

POLS 301 — POLITICS OF HAWAI`I

Ira Rohter Fall 2008

HAWAI'TS TROUBLED FUTURE:**How will the Islands respond to the three mega-challenges of the 21st century — globalization & over-development, Peak Oil, and wide-sweeping Climate Changes?**

Since Capt Cook dropped anchor in Kealahou Bay in 1778, Hawai`i's people, ecology, and social and political institutions have changed constantly. Understanding Hawai`i's present "political system" begins with recognizing that the Islands' history, from Pre-Contact time on, has been shaped by powerful social, cultural, political, and economic forces brought in by settlers from Polynesia, Europe, the United States, and Asia.

A Little History. Jumping to our recent post-World War II era, for 30 years after Statehood in 1959, Hawai`i has enjoyed a booming economy as it transformed into a fully developed "modern" society. But during the 1990s, new challenges arose as Hawai`i's economy struggled from sugar and pineapple plantation agriculture shutting down, and its new cash cow — tourism — flattened out. In response, Island leaders sought to revive mass tourism by granting even larger amounts of tax revenues and subsidies to the travel industry. Once the most Liberal of states, Democratic Legislators and Governors adopted conservative economic policies such as cutting funds for public services, lowering taxes on large corporations, promoting growth of all kinds, and awarding tax incentives to attract more offshore investors.

These trends accelerated in 2002 with the election of Hawai`i's first Republican governor in 40 years. Economic development and sprawling growth now reign largely unopposed, embraced by Democrats and Republicans alike. Besides adopting Mainland-type conservative economic ideas, the Islands are losing their once distinctive local culture as more U.S. Mainlanders and immigrants move in, and McWorld global values and media increasingly shape our way of thinking. Governor Lingle easily won reelection in 2006.

But Islanders are now faced with enormous challenges. Energy and food costs are rising dramatically because of the declining available of cheap oil (Peak Oil). Major economic crises will occur. And soon, the world's natural environment will be hugely altered by major Global Climate disruptions caused by climbing CO₂ emissions. Within a decade, Global Climate Warming will cause increasing floods and rising sea levels, ravaging droughts and deserts, catastrophic water shortages, more intense hurricanes, raging wildfires, resource wars -- with terrible humanitarian consequences -- unless we make Draconian cuts to our burning of fossil fuels, immediately and globally. Will our lethargic and often unresponsive political representatives, business leaders, and we — ordinary citizens — creatively respond to these unfolding crises by undertaking a major economic and social transformation? Or will we stagger from calamity to calamity?

TAKING ACTION. Besides analyzing the day-to-day events of Hawai`i's politics as

expressions of powerful social, political, and economic forces impacting the Islands and its people, **taking political action is the second focus of this class.** We consider: **How can we alter the behavior of the public leaders we elect, and ourselves, since everyone is enmeshed in a system that resists changing the status-quo?**

For years critics have argued that Hawai`i's natural environment and distinctive local culture has been deteriorating as business and political leaders promote even more mass tourism, shopping malls, Big Box stores, and Mainland style subdivisions and fancy mansions sprawling over the countryside. They complain that as Hawai`i's economy becomes dominated by transnational corporations, it produces greater extremes of rich and poor with a struggling middle-class, more cutting of vital social services, and a loss of Hawai`i's unique social culture and identity. Native Hawaiians' claims for justice and sovereignty remain mired in political gridlock. Most recently, while it is clear that the Islands are being greatly impacted by rising oil costs caused by Peak Oil, and Global Climate disruptions will begin to alter our environment and every facet of our lives — **little substantive has been done to deal with these eventualities** by our political representatives — both nationally and locally.

This course will examine major alterations in key institutions and behavior which could promote sustainable solutions that preserve Hawai`i's special biosphere and social identity. And especially, the role that each of us must take in creating new forms of political participation and leadership.

This course demands lots of reading and writing, and regular class attendance.

