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**UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO**  
**POLS 2310-009: Introduction to Politics (CRN: 13609)**  
**Online Course**  
**Fall (701) 2017**

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**Instructor:** Dr. Cigdem V. Sirin  
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**E-mail:** [cigdemsirin@utep.edu](mailto:cigdemsirin@utep.edu)  
**Class Website:** Blackboard through MyUTEP portal

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### **COURSE OVERVIEW**

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This course is a general introduction to the study of politics and provides a broad overview of the world's political systems. The primary goals of the course are to introduce you to several key concepts and theories within the scientific method of studying politics, increase your familiarity with different models of government, and help you develop a better understanding of U.S. and Texas political practices and institutions. We will cover topics such as political culture, ideologies, institutional structures, and political economy with comparisons and references to the United States.

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### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

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I believe, with adequate effort and willingness, all of you are capable of doing well in this course. By the end of this course, you can accomplish the following learning outcomes:

- To define, understand, and apply the concepts, principles, and practices of politics as background for the study of American and Texas political institutions.
- To recognize the analytical methods and approaches that political scientists use for the scientific study of politics.
- To apply and critique a body of factual knowledge and theories relevant to understanding different domestic and international political structures.
- To comprehend and evaluate the effects of and the relationships among historical, social, political, economic, cultural, and global forces on the U.S. and other political systems.
- To interpret and analyze factors influencing contemporary political relations within and between political systems around the world.
- To discern alternative explanations for different levels and types of political development among political systems around the world.
- To identify and understand differences and commonalities across political ideologies and cultures.
- To recognize and tolerate alternative points of view on historical and contemporary problems in comparative and international politics.

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### **LEARNING MODULES**

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This course is designed using a modular format—that is, each week is “packaged” as a single module so that all the materials, lecture notes, submission areas, discussion posts are in one area for a given week.

## **GRADING POLICY**

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Your final grade in this class will be based on the following requirements:

<b>Course Requirement</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Due Dates</b>
Midterm Exam	30%	will be activated on Monday, 09/18 @ 11:00am and due on Tuesday, 09/19 @ 11:00pm (MT).
Final Exam	30%	will be activated on Thursday, 10/12 @ 11:00am and due on Friday, 10/13 @ 11:00pm (MT).
Essay	20%	due on Friday, 10/06 @ 11:00pm (MT).
Discussion Posts	20%	Discussion posts and practice quizzes are due by Sunday @ 11:00pm at the end of each week.
Practice Quizzes	Bonus points	

All grades (including the final grade) are based on the following distribution of points:

<b>Points</b>	<b>Letter</b>
$\geq 89.50$	A
79.50-89.49	B
69.50-79.49	C
59.50-69.49	D
$\leq 59.49$	F

I do not change grades or give individual-specific extra-credit opportunities to be fair to everyone. If you are concerned about your grade, please contact and/or visit me during my office hours or by appointment. This is particularly important if your grade on the first exam is not what you expected. I will not change the grade, but I can give you feedback and suggestions on how to improve your performance in the class.

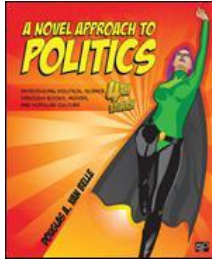
## **SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESS**

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Keep in mind that this online course is very labor-intensive, particularly since the course covers 16 weeks of course material in a relatively short 7-week period. Although completing a course online might seem easier than attending face-to-face classes on the surface, it actually takes a large amount of additional effort and time to (a) read and comprehend all the material (both the detailed lecture notes and assigned readings) and (b) type out and turn in the online class discussion posts, assignments, and other online class activities. While regular classes may require about 7-9 hours of weekly work, our online class will require you to invest closer to around 16-18 hours of dedicated time per week in order to succeed. On the bright side, the 7-week course will be completed in a relatively short time and will earn you the same three credit hours towards graduation.

## REQUIRED COURSE TEXT

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Douglas A. Van Belle, *A Novel Approach to Politics: Introducing Political Science through Books, Movies, and Popular Culture*, Fourth Edition. CQ Press. ISBN: 9781483368498

This book is available at the UTEP Bookstore and also available at online bookstores. If you choose to order your book via an online provider, please be mindful of the delivery time.

