

University of Alaska Anchorage
School of Education
3211 Providence Drive
Anchorage, Alaska 99508-8269

ED 581
Professional Learning in Science Education:
Bears of Denali

1 Credit, Graded P/NP

Summer 2026

Course Sponsor: Alaska Geographic, Murie Science and Learning Center, Denali National Park

Instructor: Pat Owen

Educational Resource: Paula Davis

Primary Grading Instructor: Jessica Brillhart

Facilitating Instructor: Jessica Brillhart

Contact Information Address: Alaska Geographic, Murie Science and Learning Center
P.O. Box 136, Denali Park, AK 99755

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Course Meeting Information

Location: Murie Science and Learning Center, Denali National Park & Preserve entrance

Start and End Date: August 3 – 5, 2026

Class Day(s) & Time(s): August 3rd, 6:30 p.m. through August 5th, 4 p.m., continuous residential course

Final Project Due: Last day of class.

Course Description: Participants will join Wildlife Biologist Pat Owen to learn from her over 30 years of studying bears in Denali National Park and Preserve. Field days will be spent investigating grizzly bear habitat and learning about this animal's behavior, life history, and their role in the Denali ecosystem. Discussions will include ongoing grizzly bear research and how to stay safe while in bear country. Participants will consider how to integrate their learning from this fieldwork course into their teaching or educational environments.

Intended Audience: Teachers and other interested educators

Course Prerequisite/Co-requisites: None

Course Design:

- a. Requires 15 contact hours and approximately 30 hours of engaged learning.
- b. Does not apply to any UAA certificate or degree program.
- c. No UAA lab and/or materials fees beyond standard charges.
- d. This Murie Science and Learning Center course will be entirely field-based. Learning will be achieved through lectures, group discussions, field observations, and field activities. This course is based upon the collegial sharing, collaboration, and support of the participants and facilitator as a community of learners. Course activities will include common readings and group discussions, collective learning processes, peer coaching/mentoring, and reflective practices.

Instructional Goals and Defined Outcomes:

RESEARCH BASED THEORY/PRINCIPLES/PRACTICES/TRENDS (CONTENT)

- 1.0 Instructional Goal:
The instructor will introduce the natural history of grizzly bears of interior Alaska to the participants including bear behavior and characteristics of their habitat.

Defined Outcomes:

- 1.1 Participants will demonstrate an understanding of the characteristics of Denali Park bear habitat.
- 1.2 Participants will demonstrate an understanding of the life cycle of a grizzly bear.
- 1.3 Participants will demonstrate an understanding of the common grizzly bear behavior.

THEORY INTO PRACTICE (APPLICATION)

- 2.0 Instructional Goal:
The instructor will teach participants the skills for safe travel in bear habitat and an understanding of how bears respond to human interaction. The instructor will present the facets of current research, methodologies and management of bears through hands-on demonstration.

Defined Outcomes:

- 2.1 Participants will practice safe behavior in bear country and during bear-human interactions.
- 2.2 Participant will demonstrate knowledge of the current research, research methodology and the management of grizzly bears in Denali Park.
- 2.3 Participants will discuss how they will incorporate their learnings into their teaching or education environments.

REFLECTION ON THEORY INTO PRACTICE (REFLECTION)

- 3.0 Instructional Goal:
Engage participants in discussions, reflective journaling and informal sharing about science instruction and how to incorporate gained knowledge and experience into their classrooms.

Defined Outcome:

Participants will review and reflect upon the scientific information covered. Participants will complete a journal, reflecting on how the information can be shared with their students.

RELATIONSHIP TO STANDARDS

4.0 Instructional Goal:
Familiarize participants with science content standards addressed by the strategies and concepts presented.

Defined Outcome:
Participants will identify the Science-Content standards applicable to their classroom.

Writing Style Requirements:

Participants' writing will reflect the clarity, conciseness, and creativity expected of post-baccalaureate certificated educators.

Attendance and Make-up Policy:

Participants are expected to actively participate in all classes as a contributing member of a learning community. Attendance is mandatory, and due to the ongoing field-based nature of this course, make-up work is not possible.

Course Assignments, Assessment of Learning, and Grading System:

Course grading will be Pass/No Pass based upon the following:

- a. Participation 50%
Participants will be expected to actively and collegially participate in discussions, activities, and other process experiences during the seminar.
- b. Final Project - Journal completion 50%
Participants will complete journal assignments to be turned in to MSLC field guide on the last day of class. Assignments will include, but are not limited to, thoughtful reflection based upon seminar experience and an application plan of how participants will integrate issues and content discussed into their own classroom setting.

Quality of Work

Grade of "Pass"

Passing work includes all components of the assignment and meets proficient criteria. It is focused, developed, supported, logical, and acceptable work with minimal errors. Work of this quality indicates understanding of key concepts and knowledge base.

