-heat seeking questions for guest speakers. Work on modular debate and papers for final class.

Lesson Plan 3: Perspectives on Pebble
February 15

Reading Homework:
1. Mining Comes with Risks and Rewards (on Course Guide)

Notes from 12/19
2. Fractured Future: Balancing Risk with Reward (On Course Guide)
3. Obtaining Trustworthy Information (On Course Guide)
4. How to Evaluate Information Sources (On Course Guide)

To Turn in: Two questions to be asked per speaker. (emailed to Libby at eroderick@uaa.alaska.edu by Feb. 13)

Class Topic

Guest Speakers (order TBA; 20 min presentations, 10 min debriefs/Q and A)

a. Native Perspective Anti-Pebble
b. Native Speaker Pro Process/Pro Pebble
c. Environmental Group Anti-Pebble (Rick Halford)
d. Pebble Limited Partnership (John Shively)

Assignment for Class 4 –
Students will be given access to advertisements/Compass Articles on both sides of the Pebble issue. In assigned groups, students will be choose one on each side of the issue and research whether they believe the information presented is reliable using information from previous information literacy discussion and readings. Each student will write a 2-page analysis of the ads'/articles' credibility and each group will prepare a 5 minute presentation for Class 4.

Lesson Plan 4: Information Literacy
March 1

Homework to turn in: Research Claims by Both Sides – 2 page papers

Class Topics

Student presentations on advertisements/articles
The question of trust in contentious natural resource issues
Trust in scientific conclusions
Student reports on dialogue and deliberation methodologies from National Coalition of Dialogue and Deliberation

Assignment Class 5
Students write a 2-page paper outlining the arguments for the positions held by a stakeholder assigned to them, e.g., pro-process industry, Alaska Native pro-process, Native anti-Pebble, commercial fishing industry, (white) environmental groups. They will then engage in a modular debate articulating and defending those positions.
Lesson Plan 5: Modular Debate and Final Wrap-up
March 22

To turn in: 2-page paper outlining the arguments for position(s) held by stakeholder assigned.

Class Topics
Modular Debate
Final summary and wrap-up.

Grading
You will be graded on a 100 point system with 100 points possible.

Class Participation
Active participation in class discussion and activities, with comments and questions that clearly indicate you have done the readings prior to class.

Contributing to the creation of a class climate in which everyone’s voice is included and honored.
Up to 25 points

Assignments
Analysis of public discourse process: Up to 10 points (Due Feb. 8)
Questions for panelists: Up to 10 points
(Due by email to eroderick@uaa.alaska.edu Feb. 13)
Advertisement analysis and report: Up to 20 points (Due March 1)
Report on public discourse process: Up to 15 points (Due March 1)
Modular debate: Up to 20 points (Due March 22)

Assignments will be awarded points on the basis of the following criteria:
Thoroughness/completeness
Well-written and/or articulated (clearly thought out; arguments are presented logically; grammatical; references are made to class readings and discussion; relevance to issues is clearly articulated; others can easily follow and understand what you are trying to express)
Appropriate length
On time

Attendance
Attendance at all classes is mandatory. In such a short course, with so much to cover (and with several honored guest speakers), too much is lost if a single class is missed.
If one class is missed, grade automatically drops to a C.
If two classes are missed, you will fail the class.