## REQUIRED READINGS

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Each week, you will have assigned readings from your textbook. A chapter summary and lecture notes will be provided for each week's readings but simply reading the chapter summary and lecture notes will not be sufficient for effectively completing the course tasks. It is important that you begin each week by first carefully doing the required readings. The list of readings per week is provided on the last page of the syllabus.

## PRACTICE QUIZZES

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After you do the assigned readings for a given week, you can take the practice quiz (which will have a total of 20 questions per week). The quiz can be taken up to three times. You should submit your answers to the practice quizzes by Sunday, 11:00pm (MT) each week. These practice quizzes are not only useful for preparing for the exams but also for earning bonus points toward your final grade point average. At the end of the semester, those who achieve an average score that ranges from 70 to 79 for their practice quizzes will receive 1 bonus point to be added to their final grade point average. If your average practice quiz score ranges from 80 to 89, 2 bonus points will be added to your final grade point average and if your average score is 90 and over, you will earn 3 bonus points. No bonus points will be earned for a score less than 70.

## EXAMS

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There are two exams for the course. Each exam constitutes 30 percent of your final grade point average. Questions are based on the readings, lectures, and online discussions. The exams will be "open book" so that you will be able to have all support materials you think are necessary to answer the exam questions. The exams will be administered via Blackboard. You will have 36 hours to complete the exam upon activation. The exams are to be taken individually—it is not allowed to discuss the exam questions with the classmates or anyone else. Please refer to the section on "Academic Integrity" below to review the university and instructor policies on cheating, collusion, and plagiarism.

### Make-up exams

Make-up exams will be given *only* in the case of a *documented* emergency (see "excused absences and excuse for late work" below). Note that make-up exams may be in a different format than the original exam and may require more intensive preparation. If you miss a test and your absence is not considered excused, you will receive a zero on the test. This policy will be strictly enforced.

## **ESSAY**

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As one of the key course tasks, you will write an essay, which will constitute 20 percent of your final grade. The instructions for the essay task are provided on the course website. Essays submitted late will lose 10 points (1 letter grade) per day (including weekends).

## **DISCUSSION POSTS/CLASS PARTICIPATION**

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Each week, you will submit a discussion post in response to a guided question. The discussion posts should be a minimum of 250 words and a maximum of 500 words. Be sure to submit your discussion posts for a given week by Sunday, 11:00pm (MT) of that week to receive credit for your participation. No late submissions will be accepted for discussion posts. Class participation via discussion posts will count for 20 percent of your final grade.

I expect everyone to actively participate in class and do so in a positive and appropriate way (see the “Online Etiquette and Effective Communication” section below). Keep in mind that class participation is more than just completing the scheduled assignments and taking exams—you should be willing to ask and answer questions, and contribute intellectually to class debates via online discussion posts.

Before posting a discussion, you should complete the assigned readings and go over the lecture notes. Exams will cover material from the readings, lectures, and our online discussions, so doing just one or the other will leave you at a disadvantage. Full credit for a discussion post is reserved only for those that follow the online etiquette and effective communication rules below.

## **COURSE/INSTRUCTOR POLICIES**

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### ***E-Mail Protocol***

UTEP e-mail is the best way to contact me. I will make every attempt to respond to your e-mail within 24-48 hours of receipt during weekdays. I will respond to weekend messages by Monday at the latest. When e-mailing me, please put the course number in the subject line. In the body of your e-mail, clearly state your question. At the end of your e-mail, be sure to put your first and last name, and your university identification number.

### ***Online Etiquette and Effective Communication***

It is essential that the utmost respect and professionalism be adhered in all exchanges between class members. This is a political science course and we will be discussing at times sensitive and controversial topics. Avoid any unnecessary arguments with other class members, such as political polemical arguments (e.g., negative partisan talking points targeting those of opposing ideological perspectives or particular political figures) or, even worse, personal attacks on others for having different views.

No inappropriate behavior will be tolerated. Unprofessional conduct will be dealt with swiftly through the university and it is at the professor’s full discretion to have a student dropped from the course for any inappropriate behavior.

Please carefully read the following rules for online etiquette and effective communication:

### **Online Etiquette and Effective Communication Policy**

**Language:** Given the absence of face-to-face clues, written text can easily be misinterpreted. Avoid the use of strong or offensive language, all capital letters, and the excessive use of exclamation points. If you feel particularly strongly about a point, it may be best to write it first as a draft and then to review it, before posting it, in order to remove any strong language.