Grade of "No Pass"

Work graded "No Pass" may lack key criteria/components of the task and show little or no evidence of conceptual understanding or knowledge utilization. Work may also show minimal or no organization/development and/or clear focus (may be difficult to follow) and may contain numerous errors. This grade indicates minimal or no knowledge or concept development. It may also mean that work was not attempted.

Course Calendar/Schedule:

Monday	6:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.	Greeting and check in at MSLC
	6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.	Introduction, orientation & overview <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Introduction to bear safety and camping/hiking etiquette○ Brief overview of current research
	7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.	Drive to MSLC Field Camp and settle in

- Tuesday 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Exploration of Denali
- Immersion in bear habitat
 - Identification of bear foods and discussion of timing of availability
 - Discussion of bear behaviors including response to humans, other wildlife, and other bears, mating, feeding, denning
 - Discussion of current and past research and what we have learned
 - Looking for bears in the field and taking time to observe and discuss their behavior
- 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Dinner and evening discussions
- Tools of the trade – field research equipment
 - Teacher study group to discuss the day’s activities and how the information can be shared with students
 - Identify applicable science content standards addressed by course content
- Wednesday 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Continued exploration of Denali
- Radio telemetry exercise
 - Continued study of bear habitat, behavior, and research
- 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Return drive to MSLC

Final Project Due: last day of class

Course Texts, Readings, Handouts, and Library Reserve:

Required Text/Materials:

Eide, S., Miller, S., and Reynolds, H. (2008) *Brown bear*. Juneau, AK: Alaska Department of Fish & Game. Retrieved from:
http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/education/wns/brown_bear.pdf

National Park Service (n.d.) *Grizzly Bear*. Retrieved from:
<https://www.nps.gov/dena/learn/nature/grizzlybear.htm>

Stonorov, Derek. (2000). *Living in harmony with bears*. Anchorage, AK: National Audubon Society, Alaska State Office. Retrieved from:
http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/home/library/pdfs/wildlife/research_pdfs/living_harmony_bears.pdf

Suggested Text/Materials:

Bentzen, T., Shideler, R., and O’Hara, T. (2014). *Use of stable isotope analysis to identify food-conditioned grizzly bears on Alaska’s North Slope*. *Ursus* 25(1):14-23. Retrieved from:

<https://akgeo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Bentzen-et-al-2014-Stable-isotope-analysis-to-identify-food-conditioned-Gbears.pdf>

Gardner, C.L. et al. (2014). *Movement patterns and space use of maternal grizzly bears influence cub survival in Interior AK*. *Ursus* 25(2):121-138. Retrieved from: <https://akgeo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Gardner-Craig-L.-et-al-2014-Movement-patterns-and-Space-Use-of-Maternal-Grizzly-Bears-Influence-Cub-Survival-in-Interior-Alaska-1.pdf>

Smith, T, Herrero, S, and DeBruyn, T. (2005). *Alaskan brown bears, humans, and habituation*. *Ursus* 16(1):1–10. Retrieved from: <https://akgeo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Smith-et-al.-Br-bears-and-habituation.pdf>

Smith et al. (2008) *Efficacy of Bear Deterrent Spray in Alaska*. *The Journal of Wildlife Management* 72(3): 640-645. Retrieved from: <https://akgeo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Smith-et-al-Efficacy-of-pepper-spray.pdf>

Smith et al. (2012) *Efficacy of Firearms for Bear Deterrence in Alaska*. *The Journal of Wildlife Management*. Retrieved from: <https://akgeo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Smith-et-al.-2012-Efficacy-of-firearms.pdf>

Content References:

Breiter, M. (2005). *Bears*. Buffalo, NY: Firefly Books.

Busch, R. (2000). *The grizzly almanac*. New York, NY: The Lyons Press.

Gibbons, G, (2003) *Grizzly bears*. New York: Holiday House.

Murie, A. (1985). *The Grizzlies of Mount McKinley*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Tagliaferro, L. (2004). *Bears and their dens*. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press.

Standards References:

Alaska Comprehensive Center. (2012). *Guide to Implementing the Alaska Cultural Standards for Educators*. Juneau, AK: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. Retrieved from: <https://education.alaska.gov/standards/cultural>

Alaska Native Knowledge Network. (1998). *Alaska standards for culturally responsive schools*. Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Press. Retrieved from: <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/publications/culturalstandards.pdf>

National Research Council, the National Science Teachers Association, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and Achieve. (2013). *The next generation science standards*. Retrieved from <http://www.nextgenscience.org/next-generation-science-standards>.

