

**Analytic Paper Assignment**  
**POL 1201**  
**Fall 2005**

1. Read one of the following books: *Bowling Alone*, *Nickel and Dimed*, or *What's the Matter with Kansas* and write an analytic essay on that book answering one of the questions listed for the book.
2. The paper should be 4-6 pages and should be written in the form of a standard paper (12 point font, 1 inch margins, double sided).
  - a) Avoid long quotes in the text—use footnotes instead. Citations can be given by just putting the page numbers in parentheses at the end of the sentence like this: (Putnam, p.36).
  - b) If you draw from another source like the course text book, do the same thing, (Greenberg & Page, p. 36.).
3. This paper is not a summary or a book review, rather it is a long essay. Thus, in writing this essay on whichever book you choose, you should assume your reader (me!) has read the book and neither needs nor wants an extensive plot summary. Make an argument and present your thesis at the start of the paper. Then, use evidence for assertions you make throughout the paper and continue to tie your evidence to your thesis. While clearly the paper is asking for your opinions of the book and its thesis, these opinions should be thoughtful and grounded in a critical assessment of the book. In other words your review and answer to the question at hand should not reject the book either because it is inelegant prose or because you just think the author pig-headed, etc. You must back up your arguments with examples, evidence and logic.
4. A hard copy of your analytic essay is due Wednesday, November 9<sup>th</sup> in class. You should have completed reading the book you've chosen by class time on Wednesday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> since we'll be doing an exercise on the content of all the books that day.
5. I'm happy to read drafts, go over an outline or argument you want to make, etc. with you during office hours. If you'd like to go over a draft you must e-mail me an electronic version of the draft prior to Monday, November 7<sup>th</sup>.
6. The analytic essay is worth close to 15% of your overall course grade. Please specify which question you're answering and what book you've read in the header of your paper (e.g., after your name indicate *Bowling Alone*, #2)..

**For *Bowling Alone***

1. What is social capital and why does it matter for the American political process? Drawing on your readings, lectures, and your observations, evaluate the author's thesis. What information, if any, can we glean from Putnam's argument about democracy in the U.S.?
2. What can be done about the crisis Putnam identifies? Is the problem fixable or not? Are you convinced it needs fixing? Are Putnam's proposed remedies the answer to the problem he identifies?
3. Write your own question, but get it approved by me first.

**For *Nickel and Dimed***

1. "Ehrenreich's book is depressing, but I'm not sure there's much in it that the American political system could alter." Do you agree or disagree? (be sure to cite evidence!)
2. For all their radicalism, many critics say the founders would not be particularly disturbed reading Ehrenreich's book. Why or why not? What leads you to think this? Should they be?
3. Ehrenreich believes this book is exactly the kind of thing classes in American politics should be reading. Why do you think? What lessons, if any, does she hold regarding American politics? Is she right or wrong?
4. Write your own question, but get it approved by me first.

**For What's the Matter with Kansas**

1. Frank suggests that working class “moral values” trump economic considerations in terms of political attitudes and political behavior for Kansan backlash conservatives. Do moral and social issues really persuade people at the ballot box?
2. How does religious background influence political decisions? After reading Frank’s argument about the power of church in Midwestern politics, do you feel there’s something wrong with the way religious values are influencing politics in places like Kansas, or is this democracy in action?
3. Write your own question, but get it approved by me first.