**Respect:** A Web-based classroom is still a classroom, and comments that would be inappropriate in a regular classroom are likely to be inappropriate in a Web-based course as well. Treat your professor and your fellow students with respect. Remember that members of the class and I will be reading any postings.

**Be Forgiving:** If someone states something that you find offensive, mention this directly to the professor. Remember that the person contributing to the discussion is also new to this form of communication. What you find offensive may quite possibly have been unintended and can best be cleared up by the professor.

**This is Permanent:** Think carefully about the content of your message before contributing it. Once sent to the group, there is no taking it back. When reacting to someone else's message, address the ideas, not the person. Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a face-to-face situation.

**Edit Your Work:** The grammar, spelling, and punctuation of a message are part of the grading criteria – you should not expect your professor and peers to decode misspelled words or poorly constructed sentences. It is a good practice to compose and check your comments in a word-processor before posting them.

**Test for Clarity:** Messages may often appear perfectly clear to you as you compose them, but turn out to be perfectly obtuse to your reader. One way to test for clarity is to read your message aloud to see if it flows smoothly. If you can read it to another person before posting it, even better.

**Follow the Parameters/Stick to the Point:** Follow the posting requirements and parameters set up by your professor. Contributions to a discussion should have a clear subject header, and you need to stick to the subject. Don't waste others' time by going off on irrelevant tangents. Also keep in mind that no credit will be received for yes/no answers. Posts should justify positions and provide specific examples. Students must demonstrate that they have read the assignment and their classmates' comments carefully and thoughtfully.

**Read First, Write Later:** Don't add your comments to a discussion before reading the comments of other students unless the assignment specifically asks you to. Doing so is tantamount to ignoring your fellow students and is rude. Comments related to the content of previous messages should be posted under them to keep related topics organized, and you should specify the person and the particular point you are following up on.

### ***Excused Absences and Excuse for Late Work***

I will excuse absences and late work *only* when a student participates in an official university-recognized activity, observes a recognized religious holiday of her/his faith that happens to coincide with a class session, is called to and participates in active military service for a reasonably brief period, or confronts a medical emergency. To be excused, you must notify me *in writing* prior to the date of absence. That said, in cases where advance notification is not feasible (e.g. a medical emergency), you must provide notification as soon as possible following your absence. Such notification must include an explanation of why notice could not be sent in advance. You must also provide satisfactory documentation verifying the reason for the absence. In case of an illness, a doctor's note is the proper documentation required. *For my records, you should e-mail me a scanned copy of the documentation that verifies the reason for your absence (if you don't have access to a scanner, you can take a photo of the documentation).* *Documentation that is not provided in a timely manner will not be accepted.*

Please do not ask me to excuse absences for minor illnesses or scheduling conflicts (e.g. sports practices, play rehearsals, meetings, conferences, appointments with other professors or advisors, student teaching, having your cable installed, having a bad headache, etc.). I am aware that students have other interests and obligations, but you should nevertheless make this class a priority. If you are likely to have recurring conflicts, please take another course that better fits your schedule.

See academic regulations in UTEP Undergraduate Catalogue for a list of excused absences: <http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=54418>. According to UTEP Curriculum and Classroom Policies, "When, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor may drop the student from the class with a grade of "W" before the course drop deadline and with a grade of "F" after the course drop deadline."

### ***Academic Integrity***

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to cheating, collusion, and plagiarism. *Cheating* may involve copying from or providing information to another student and possessing unauthorized materials during a test. *Collusion* involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. One example of collusion is preparing a discussion entry for another person or having someone prepare a discussion entry for you. I encourage students to study together and work collectively; however, working together to write any part of a written assignment, research paper, and/or exam is collusion.

*Plagiarism* is commonly defined as passing off the ideas, works, writing, etc., of another person as your own. Accordingly, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own work, even if you have the permission of that person. Be aware, just as the internet has made it easier to find material, it has also made it easier to trace the source of any written work. If you are unsure whether a citation is required, err on the side of caution and provide one.

Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violations will be taken seriously and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions. Refer to <http://studentaffairs.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=4386> for further information.

### ***Copyright Statement for Course Materials***

All materials used in this course are protected by copyright law. The course materials are only for the use of students currently enrolled in this course and only for the purpose of this course. They may not be further disseminated.

