

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICS

Political Science 2310

Spring 2020

Professor

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Office: Benedict Hall 301

Office Hours: Mondays 10:30am-noon; Tuesdays 1-2pm; and by appointment

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Class Time/Location: MW 1:30-2:50pm Undergraduate Learning Center 126

Teaching Assistants

Name	Office Hours	Email	Office/Phone
TBD			

Catalogue Description

An overview of the concepts, principles, and practices of politics as background for the study of American and Texas political institutions. The course may employ an international, comparative, or theoretical focus. Prerequisite: Freshman standing.

Course Content

This is an introductory course in the study of politics, with an emphasis on understanding politics within the context of **global awareness**. We will break the subject down into political behavior within various domestic settings (comparative politics) and relations among countries (international relations). The course will require **critical thinking** in learning fundamental political concepts and issues through the focus on institutions, culture, ideas, and political economy with attention on their global transformations. We will also closely view the politics of various countries drawn from Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. The goal for the semester is to give you grounding in the study of politics, increase your powers of analysis and argument, and further your ability to enhance **problem-solving** skills both individually and through **teamwork**.

At the end of this course you will:

- 1) have a knowledge base regarding politics and government in general;
- 2) be able to analyze political activity scientifically in the world today; and
- 3) be able to hold factually based perspectives on important current issues.

Course Textbook

The course textbook chapters are located on the Blackboard (Bb) website.

Response System

We will be using a cloud-based student response software by iClicker for all the quizzes, See the “Course Obligation” section of the syllabus for more information on the quizzes. There is no extra cost for using this software application.

You are required to bring a device to participate in my iClicker Cloud quizzes. You can participate with a smartphone, tablet, or laptop. It is your responsibility to set up your iClicker Reef account in a timely fashion, as well as making sure your device is working properly. If you do not have an existing iClicker Reef student account then you will need to create one. You will also need to connect to either UTEP’s Wi-Fi (UTEPSecure) or to your mobile data plan while using iClicker Reef.

Submitting quiz answers for a fellow student is a case of academic dishonesty and a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. If caught do this, you will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution for possible disciplinary action.

Beginning on February 3, we will have quizzes during every meeting using the response system. If you do not register by February 3, I will need to drop you from this course since this is major portion of your grade.

In order to participate in the iClicker sessions and ensure that your grades are properly reflected in blackboard, see below for instructions:

- **Log into Blackboard and click on the page for this course. Search for the iClicker Reef icon on the Home Page Tab and click on it.**
 - Sign into your iClicker Reef account from the window that opens.
 - If you do not have an iClicker Reef account, create one by clicking "**Sign Up!**" It is free to create an account. You should **use your university email address** (username@miners.utep.edu) when creating your account. When asked to register a remote device, **choose not at this time or skip**.
 - **If you already have an existing account, DO NOT create a new one. If you do not remember your account email or password please contact the [UTEP Technology Support HelpDesk](#).**
 - Clicking the iClicker link in my Blackboard course will ensure your iClicker grades show up in my Blackboard gradebook.
 - This will also add my iClicker Cloud course to your iClicker Reef account so you'll be ready to participate in class.

Note: Upon signing up for a **new** account you will see a message about a 14 day free trial. You **will not** need to purchase a subscription after the 14 day free trial is over because the use of iClicker REEF is provided to you for free.

How to participate in my iClicker sessions during each class.

- Each time our class meets, make sure you have selected my course from the main screen of your iClicker Reef account.
 - When I start a session, click the **Join** button that appears on your screen, then answer each question I ask in iClicker Reef.
 - For short answer, target and numeric questions, make sure you press **Send/Enter**.
- I have turned on the Attendance GPS location requirement for iClicker Reef in our class. If you are not physically in class when you try to join my session, your quiz scores will not be count.
 - You will need to allow the device you are using to reveal your location in order to successfully check in.
 - If you have any issues with your device's geolocation, refer to the [Attendance Geolocation Troubleshooting Guide](#) or contact the [UTEP Technology Support HelpDesk](#).

Please go to https://www.utep.edu/technologysupport/ServiceCatalog/INST_ClassResponseSystem.html for more information.