State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. (2019). *Content and performance standards for Alaska students*. Juneau, AK: Author. Retrieved from: [https://education.alaska.gov/akstandards/standards/Content and Performance Standards_edited.pdf](https://education.alaska.gov/akstandards/standards/Content_and_Performance_Standards_edited.pdf)

State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. (2019). *K-12 Science Standards for Alaska*. Juneau, AK. Author. Retrieved from: <https://education.alaska.gov/akstandards/science/science-standards-for-alaska.pdf?v=1>

State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. (2012). *Alaska English/Language Arts and Math Standards*. Juneau, AK: Author. Retrieved from: [https://education.alaska.gov/akstandards/standards/ELA and Math.pdf](https://education.alaska.gov/akstandards/standards/ELA_and_Math.pdf)

Informed by the School of Education Vision, Mission, and Conceptual Framework:

We believe that the preparation and support of professional educators is the shared responsibility of the University of Alaska Anchorage and our partners, and that our programs must evolve dynamically in response to unique community needs, research, and continuous program assessment. This PACE course is designed to meet a professional development need in response to our partner school districts and professional organizations. The course fits within the mission of the UAA School of Education as we encourage lifelong learning to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

Link to Alaska Educator Content and Performance Standards:

This professional development is rooted in the fundamentals of Alaska’s standards for teachers, administrators, and beginning teachers in Alaska’s Administrative Code, 4 AAC 04.200. It is offered to encourage and support practicing educators attain, maintain, or surpass the standards for effectively preparing today’s students for successful lives and productive careers. (<https://education.alaska.gov/standards/other-standards>)

Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning:

This course is further informed by the Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning which outline the “characteristics of professional learning that leads to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results.” As explicit in the standards, “professional learning is for educators to develop the knowledge, skills, practices and dispositions they need to help student perform at a higher levels.” (<https://standards.learningforward.org>)

Course Policies:

Incomplete Grades

Due to the nature of this course, grades of incomplete will not be permitted.

ADA Policy

The provision of equal opportunities for students who experience disabilities is a campus-wide responsibility and commitment. Disabilities Support Services (DSS) is the designated UAA department responsible for coordinating academic support services for students who experience disabilities. To access support services, students must contact DSS (786-4530 or 786-4536 TTY) and provide current disability documentation that supports the requested services. Disability support services are mandated by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. Additional information may be accessed at the DSS Office in RH 105 or on-line at www.uaa.alaska.edu/dss.

Academic Dishonesty Policy

Academic integrity is a basic principle that requires all students to take credit only for the ideas and efforts that are their own. Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty are defined as the submission of materials in assignments, exams, or other academic work that is based on sources prohibited by the faculty member. Academic dishonesty is defined further in the “student Code of Conduct.” In addition to any adverse academic action that may result from the academically dishonest behavior, the University specifically reserves the right to address and sanction the conduct involved through student judicial review procedures and the Academic Dispute Resolution Procedure specified in the University catalog.

Professional and Ethical Behavior

University of Alaska Anchorage School of Education students are expected to abide by the State of Alaska Code of Ethics of the Education Profession and professional teaching standards as they concern students, the public, and the profession. The standards, adopted by the Professional Teaching Practices Commission, govern all members of the teaching profession. A violation of the code of ethics and professional teaching standards are grounds for revocation or suspension of teaching certification.

Technology Integration

University of Alaska Anchorage School of Education students are expected to (a) demonstrate sound understanding of technology operations and concepts; (b) plan and design effective learning environments and experiences supported by technology; (c) implement curriculum plans that include technology applications in methods and strategies to maximize student learning; (d) facilitate a variety of effective assessment and evaluation strategies; (e) use technology to enhance productivity and professional practice; and (f) understand the social, ethical, and human issues surrounding use of technology in PreK-12 schools and apply those principles in practice.

Course Safety and Risk

This course is sponsored by Alaska Geographic and the Murie Science and Learning Center. The University of Alaska Anchorage provides the credit option for interested participants. This course takes place entirely outdoors and within a remote area of Alaska. Field courses, such as this, do have inherent risks. These risks will be outlined by the course instructors and in the Alaska Geographic Participant Release of Liability, Waiver of Claims, Assumption of Risks, and Indemnity Agreement form. This form will be provided at the time of registration and a signed copy is required in order to attend.

Non-Discrimination Policy

The University of Alaska is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer and educational institution. The University of Alaska does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, citizenship, age, sex, physical or mental disability, status as a protected veteran, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, parenthood, sexual orientation, gender identity, political affiliation or belief, genetic information, or other legally protected status. The University's commitment to nondiscrimination, including against sex discrimination, applies to students, employees, and applicants for admission and employment. Contact information, applicable laws, and complaint procedures are included on UA's statement of nondiscrimination available at www.alaska.edu/nondiscrimination