### ***Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)***

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you require specific accommodations and support services, please contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Please keep in mind that accommodations need to be requested at least two weeks (or a month if advance planning, such as the acquisition of books-on-tape, is required) prior to the beginning of the semester. Here is the contact information for CASS: web: <http://sa.utep.edu/cass/>; phone: (915) 747-5148; fax: (915) 747-8712; e-mail: [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu); location: UTEP Union Building East Room 106.

## **SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS**

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You will need the following software on your computer to efficiently work in this course (your computer may already have some of these programs installed):

- **Adobe Acrobat Reader.** To get this program, go to <https://acrobat.adobe.com/us/en/products/pdf-reader.html> and follow the instructions.
- **Adobe Flash Player.** To get this program, go to <https://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/> and follow the instructions.
- **QuickTime Player.** To get this program, go to <http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/> and follow the instructions.
- **Microsoft Office.** If you do not have a word-processing software, go to <https://my.apps.utep.edu>. Using My.Apps interface, UTEP students can access most software offered in student computer labs (including Microsoft Office) from their personal computing devices. Students can use any laptop, tablet, or smartphone with an Internet connection and use the software from anywhere at any time. For more information, go to <http://admin.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=73740> and follow the instructions.

## **UTEP TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

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The University of Texas at El Paso offers complete technical information and Help Desk support at: <http://issweb.utep.edu/techsupport/>.

**ALTERNATE MEANS OF SUBMITTING WORK IN CASE OF TECHNICAL ISSUES**

I strongly suggest that you save all your work (answers to discussion points, quizzes, exams, and essays) in a separate Word document as a back-up in case there is a technical issue with the course website, network, and/or your computer. This way, you will have evidence that you completed the work and will not lose credit. If you are experiencing difficulties submitting your work through the course website, you can always email me ([cigdemsirin@utep.edu](mailto:cigdemsirin@utep.edu)) your back-up document.



## **COURSE SCHEDULE AND TASKS BY WEEKS\***

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### **Week 1: 08/28-09/03**

- Carefully read the syllabus
- Review the posted materials in the “Welcome and Course Introduction” folder
- Do this week’s readings:
  - Chapter 1: Introducing the Ancient Debate: The Ideal versus the Real
  - Chapter 2: Why Government: Security, Anarchy, and Some Basic Group Dynamics
- Watch this week’s recommended documentaries and videos
- Submit your discussion post
- Take the practice quiz

### **Week 2: 09/04-09/10**

- Do this week’s reading:
  - Chapter 3: Governing Society: We Know Who You Are
  - Chapter 4: Government’s Role in the Economy
- Watch this week’s recommended documentaries and videos
- Submit your discussion post
- Take the practice quiz

### **Week 3: 09/11-09/17**

- Do this week’s reading:
  - Chapter 5: Structures and Institutions
  - Chapter 6: El Grande Loco Casa Blanca: The Executive
- Watch this week’s recommended documentaries and videos
- Submit your discussion post
- Take the practice quiz

### **Week 4: 09/18-09/24**

**Midterm Exam – will be activated on Monday, September 18 @ 11:00am and due on Tuesday, September 19 @ 11:00pm (MT).**

- Do this week’s reading:
  - Chapter 7: The Confederacy of Dunces: The Legislative Function
  - Chapter 8: Brazilian Bureaucracy
- Watch this week’s recommended documentaries and videos
- Submit your discussion post
- Take the practice quiz

**Week 5: 09/25-10/01**

- Do this week's reading:
  - Chapter 9: Courts and Law
  - Chapter 10: Not Quite Right, but Still Good: The Democratic Ideal in Modern Politics
- Watch this week's recommended documentaries and videos
- Submit your discussion post
- Take the practice quiz

**Week 6: 10/02-10/08**

**Essay due on Friday, October 6 @ 11:00pm (MT).**

- Do this week's reading:
  - Chapter 11: Media, Politics, and Government
  - Chapter 12: International Politics
- Watch this week's recommended documentaries and videos
- Submit your discussion post
- Take the practice quiz

**Week 7: 10/09-10/15**

**Final Exam – will be activated on Thursday, October 12 @ 11:00am and due on Friday, October 13 @ 11:00pm (MT).**

- Do this week's readings:
  - Chapter 14: Political Culture
  - Chapter 15: The Latest and Bestest Chapter: The Study of Politics
- Watch this week's recommended documentaries and videos
- Submit your discussion post
- Take the practice quiz

**\*The designated time zone for the submission of all course assignments and tasks is Mountain Time (MT).**