Course Obligations

Students are expected to actively participate in the learning process. What does this mean? You will need to

- 1) complete the reading assignments (found in this syllabus) before the beginning of class;
- 2) review your lecture notes before the beginning of class;
- 3) follow current political developments around the world in the media. Some suggested periodicals include the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, or *Christian Science Monitor*. If you have knowledge of one or more foreign languages, you are encouraged to read international newspapers on the internet.

There is a mix of obligations you must meet to fulfill the course requirements. This includes daily quizzes, group discussion questions, and a comprehensive final exam.

Daily Quizzes

Each day, you will be given a short quiz of 3-5 questions (using the response system) to assess your active participation in the course. Quizzes are closed notes and book and will be given throughout our course meetings.

Group Discussion Questions

You will form study groups of 3-4 students and answer discussion questions, which are found in the course textbook. The answers are due one day after we complete a chapter. Answers to the question should be brief (no more than 100 words) and uploaded onto Bb.

You will provide me with your study group memberships on January 29 by placing your names on a single index card that I will provide. If you do not form a study group on January 29, I will need to drop you from this course since this is major portion of your grade.

You can put your group contact information here:

Name	Email	Phone Number

Comprehensive Final eExam

The final exam is closed book/notes and in-class. The exam is solely multiple-choice questions based on the readings, lectures, and current political developments.

It will be in an eExam format. This course requires the use of LockDown Browser for exams. Watch this [brief video](#) to get a basic understanding.

Follow these steps to ensure you do not encounter issues during your final. Do this *at least one week* prior.

- 1) Download the [Lockdown](#) browser on your personal laptop or [reserve](#) one with Equipment Checkout in the Library 300.
- 2) Contact the [Technology Support](#) if you encounter issues.

Steps for exam day

- 1) During the exam, be sure to connect to the UTEPSecure WiFi.
- 2) Make sure you are using the Lockdown Browser to take the exam (not Chrome, Firefox, etc.)
- 3) If you encounter an issue during the exam, restart the Lockdown Browser and launch the exam again. If you cannot close Lockdown Browser, restart your computer. The exam will pick up where you left off. Do this *first*, before raising your hand for a hard copy.

The final will be held May 13 from 4:00-6:45pm in Undergraduate Learning Center 126.

Grades

Each obligation is worth up to 100 points. The following weights are used in determining students' final grades. No "extra credit" points will be given in this course.

Course Requirement	Due	Weight
Daily Quizzes	Each Meeting	40 percent
Group Discussion Questions	After Chapter Completion	30 percent
Final Examination	May 13	30 percent

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

Points	Letter
90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
59 and below	F

Course Policies

The following policies are in place in order to better manage the learning environment in a large class room:

- 1) Students may tape class lectures for personal use. However the sale or exchange of such tapes is not permitted unless prior permission is given.
- 2) Cell/Smart phones use is restricted. You may only use them for daily quizzes and ringers must be turned off during class time.
- 3) There must be complete silence when the instructor is speaking. Please let me know if you have questions during instruction.
- 4) You may use your laptop in class in order to take notes. However, chatting, texting, e-mailing, internet browsing, or any activity not related to official class activity is prohibited. All laptop users will need to sit in a designated area in the front of the auditorium.
- 5) Some communication from me will be posted on BlackBoard. Please monitor our course webpage on BlackBoard regularly.
- 6) Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. 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 Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions. For further information, please refer to <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/student-conduct/academic-integrity.html>
- 7) Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with limitations due to disabilities, including learning disabilities. Please see me personally within the first week to discuss any special needs you might have. If you have a documented disability and require specific accommodations, you will need to contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) (formerly known as the Disabled Student Services Office) in 302 Union East within the first two weeks of classes. CASS can also be reached in the following ways:
Web: <http://sa.utep.edu/cass/> E-Mail: cass@utep.edu
Phone: (915) 747-5148 voice or TTY

Readings and Presentations

All presentation slides posted on Black Board

January 22 & 27

Orientation; International Politics and Political Science (Textbook 1 & 2)

Why is generalizing important? How does one go about developing a generalization? What is the difference between a dependent and an independent variable? What is meant by the comparative method? How are comparative politics and international relations different? What is meant by critical thinking? What is the difference between a description, an explanation, and a prediction?

January 29 & February 3 (Quizzes will begin on February 3!)

