

# **Syllabus – Online POL 121 American Government and Politics, WEC, Spring 2008**

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## **Learning Goals**

Through successful completion of this course, you will:

1. Explain how the constitutional structure shapes American politics
2. Understand key institutions of American government
3. Understand pathways of participation in the American political process
4. Analyze prospects for American democracy and your linkage to the larger political system

## **Book List**

- Watts, **Understanding American Government and Politics**
- Wayne, **The Road to the White House 2004: The Politics of Presidential Elections**

## **Course Organization**

This is an Online course, a somewhat different format than you may have been familiar with in Weekend College or the Rochester program.

The value of this course to you will depend first upon your reading the materials with care. In addition the value of the course will depend upon your engagement with the instructor and with your fellow students in active use of on-line discussion. For this reason, you are asked to regularly post your reading reports and to comment on the reading reports of others. The instructor's on-line comments and questions will help to deepen and extend your understanding of the reading and the points that are introduced by the on-line reports and the commentaries.

## **Further Information on Class Activity**

**1. Reading Reports:** All chapter assignments for reading reports will be made during the first week of class and those assignments will be posted week by week into the Moodle site for this class. That will tell each student when his or her chapter reports are due. The first assignments will not be due until the second week of class. Even if you are not assigned a chapter for a given week, all students are expected to read the assigned material each week.

You should expect to read and post your reading reports on your assigned chapters by the middle of the assignment week (Tuesday or Wednesday). Your reading report should be in the form of a short two to three page paper as described below.

**2. Response Commentaries:** All students are responsible each week for posting response commentaries to the Moodle class site . This means each student should post a reply commentary to at least one of the reports by the end of the assignment week (Friday to Sunday). If you want to post commentary but new reading report is slow to post, feel free to post your own comments on relevant material.

**3. Open Discussion:** You are welcome to initiate discussion and exchanges--apart from the requested posting--with each other on ideas or views that relate to the subject matter. This should show some real differences of opinion and viewpoint among you. The ground rules are the usual courtesies of the Internet and a recollection that we intending to learn together which means listening to differing viewpoints. You are also welcome to post references to articles or blogs or sites or other media that you think others in the class would want to know about.

**4. Preparing the reading reports & response commentaries:**

The reading reports should give an understandable summary of the main points and arguments of the reading, as you understood them. In addition to the summary of the reading you are asked to reflect on what you have read in the chapter. What especially interested you? What was newly informative to you? Were there any points difficult to understand?

Response commentaries should identify your evaluation of the main points presented by a particular reading report and pose questions to the reporter if you have any.

**5. Participation Expectations:**

The minimum expectation are (1) that each student is expected to be in the classroom site at least twice a week; (2) that each student is expected to post reading reports on time when assigned; and (3) that each student is expected to post response commentaries weekly to at least one of the reading reports of others.

More frequent participation is welcome and credit for more active posting work will be reflected in the grade.

**6. The Final Paper** will ask you to draw on class readings and anything else you have read you believe is relevant. The Final Paper assignment will be available near the middle of the course and a space will be created in the Moodle site for posting your final papers.

7. Prof. Hedblom will act as a general guide in the course, she will respond to reading reports and participate in the posting discussions each week. If you have questions, please contact her directly by email or by phone. She will provide a mid term evaluation on progress in the class to each student.

Reading reports/response commentaries/class participation	60% (20% each)
Final Paper Project	40%

