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**UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO**  
**POLS 2310-025: Introduction to Politics (CRN: 24181)**  
**Spring 8W1 2024**

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**Instructor:** Dr. Cigdem Sirin (Phonetic: Cheedém Shirin  Hear my name) / Pronouns: She|Her|Hers)

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 11am-12pm virtually via Zoom or by appointment

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**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 OBJECTIVES**

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- 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 acknowledge and tolerate alternative points of view on historical and contemporary problems in comparative and international politics.

Targeted [UTEP Edge](#) advantages: Communication, critical thinking, problem solving, social responsibility, and global awareness.

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## **WEEKLY LEARNING MODULES**

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This **8-week** online course is designed using a modular format—that is, all of the course materials for a given weekly module including lecture notes, assignments, and submission links are in one area. A new weekly module will become available every Monday at midnight on Blackboard.

## OBJECTIVES FOR PROFESSIONALISM

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It is essential that utmost respect and professionalism be adhered in all exchanges between class members. This is a political science course and we will be at times discussing sensitive and controversial topics. In our discussions, 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 and/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.

## GRADING POLICY

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

Course Requirement	Weight	Due Dates
Midterm Exam	30%	will be activated on Saturday, February 10 @ 12:00am and due on Sunday, February 11 @ 11:59pm
Final Exam	30%	will be activated on Saturday, March 9 @ 12:00am and due on Sunday, March 10 @ 11:59pm
Instructional Games/Simulations/Activities	20%	Instructional games/simulations/activities, discussion posts, and practice quizzes are due by Sunday, 11:59pm (MT) at the end of each weekly module.
Discussion Posts	20%	
Practice Quizzes	Bonus	

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

Points	Letter
≥ 89.50	A
79.50-89.49	B
69.50-79.49	C
59.50-69.49	D
≤ 59.49	F

If you are concerned about your grade, please contact and/or visit me during my office hours or by appointment. I can give you feedback and suggestions on how to improve your performance in the class.

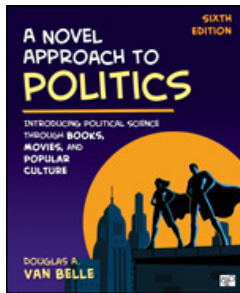
## VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS

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My office hours are on **Tuesdays 11am-12pm**. I will be available via Zoom during these hours. The Zoom link is provided on Blackboard. Feel free to email me ([cigdemsirin@utep.edu](mailto:cigdemsirin@utep.edu)) if you need to make an appointment for a virtual meeting outside of these hours.

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

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Douglas A. Van Belle, *A Novel Approach to Politics: Introducing Political Science through Books, Movies, and Popular Culture*, Sixth Edition. CQ Press. ISBN: 9781544374734.

Each module, you will have assigned readings from your textbook. A chapter summary and lecture notes will be provided for each module'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 module by first carefully doing the required readings. The list of readings per module is provided in the last section of the syllabus.

Among other Edge Advantages, the required readings in this course align particularly well with the Edge Advantage "Global Awareness" that promotes a mindset in which students understand and appreciate people, cultures, and ideas from around the world that impact our community.

## PRACTICE QUIZZES

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After you do the assigned readings for a given module, you can take the practice quiz. The quiz can be taken up to three times. These practice quizzes are not only useful for preparing for the exams but also for earning bonus points toward your final grade. 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 48 hours to complete each 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.

## DISCUSSION POSTS/CLASS PARTICIPATION

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Each module, you will submit (1) a discussion post in response to a guided question (minimum of 200 words and maximum of 500 words) and (2) respond to at least one of your classmates' post (minimum of 100 words and maximum of 500 words). Class participation via discussion posts will count for 20 percent of your final grade.

Among other Edge Advantages, this activity is particularly in line with the Edge Advantage “Communication” that encourages UTEP students to reach mutual understanding through the effective exchange of information, ideas, and feelings.

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.

### **ONLINE ETIQUETTE AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION POLICY**

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

**Language:** Given the absence of face-to-face clues, written text can easily be misinterpreted. Avoid the use of strong and/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 offensive language.

**Respect:** An online classroom is still a classroom, and comments that would be inappropriate in a regular classroom would also be inappropriate in an online course. Treat your professor and your classmates with respect.

**Be Forgiving:** If someone states something that you find offensive, mention this directly to your professor. Remember that the person contributing to the online discussion may be new to this form of communication. What you find offensive may 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 once it is viewed (even if you can later delete or edit your message). 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 good practice to compose and check your comments in a word processor, and proofread before posting them.