MAJOR TEXTS:

Noel Kent, *HAWAI`I: ISLANDS UNDER THE INFLUENCE*. Ronald Takaki, *PAU HANA: PLANTATION LIFE AND LABOR IN HAWAI`I*. Ira Rohter, *A GREEN HAWAI`I: SOURCEBOOK FOR DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES*. + Many readings on UH Lualaba website

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **READ READING ASSIGNMENTS ON-TIME, AND ATTEND CLASS REGULARLY.** As a 300-level course, this class demands considerable readings and writing. It follows more a **seminar discussion-oriented**, rather than, lecture format. Altho I open each class with a brief commentary or theoretical contextualization on each week's topics, I usually do not rehash the readings per se. We will divide into small groups (Teams) to discuss the assignments, relating them to daily happenings in Hawai`i and our own lives. Class visitors add their insights based on their own direct involvement in Hawai`i's political life. Since much of unique value happens in class, **reading the assigned materials on time [see 3. Weekly Quizzes below], and regular class attendance, is expected and required.**
2. **BIWEEKLY THINK-ABOUT PAPERS.** While we constantly discuss current issues and personalities in the news [see #4 below], this class takes a theory-based "political science" approach to Hawai`i's politics that emphasizes interpreting

current events via historical and analytical frameworks contained in the texts we read. Each Thursday I will hand out questions to guide your reading and reflections for the next week's classes. **Every other week, you are required to write up and hand in a succinct (1-2 page) reaction paper to the assigned readings.** These short papers are **due** the first day the material is discussed in class. Late papers are accepted, but are graded down.

3. **WEEKLY QUICK QUIZ AND TEAM-PRODUCED WORKSHEETS.** Every Tues each student takes a 15-minute in-class quiz covering the major concepts presented in the assigned readings for that week. Permanent "teams" then discuss, and present a worksheet outlining their conclusions about questions raised about the readings.
4. **FOLLOW TOPICAL HAWAI`I ISSUES.** Hawai`i's press, TV and radio are filled with material about many issues confronting the Islands — budget cuts and job creation, abortion and same-sex marriage, poor education, native Hawaiian rights, energy, food self-sufficiency, water disputes, crime and drugs, environmental pollution and destruction, homelessness, taxes POLS 301 students should follow these issues more completely by regularly looking at one of our local newspapers — *THE HONOLULU ADVERTISER*, *HONOLULU STAR-BULLETIN* [available on line] — and especially the *HONOLULU WEEKLY*, which often contains more critical coverage and analyses. You will need to be familiar with these "issues" during class discussions, and use them in your interviews of Legislators and in the Final Essay.
5. **INTERVIEWS WITH ACTIVISTS AND LEGISLATORS.** The question — "*How to best deal with Hawai`i's present problems, and prepare for the future?*" — is of prime concern to members of the State Legislature and community activists. Towards the end of the semester you will interview an Island Activist, and a Legislator, about their views. You will question them about what they see as "*the most important problems challenging Hawai`i today?*" and "*What solutions do you recommend?*" We will especially explore how they view "alternative solutions" presented in A Green Hawai`i. You will briefly write-up their viewpoints, as well as incorporate them in the writing of the Final Essay.
6. **TAKE-HOME MID-TERM, AND FINAL ESSAYS.** A 5 page Midterm, and Final essay, tie together the readings and discussions. The essays are **not** book reviews or summaries of readings, but analytical, synthesizing reflections on the assigned readings and major concepts presented in the course.
7. **GRADING CRITERIA**
 - 15% Biweekly readings Think-About papers
 - 25% In Class short quizzes
 - 20% Midterm essay
 - 10% Interviews with Activists and Legislators
 - 20% Final essay
 - 10% Class attendance and Team participation

