

**HONR 228 Politicians and their World**  
**10/6/2008**

**Writing Assignments:**

1. Have students work jointly on an ambitious project that is more than an exercise. This is, a project intended for a real audience—the next President of the United States. Secondly, for members of the Fredonia community.

Project Title: *The President*

Description: *how must a president conduct himself to be effective in his office?* Answering this question requires us to think about three related questions.

- *First*, what kind of person is the president-elect? What are his goals? What personal qualities seem likely to lead to success? What qualities may hinder his performance in office? That is, what are his personal strengths and weaknesses?
- *Second*, what is the domestic and international environment in which he must conduct his presidency? What are the challenges—immediate and remote—he is likely to face?

*Third*, what is the nature of the office he holds?

2. Two models available to the students: Machiavelli's *Prince*, and a contemporary work entitled, *Memo to the New President*, by Michael Genovese.
3. They are reading John McCain's autobiography, *Faith of My Fathers*, and Barack Obama's, *The Audacity of Hope*. David Gergen's *Eyewitness to Power*, a study of the leadership of Nixon, Ford, Reagan and Clinton.
4. Each student will write three papers in preparation for the final, group project. Each of these will be graded in the usual way. I ask my students to submit their papers as email attachments. I then use the Microsoft tracking function to add my comments/corrections to the student's paper.

5. The students have divided themselves into five working groups devoted to a specific issue area they have identified as critical:

Economic recovery  
Educational reform  
Environment/Energy  
Reorientation of US foreign policy  
Iraq/Afghanistan

6. Three individual papers:

- First Paper: *What are the critical qualities of leadership needed in the next President?*
- Second Paper: *Exploration of a critical issue.*
- Third Paper: *How must President McCain or President Obama conduct himself to effectively address the issue you addressed in your second paper? Give particular attention to his relationship with Congress, the media and the American people. Remember, too, that you are writing to a specific person. You should reflect in your paper your understanding of who this person is, i.e., his strengths and weaknesses as you and others see them.*

7. The final group project—*Advice to the Next President*, or simply *The President*—is a compilation and revision of these individual contributions. How are they going to make this work? I haven't figured this out yet.