
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
POLS 2310-026: Introduction to Politics (CRN: 24182)
Winter 2024

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

COURSE OVERVIEW

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.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 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.

DAILY LEARNING MODULES

This **2-week Wintermester** course is designed using a **daily modular format**—that is, all the materials, lecture notes, submission areas, discussion posts are in one area for a given daily module. Each new daily module will become available at midnight on Blackboard.

OBJECTIVES FOR PROFESSIONALISM

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

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, January 6 @ 12:00am and due on Sunday, January 7 @ 11:59pm
Final Exam	30%	will be activated on Saturday, January 13 @ 12:00am and due on Sunday, January 14 @ 11:59pm
Instructional Games/Simulations/Activities	20%	Instructional games/simulations/activities, discussion posts, and practice quizzes are due by 11:59pm (MT) at the end of each daily module.
Discussion Posts	20%	
Practice Quizzes	Bonus	

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

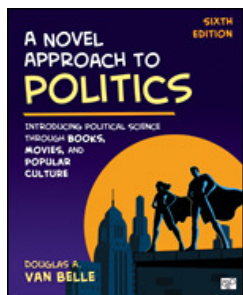
Points	Letter
≥ 89.50	A
79.50-89.49	B
69.50-79.49	C
59.50-69.49	D
≤ 59.49	F

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

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) if you need to make an appointment for a virtual meeting outside of these hours.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK



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

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

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

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

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.

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

EXCUSED ABSENCES AND EXCUSE FOR LATE WORK

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

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

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. 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.

DIVERSITY

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

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 also 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. Please visit their website for contact and additional information: <http://sa.utep.edu/cass/>. If you have already been approved for accommodations through the CASS, please meet with me so we can develop an implementation plan together.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT

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, Wixarika 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.

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.

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 (cigdemsirin@utep.edu) your back-up document as a last resort.

SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS

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.

RESOURCES FOR ASSISTANCE

UTEP provides a variety of student services and support:

Technology Resources

- [UTEP Help Desk](#): If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the Help Desk as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students.

Academic Resources

- [UTEP Library](#): Access a wide range of resources including online, full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.
- [University Writing Center \(UWC\)](#): Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.
- [Math Tutoring Center \(MaRCS\)](#): Ask a tutor for help and explore other available math resources.
- [History Tutoring Center \(HTC\)](#): Receive assistance with writing history papers, get help from a tutor and explore other history resources.
- [RefWorks](#): A bibliographic citation tool; check out the RefWorks tutorial and Fact Sheet and Quick-Start Guide.

Individual Resources

- [Military Student Success Center](#): Assists personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.
- [Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#): Assists students with ADA-related accommodations for coursework, housing, and internships.
- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#): Provides a variety of counseling services including individual, couples, and group sessions as well as career and disability assessments.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS*

Day 1 – 01/02

- Welcome and course introduction
 - Carefully read the syllabus
 - Review the introductory materials posted in this module
 - Introduce yourself to the class and respond to at least one of your peers
 - Submit “Collective Task: Building Our Own Community Agreement”
 - Take the syllabus quiz

Day 2 – 01/03

- Do this module’s readings:
 - 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
- Watch this module’s recommended documentaries and videos
- Submit your discussion post and peer response
- Submit the instructional game/simulation/activity
- Take the practice quiz

Day 3 – 01/04

- Do this module’s readings:
 - Chapter 3: Governing Society
 - Chapter 4: Government’s Role in the Economy
- Watch this module’s recommended documentaries and videos
- Submit your discussion post and peer response
- Submit the instructional game/simulation/activity
- Take the practice quiz

Day 4 – 01/05

- Do this module’s reading:
 - Chapter 5: Structures and Institutions
 - Chapter 6: El Grande Loco Casa Blanca: The Executive
- Watch this module’s recommended documentaries and videos
- Submit your discussion post and peer response
- Submit the instructional game/simulation/activity
- Take the practice quiz

Days 5-6 – 01/06-01/07

- **Midterm Exam – will be activated on Saturday, January 6 @12:00am and due on Sunday, January 7 @11:59pm.**

Day 7 – 01/08

- Do this module's reading:
 - Chapter 7: The Confederacy of Dunces: The Legislative Function
 - Chapter 8: Brazilian Bureaucracy
- Watch this module's recommended documentaries and videos
- Submit your discussion post and peer response
- Submit the instructional game/simulation/activity
- Take the practice quiz

Day 8 – 01/09

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

Day 9 – 01/10

- Do this module's reading:
 - Chapter 11: Media, Politics, and Government
 - Chapter 12: International Politics
 - Chapter 13: Secret Government: Spies, Lies, and Freedom Fries
- Watch this module's recommended documentaries and videos
- Submit your discussion post and peer response
- Submit the instructional game/simulation/activity
- Take the practice quiz

Day 10 – 01/11

- Do this module's readings:
 - Chapter 14: Political Culture
 - Chapter 15: The Latest and Bestest Chapter: The Study of Politics
- Watch this module's recommended documentaries and videos
- Submit your discussion post and peer response
- Submit the instructional game/simulation/activity
- Take the practice quiz

Day 11 – 01/12

- Exam study and make-up day

Days 12-13 – 01/13-01/14

- **Final Exam – will be activated on Saturday, January 13 @12:00am and due on Sunday, January 14 @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)**.