**Test for Clarity:** Messages may often appear perfectly clear to you as you compose them, but turn out to be unclear to your reader. One way to test for clarity is to read your message aloud to see if it flows smoothly.

**Read First, Write Later:** Make sure to do all the readings, activities, and individual research before crafting your discussion post. Follow the posting requirements and parameters set up by your professor. Posts should justify positions and provide specific examples. You need to stick to the subject—avoid going off on irrelevant tangents. An informed, well-researched discussion point will enhance the quality of everyone’s learning experience and exchange of ideas.

**Keep it a Safe Space:** Blackboard is not a public internet venue; all postings to it should be considered private and confidential. Whatever is posted on in these online spaces is intended for classmates and professor only. Please do not copy documents and paste them to a publicly accessible website, blog, or other space.

Make sure to also contribute to and review our community agreement available in Module 1.

### **EXCUSED ABSENCES AND EXCUSE FOR LATE WORK**

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I will excuse absences and late work when a student participates in an official university-recognized activity, observes a recognized religious holiday of their 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, please notify me in writing prior to the date of absence if possible. That said, in cases where advance notification is not feasible (e.g. a medical emergency or lack of childcare), please provide notification as soon as possible following your absence. *If available*, please also provide satisfactory documentation verifying the reason for the absence (such as a doctor’s note) for my records.

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.”

### **CLASSROOM AND E-MAIL PROTOCOL**

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The best way to contact me is via UTEP e-mail. I will make every attempt to respond to your e-mail within 24 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.

### **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND MISCONDUCT**

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Academic misconduct and dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. This 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. 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. If you are unsure whether a citation is required, err on the side of caution and provide one. A document detailing different forms of plagiarism is provided on Blackboard. 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. All written work submitted for this course will be checked by the instructor for originality via *SafeAssign*—an online originality checking service made available by UTEP.

Any act of academic misconduct and dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

### ***AI is Prohibited***

Use of AI technologies or automated tools, particularly generative AI such as [ChatGPT](#) or [DALL-E](#), is **not allowed** for assignments in this class. Each student is expected to use critical and creative thinking skills to complete tasks and not rely on computer-generated ideas. Any direct use of AI-generated materials submitted as your own work will be treated as plagiarism and reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR).

## **DIVERSITY**

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It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socio-economic status, race/ethnicity, religion, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally and/or for other students.

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

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It is my goal to create a learning experience that is as accessible as possible. If you anticipate any issues related to the format, materials, or requirements of this course, please meet with me outside of class so we can explore potential options. Students with disabilities may wish to work with the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) to discuss a range of options to removing barriers in this course, including official accommodations. Students who become pregnant or have parenting responsibilities may also request reasonable accommodations. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. For more information, please visit: <https://www.utep.edu/titleix/pregnancy-and-parenting.html>. Contact the CASS at 915-747-5148, email them at [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu), or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal. If you have already been approved for accommodations through the CASS, please inform me as soon as possible so we can develop an implementation plan together.

## **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT**

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As members of the University of Texas at El Paso community, we acknowledge that we are meeting on unceded Indigenous land. We would like to recognize and pay our respects to the Indigenous people with long ties to the immediate region: Lipan Apache, Mescalero Apache, Piro, Manso, Suma, Jumano, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, Piro/Manso/Tiwa Indian Tribe of the Pueblo of San Juan de Guadalupe, and Tortugas Pueblo. We also acknowledge the nations whose territories include present day Texas: the Carrizo & Comecrudo, Coahuiltecan, Caddo, Tonkawa, Comanche, Alabama-Coushatta, Kickapoo, and the peoples of Chihuahua and northern Mexico from whom most/many of our students descend, such as the Rarámuri, Tepehuan, Wixarrika and Nahuatlaca peoples. Finally, we recognize all of the American Indian and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories here in Paso del Norte, on Turtle Island. The University of Texas at El Paso honors your history and cultures and we seek greater awareness of the myriad ways in which your legacy can guide us in fruitful partnerships and mutually fulfilling relationships.

## **RESOURCES FOR ASSISTANCE**

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UTEP provides a variety of student services and support. Please refer to the QR code below for a listing of campus resources or visit [https://www.utep.edu/advising/student\\_resources/student-success-resource-hub.html](https://www.utep.edu/advising/student_resources/student-success-resource-hub.html).