**POLS 301 — "POLITICS OF HAWAI`I" FALL 2008
READING ASSIGNMENTS AND CLASS SCHEDULE**

**I. SETTING THE STAGE:
HAWAI`I'S CURRENT SITUATION
AND LIKELY FUTURES?**

- WEEK 1** — [Aug 25-29] Introduction to Course
"Picking Hawai`i's Future";
"Jobs" [Laulima website])
Overview of problems confronting Hawai`i & proposed fixes. Solutions or bandaids? Possible Isle futures: a Tourist Mecca, a Golden Pacific age, economic and ecological disaster, becoming a backwater society? *Who gains, who loses in each scenario?*
- WEEK 2** — [Sept 1-5] Rohter, *A GREEN HAWAI`I*, Ch.1 & Ch.2 & pp.53-57; "Hawai`i's Dirty Secret"; Managing Growth; James Howard Kunstler, "Making Other Arrangements-- A Wakeup call to a citizenry entering an age of oil scarcity"; "Climate Code Red." Drowning of Hawaii
Rohter's "Dark Parable" — What happens if growth-at-any-price trends continue? Kuntsler's, Climate Code Red, and Rohter's grim forecast of a vastly changed world where everything will change.
Hawai`i situation as of 2008 — a holistic analysis of the roots of Hawai`i's problems.

***** HAWAI`I'S RECENT POLITICAL PAST *****

- WEEK 3** — [Sept 8-12] *CATCH A WAVE*. Excerpts on Laulima.
Examination of Post-WWII political forces affecting Hawai`i & Rise of Democratic Party. Case study: the 1970 campaign for governor. Major actors and influences. Question — What's the same, different about 2008?
- George Cooper & Gavan Daws, *LAND AND POWER IN HAWAI`I*. Intro & selections
Economic power and political influence after Statehood. The "Democrat" years — the classic "who got what?" applied to Hawai`i. Transition from a progressive agenda to self-interest and muddling through.

II. FILLING IN THE CONTEXT OF ISLAND POLITICS
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***** OVERVIEW — A POLITICAL ECONOMY "READING" OF
HAWAI`I'S HISTORY *****

<p>WEEK 4 — [Sept 15-19] Noel Kent, <i>HAWAI`I: ISLANDS UNDER THE INFLUENCE.</i> Chapters "Neo- liberalism" handout [Laulima Website]</p>	<p>A critical socio-economic history of Hawai`i's "development." From kingdom to dependency, from <i>lo`i</i> to plantations to hotels, golf courses, and shopping centers. What is Globalism's 2008 form?</p>
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***** THE FIRST DWELLERS ON THE LAND — THE NATIVE
HAWAIIAN CULTURE *****

<p>WEEK 5 — [Sept 22-26] George Kanahale <i>KU KANAKA: STAND TALL.</i> (OPTIONAL) Kaili`ohe Kame`ekua's <i>TALES FROM THE NIGHT RAINBOW;</i> [Laulima website]</p>	<p>Understanding the values that underlie the pre-contact Hawaiians' life. Basic concepts of Hawaiian culture: love of the land [<i>malama `aina</i>], harmonious relations of human beings with one another and the universe [<i>`ohana, pono, & lokahi</i>]. Relevance today?</p>
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***** THE NEW IMMIGRANTS *****

<p>WEEK 6 — [Sept 29-Oct 3] Ronald Takaki, <i>PAU HANA: PLANTATION LIFE AND LABOR IN HAWAI`I 1835- 1920.</i> Chapters....</p>	<p>Takaki describes the experiences of the immigrants brought to Hawai`i to work on the plantations. Their struggles and successes, the values they carried with them, and acquired. Precursors to Democratic Party's uprising in the 1960s. Being "local" -- Does the past matter anymore?</p>
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***** POST-W.W.II INFLUENCES — THE AMERICAN CULTURE &
GLOBALIZATION *****

