

Syllabus – Online Augsburg Course, Fall, 2008

POL 121 American Government and Politics

Contact Information

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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, second edition
- Wayne, The Road to the White House 2008: The Politics of Presidential Elections, 2008 edition.

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

All chapter assignments for reading reports will be made on the Moodle site during the first week of class. No reports will be due until the second week of class. The Final Paper Project will ask you to draw on class readings and anything else you have read you believe is relevant. Therefore it should be clear that all students are asked to read all of the assigned texts even though you have specific responsibility for reporting on a given chapter.

Each student will be responsible for preparing and submitting reports and response commentary to the class on specific readings or parts of specific readings. You will be expected to prepare three such reports as a short two to three page papers to be submitted to the class discussion space. Everyone will do some summarizing and submitting and everyone will be expected to have read the material on time.

You should expect to read and post your assigned reports by the middle of the assignment week (Tuesday to Wednesday) and to post your reply commentary to at least two of the reports due each week by the end of the assignment week (Friday to Sunday). Therefore, at a minimum you should expect to log in twice a week to participate in the class. If you need to post commentary but new material is slow to post, feel free to post your own comments on relevant material.

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.

#### How to prepare 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.

The Final Paper Project will be available near the middle of the course.

#### Class Requirements and Grading

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