Views of “What Ought to be:” Normative Thinking (Textbook Chapter 3)

What is the difference between a scientific theory and an ideology? What is the difference between the way the term liberalism is used in the US and how it is used around the world? What about conservatism? What is the difference between socialism and social democracy? What happened to Marxism in countries that adopted it? Is fascism the same as communism? What is the connection between religious fundamentalism and ideology? Is Islam the only religion that some practice like an ideology?

February 5, 10, & 12

Individual Political Behavior: The Role of Culture (Textbook Chapter 4)

What part(s) of a country’s culture would be important to the study of politics? How are values acquired? Are attitudes purely cultural? Are religious conflicts only about religion, or are there other factors? What types of attitudes are important to the study of politics? Does political culture change over time?

February 17 & 19

Individual Political Behavior: A Psychological Approach (Textbook Chapter 5)

How can political psychology help us to understand behavior? How is this useful in understanding politics? How do individuals process information? What role does trust play in explaining political decisions? Why is identity important in understanding national politics? Why is the Prisoners’ Dilemma important to understanding individual behavior? Do all individuals behave in a rational manner?

February 24, & 26, & March 2

States: Government Organization and Rule (Textbook Chapter 6)

What is a state and why do we view them as sovereign? How has globalization changed the concept of state sovereignty? How do states get people to obey laws? Why do some states “fail?” What is the difference between a liberal democracy and authoritarian rule?

March 4, 9, & 11

Governmental Institutions (Textbook Chapter 7)

What is the difference between unitary and federal systems? Which countries are federal and which are unitary? Why do some countries adopt one form over the other? How is power distributed in a federal system? What are the ways to represent citizens in a democracy? What is a parliamentary government? Which country exemplifies this type of government? How is that different from a presidential system? What is a ruling coalition? Is it possible to have both a presidential and a parliamentary system? Why do these things matter when talking about making laws? What is the difference between a head of state and the head of government? What influence does the head of government have in domestic politics? What role does the bureaucracy have in executive power? Are they autonomous? What are the components of a country's judicial system? Are all judicial systems the same? How are judges chosen? Is it important for a country's judiciary to be autonomous? What are the various sources of law?

March 16 & 18 – No Classes – Spring BreakMarch 23 & 30

Elections and Political Parties (Textbook Chapter 8)

What are the ways to count votes in a democracy? What are the various electoral systems? What forms do political parties take? What are their functions? What are the major differences between the political parties found in various countries? What is the difference between a political party and an interest group?

April 6, 8, & 13

Political Economy: How do countries govern their economies? (Textbook Chapter 9)

Why is it important to look at political economy? What are the economic concepts that are important to the basic understanding of political economy? What are some of the basic tenets of the capitalist system? How popular is capitalism today? What is a centrally planned economy? How does capitalism and command economies differ from mixed economies? What are some of the current ideas regarding how countries can develop? How successful have these ideas been in reality? What forces are there in convincing a country to adopt one idea over another? Is the “one size fits all” approach to economic development realistic? Why or why not?

April 15 & 20

Democratization: The Magic Cure? (Textbook Chapter 10)

What are authoritarian regimes? Are they all alike? Why do individuals wish to transition from authoritarian rule to democracy? What are some of the ways countries democratize? Why are some democratization efforts violent while others are peaceful? Can democratization solve the problems facing a country? Why do new democracies fail and revert to becoming authoritarian regimes?

April 22, 27, & 29

Global Conflict: International and Civil Wars (Textbook Chapter 11)

What is meant by “major war?” What are some of the causes of major war? Has the number of wars among countries declined since 1945? What about civil wars, have they increased or decreased? What explains the levels of international and civil wars since 1945? How has terrorism changed over time? Is terrorism and economic development connected? How does a government go about preventing terrorist acts? How will global climate change impact international politics?

May 4 & 6

Cooperation in Our Globalizing World (Textbook Chapter 12)

What differentiates an international regime from other types of international organizations? What is the source of legitimacy of international organizations? Are all supranational organizations successful? Why or why not? Why would we connect globalization with international economics? Is liberalism important for the spread of globalization? How has the world been transformed over the last fifteen or so years? What were some of the failures that led to these transformations? Does globalization benefit everyone? Why or why not?

Final Examination: Wednesday, May 13 from 4:00-6:45pm in Undergraduate Learning Center 126.