<p>WEEK 7 — [Oct 6-10] Holsworth & Wray, <i>AMERICAN POLITICS AND EVERYDAY LIFE.</i> Ch.1 — "Intro" & Ch.2 "Conventions of Consumer Society"; "Hey Kid. Buy This!" [Laulima website]</p>	<p>While Hawai`i sits thousands of miles from the U.S Mainland, with a unique history, it exists today within a matrix of distinctive American values and practices. The "American worldview"; the commandments of the "Consumer Society" — when global capitalism prevails.</p>
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*** **III. AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL FOR HAWAI`I** ***

- WEEK 8** — [Oct 13-17] Rohter, A
GREEN HAWAI`I, pp.57-64 & Ch 4, "Green Wai`alua"
Ch 12, "Sustainable Agriculture"; (optional - Organic Food on Oahu, MA`O Farm
- COMMUNITY-BASED ECONOMICS.** Examples of self-reliant Community development & economic democracy, i.e., worker, community, and locally owned businesses. A truly diversified economy based on self-reliance and locally-owned small businesses. Meeting our own needs — sustainable agriculture; eco/cultural/agro- tourism.
- WEEK 9** — [Oct 20-24] Rohter, A
GREEN HAWAI`I, ch 5, "Economic Democracy & Financing the Community-Based-Economy" & "The Mondragon co-ops" & "New Mondragon" "Naming Globalism" ; Optional -- "Alternatives to Corp power"
- Alternatives to globalization: A "commonwealth economy" — diversified, grounded in economic fairness, grassroots democracy, and ecological wisdom.
- WEEK 10** — [Oct 27-31] Rohter, A
GREEN HAWAI`I, ch.8, "Green Politics,
- CITIZEN-BASED POLITICS & REINVENTING GOVT.** Are "reforms" enough? vs. creating new political structures and processes. Decentralized decision-making and maximum citizen participation. Grassroots politics vs. top-down rule.
- WEEK 11** — [Nov 3-7] Rohter, A
GREEN HAWAI`I, CH.9, "Water, Energy, and Land"; "HECO Power Trip"; Other readings -- "10 Steps in 10 Years to 100 Percent Renewable Power"; "12 Tips for the Sustainability Shift"
- SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DESIGN (I) -- RESOURCES.** Living an ecologically-balanced lifestyle: the soft energy path, conservation of land and water resources, reforestation, etc. How Hawai`i will look after Peak Oil / global Climate Change cut in.
- WEEK 12** — [Nov 10-14] **WEEK 14**
"Kapolei Villages" ch 6, & "Palolo" ch 7,
- SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DESIGN (II) --** "Smart growth" vs conventional solutions to Hawai`i's housing problems, which = more car-based urban sprawl. Instead, greenbelts and urban eco-villages, co-housing, community gardens and parks, community-based planning.
- WEEK 13** — [Nov 17-21] **ROUNDTABLE ON HAWAIIAN**
- How should we respond to the shameful history of the Hawaiians' dispossession from

SOVEREIGNTY
handouts + guest
speaker.

their land and loss of power? Is the restoration of Hawaiian land and self-governance approaching? Or continued assimilation likely? New relationships — Models of nationhood; a Recognition Bill?

WEEK 14 — [Nov 25] *GREEN HAWAI`I*, ch.10, "A Fulfilling Community Life"

A more fulfilling community life.
Examples of a caring society = preventative health, the elderly. Green Education — Passing on values appropriate for the 21st Century.

WEEK 15 [Dec 1-5] "Chattanooga"; "Korea's New Lions" ("386 Generation"), Louis Gibbs Love's Canal; Youth Climate Movement; "Communities Take Power"

GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE
A new generation of leaders emerging. Citizen empowerment, community-based decision-making, forces changing the political and social agendas of the Islands.

WEEK 16 [Dec 9-11] Rohter, A *GREEN HAWAI`I*, ch. 11 "Emergence of a Green Hawai`i", plus other readings

Various examples of How major changes might happen in Hawai`i