

TO: MPA 500 Students

December 2008

FR: Donald J. Calista

RE: Opening Letter

Welcome to the MPA Program and to the Spring 2009 version of MPA 500L700, which begins officially on January 20th. Whether this course is your first online experience or you do this stuff all the time, we hope you'll find the course useful and, perhaps, even interesting. Consider reviewing the iLearn tutorial prior to the course's opening.

The online program moves fast. During the eight weeks of this course, the workload is the equivalent of taking two graduate courses at the same time. Luckily, you'll have the flexibility and convenience of studying whenever you choose and you will not have to spend time commuting, or even changing clothes. We hope this effort results in a more focused and efficient use of our time, as well as less need to do laundry.

Since the online courses are eight weeks long and they cover the same material as the traditional 14-week course, it is essential that we start working seriously on the subject matter on the class start date, which as you will recall is : that's right—let's not always see the same raised hands—January 20, 2009.

The luxury of taking the first two weeks to get used to a class, or of falling behind and catching up later, is simply not available for this type of course. Therefore, we must be prepared and ready to go immediately. Probably this will build your character some way. The opening week's course material and the Syllabus, which contains various assignment details, will be available on the Friday preceding January 20, 2009, which is January 16, 2009. Afterwards, the course material is released on the Thursdays of each subsequent week at 5PM ET, including the weekly Discussion Forum (DF) question(s).

People will be placed in teams of three during the first week of the course. To avoid inconveniencing others, if someone is dropping the course, do so early in the first week. If, for whatever reason, someone faces a situation of having to disengage from a team during the semester, then, that person will withdraw from the course, without grade penalty, and without a payment refund. Teamwork is integral to the MPA work, as it is to life in general.

Within each week's Discussion Forum (DF), we will find a topic called "What's Happening?" This is the public space we use to ask any question, raise any issue, express a concern, or let us know about anything else. We do not use e-mail to the instructor. Students may choose to e-mail one another, however. The team component makes it a necessity. If people want to look at the underlying rationale for the perspectives adopted for this e-learning course, they may review a recent article I wrote:

[The Transformational Nature of Web-Based Mediation: Constructing a Research Agenda for In-Service Public Administration Students](#), *Public Performance & Management Review*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Dec 2006. Vol. 30, Iss. 2; p. 245ff.

As needed, we will employ synchronous office hours or chats. In the past, the usefulness of What's Happening? has limited attendance at chats. That's fine, as it is voluntary. Chats will be announced a week beforehand.

Course Notes can be found by clicking Lessons which will appear each week on Thursdays at 5PM for the following week's material. The DF question also is released on Thursdays at 5PM. The first week's Lesson and DF question, however, will be open on the Friday, January 16th. We begin on January 20th, 2009, which is when I will sign-in officially. Over that weekend I will pop in to see if anyone has a question to be asked in the Week One DF in "What's Happening?"—and not e-mail.

The course adopts a distinctively global perspective, an orientation that should infuse everyone's thinking and acting from this point forward—if people have not done so already.

People can order the books online from our very deluxe Marist Bookstore (<http://marist.bkstore.com/>). Please make sure to get your textbooks before class begins.

The required textbooks for this course will be:

Nicholas Henry, *Public Administration and Public Affairs*, 10th ed., Prentice Hall, 2007  
ISBN-10: 0132222973

Jay Shafritz and Albert Hyde, *Classics of Public Administration*, 6th ed., Thomson Wadsworth, 2007, ISBN 13-978-0-495-56591-5

Arthur Miller/Henrik Ibsen, *An Enemy of the People*, Penguin, 1951

An *optional* reading which will come in handy throughout the program is:  
Susan Wheelan, *Creating Effective Teams: A Guide for Members and Leaders*, Sage, 1999

We will have access to the course "live" on the Friday before the official start date, if all goes well. When this class is "live" (students have registered and paid and student names have been downloaded to the class roster), you may access this course simply by

Going to:	<a href="http://ilearn.marist.edu">http://ilearn.marist.edu</a>
Entering:	Marist account and password

If you are a new student (and have paid and registered), you must contact our Marist Help Desk to obtain your Kaccount (845-575-HELP). Please take time to go through the “Course Demo” at the elearning site. Returning students who have forgotten their Kaccount must contact the Help Desk, blush prettily, and ask to be reminded of your number.

Two confessions: one is that when we first began this e-MPA program I expressed to colleagues that when the seminar arrived, the technology would be innovative enough to employ full motion voice and video. That prediction was made during the euphoria of the dot.com era. So much for crystal balls. The ubiquity of broad bandwidth just has not happened, but it soon will.

The other confession is that this semester is my first in using iLearn. Errors will be made here and there about which I trust we can have a good laugh. For example, for the same functionality, the nomenclature changed—what was a Discussion Group (DG) is now a Discussion Forum (DF), as noted. So, let us know when things go awry in the weekly “What’s Happening?”—and not e-mail.

The course will be open for view on the Friday before classes officially begin on January 20<sup>th</sup>. Reminder: Use the *What’s Going On?* in the DFs for any communications—and not e-mail.

See you soon. Bonne chance a tout!