## **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):

- **Microsoft Office.** If you do not have a word-processing software, you can download Word and other Microsoft Office programs (including Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and more) for free via UTEP's Microsoft Office Portal. Click the following link for more information about [Microsoft Office 365](#) and follow the instructions.

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

I strongly suggest that you submit your work with plenty of time to spare in the event that you have a technical issue with the course website, network, and/or your computer. I also suggest you save all your work (answers to discussion points, quizzes, exams, and essays) in a separate Word document as a back-up. 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, please contact the UTEP [Help Desk](#). You can email me ([cigdemsirir@utep.edu](mailto:cigdemsirir@utep.edu)) your back-up document as a last resort.

## **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.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS\***

### **Module 1: Welcome and Course Introduction (01/16-01/21)**

- Carefully read the syllabus
- Review the introductory materials
- Introduce yourself to the class and respond to at least one of your peers
- Contribute to “Collective Task: Building Our Own Community Agreement”
- Complete the instructional game/simulation/activity
- Take the syllabus quiz

### **Module 2 (01/22-01/28)**

- Do this module’s *required* readings and review the lecture materials
  - Introduction & Introduction (Take 2) – pages xxi-xxix
  - Chapter 1: Introducing the Ancient Debate: The Ideal versus the Real
  - Chapter 2: Why Government? Security, Anarchy, and Some Basic Group Dynamics
- Check out this module’s *recommended* multimedia resources
- Submit your discussion post and peer response
- Complete the instructional game/simulation/activity
- Take the practice quiz

### **Module 3 (01/29-02/04)**

- Do this module’s *required* readings and review the lecture materials
  - Chapter 3: Governing Society
  - Chapter 4: Government’s Role in the Economy
- Check out this module’s *recommended* multimedia resources
- Submit your discussion post and peer response
- Complete the instructional game/simulation/activity
- Take the practice quiz



#### **Module 4 (02/05-02/11)**

- Do this module's *required* readings and review the lecture materials
    - Chapter 5: Structures and Institutions
    - Chapter 6: El Grande Loco Casa Blanca: The Executive
  - Check out this module's *recommended* multimedia resources
  - Submit your discussion post and peer response
  - Complete the instructional game/simulation/activity
  - Take the practice quiz
- **Midterm Exam – will be activated on Saturday, February 10 @12:00am and due on Sunday, February 11 @11:59pm.**

#### **Module 5 (02/12-02/18)**

- Do this module's *required* readings and review the lecture materials
  - Chapter 7: The Confederacy of Dunces: The Legislative Function
  - Chapter 8: Brazilian Bureaucracy
- Check out this module's *recommended* multimedia resources
- Submit your discussion post and peer response
- Complete the instructional game/simulation/activity
- Take the practice quiz

#### **Module 6 (02/19-02/25)**

- Do this module's *required* readings and review the lecture materials
  - Chapter 9: Courts and Law
  - Chapter 10: Not Quite Right, but Still Good: The Democratic Ideal in Modern Politics
- Check out this module's *recommended* multimedia resources
- Submit your discussion post and peer response
- Complete the instructional game/simulation/activity
- Take the practice quiz

#### **Module 7 (02/26-03/03)**

- Do this module's *required* readings and review the lecture materials
  - Chapter 11: Media, Politics, and Government
  - Chapter 12: International Politics
  - Chapter 13: Secret Government: Spies, Lies, and Freedom Fries
- Check out this module's *recommended* multimedia resources
- Submit your discussion post and peer response
- Complete the instructional game/simulation/activity
- Take the practice quiz

### Module 8 (03/04-03/10)

- Do this module's *required* readings and review the lecture materials
    - Chapter 14: Political Culture
    - Chapter 15: The Latest and Bestest Chapter: The Study of Politics
  - Check out this module's *recommended* multimedia resources
  - Submit your discussion post and peer response
  - Complete the instructional game/simulation/activity
  - Take the practice quiz
- Don't forget to fill out the **end-of-semester evaluations** for the course. Evaluation window starts on February 27 and ends on March 8. Those who submit a screenshot of the submission confirmation on Blackboard will receive 5 bonus points added to their final exam score (**screenshots due by Friday, March 8, 11:59pm**).
- **Final Exam – will be activated on Saturday, March 9 @12:00am and due on Sunday, March 10 @11:59pm.**

\*This is a provisional schedule of our course. With advanced notice, I may introduce specific changes based on progress in class. Please also note that the designated time zone for the submission of all course assignments and tasks is **Mountain Time (MT)**.