

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICS

Political Science 2310

Summer 2021

Professor

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Department of Political Science

Office Hours: Mondays 10:30am-noon; Thursdays 1-2pm; and by appointment; all office hours are virtual using the Zoom link on Blackboard.

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Course Tutor

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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**.

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.

Technology Requirements

Course content is delivered via the Internet through the Blackboard learning management system.

Ensure your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have access to the Web and a stable web browser. Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox are the best browsers for Blackboard; other browsers may cause complications. When having technical difficulties, update your browser, clear your cache, or try switching to another browser.

You will need to have access to a computer/laptop. You will need to download or update the following software: Microsoft Office, Adobe Acrobat Reader, Windows Media Player, QuickTime, and Java. Check that your computer hardware and software are up-to-date and able to access all parts of the course.

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.

If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the UTEP Help Desk as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students. Please do not contact me for this type of assistance. The Help Desk is much better equipped than I am to assist you!

Course Communication

Because this is a remote learning class, we will not see each other in the ways you may be accustomed to: during class time, small group meetings, and office hours. However, there are a number of ways we can keep the communication channels open:

- **Office Hours:** We will not be able to meet on campus, but I will still have office hours for your questions and comments about the course. My office hours will be held on Blackboard using Zoom. Please see the days and times at the top of this syllabus and send me an email if you wish to meet during normal office hours or we need setup a time and day that fits our schedules.
- **Email:** UTEP e-mail is the best way to contact me. I will make every attempt to respond to your e-mail within 24 hours of receipt. When e-mailing me, be sure to email from your UTEP student account and 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.

UTEP COVID-19 Policies and Precautions

You must **STAY AT HOME** and **REPORT** if you (1) have been diagnosed with COVID- 19, (2) are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or (3) have had recent contact with a person who has received a positive coronavirus test. Reports should be made at screening.utep.edu. If you know of anyone who should report any of these three criteria, you should encourage them to report. If the individual cannot report, you can report on their behalf by sending an email to COVIDaction@utep.edu.

Course Resources

UTEP provides a variety of student services and support: Technology Resources

- [Help Desk](#): Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software, etc.) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for assistance. Contact the Helpdesk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus.

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.

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 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 viewing the voiceover lectures;
- 2) review your notes before viewing the voiceover lectures;
- 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.

Course voice over lectures will be posted on Bb. You will need to listen to each presentation (along with the readings) so you can maximize your chances on doing well on the quizzes and final exam. There is a quasi-option to move through the course at your own pace. This means you can move through the readings, lectures, and quizzes faster than the scheduled requirement. However, everyone will need to at least complete the quizzes before the quiz due day and time (see “Readings and Presentations” section for full schedules). You will not be able to complete the quizzes after the due day and time. Therefore, please do not miss any.

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

Quizzes and Final Exam

You will need to take the quizzes to assess your active learning in the course. Quizzes will only include multiple-choice questions based on the readings and the lectures and are open notes and book. Quizzes will be on Bb and are due by midnight (Mountain Time zone) of the day listed in the schedule. You will have 15 minutes to answer the questions. Please see the “Readings and Presentations” section for full schedules.

The final exam is also open book and notes. The exam is solely multiple-choice questions based on the readings and lectures. The exam delivery is in Bb and you will have two hours to complete the final exam.

All quizzes and the final exam will be in an electronic 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 quizzes and final exam. Do this on the first day of class.

- 1) Download the [Lockdown](#) browser on your personal laptop or desktop.
- 2) Contact the [Technology Support](#) if you encounter issues.

Steps for taking the quizzes and exams

- 1) Be sure to connect to a stable Wi-Fi connection. If you lack one at home, please use one of the labs at UTEP. If you are going to use the UTEP option, it would be wise to plan well ahead of time so you have the space to use it.
- 2) Make sure you are using the Lockdown Browser to take the exam (not Chrome, Firefox, Safari, 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.

Grades

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

Course Requirement	Weight
12 Quizzes (total points)	60 percent
Final Examination	40 percent

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

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

Use the following table to calculate your weighted points:

Course Requirement	Your Total Score	Multiply by	Your Weighted Score
Quizzes		0.60	
Final Examination		0.40	
Sum of Weighted Score			

Here is an example. Let's say a student earned a total of 95 points for the quizzes and 77 points on the final exam. The student's table will look like this:

Course Requirement	Your Total Score	Multiply by	Your Weighted Score
Quizzes	95	0.60	57.0
Final Examination	77	0.40	30.8
Sum of Weighted Score			87.8

In this example, the total weighted score is 88 (I round up if you have a 0.5 or above). , using the distribution of points table above, the student will earn a B.

Course Policies

The following policies are in place in order to better manage the learning environment:

- 1) Some communication from me will be posted on BlackBoard. Please monitor our course page on BlackBoard regularly.
- 2) 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>
- 3) 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, Presentations, and Quizzes

All voice over presentation are posted on Blackboard

Module 1 (July 5 – 6)

Orientation (No readings or quiz for this module)

The first voice over presentation will review the syllabus and go over the specifics. No quiz will be required by the end of this week.

*** Mock Practice Quiz due July 6 by midnight (Mountain Time) ***

Module 2 (July 7 – 9)

International Politics and Political Science (Textbook Chapters 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?

*** Quiz #1 due July 9 by midnight (Mountain Time) ***

Module 3 (July 12 – 14)

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?

*** Quiz #2 due July 14 by midnight (Mountain Time) ***

Module 4 (July 14 – 16)

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?

*** Quiz #3 due July 16 by midnight (Mountain Time) ***

Module 5 (July 19 – 21)

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?

*** Quiz #4 due July 21 by midnight (Mountain Time) ***

Module 6 (July 21 – 23)

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?

*** Quiz #5 due July 23 by midnight (Mountain Time) ***

Module 7 (July 26 – 28)

Public Policy and Public Goods (Textbook Chapter 7)

What are the different types of interest groups? What roles and influence do interest groups have in formulating policy? What are the differences between national, public, and private interests and their policy formulations? What are the different characteristics of public goods and common pool resources? Why would someone consider ecological health is a collective good? Why does individual rational behavior lead to collective action problems? What are some solutions to overcome those problems?

*** Quiz #6 due July 28 by midnight (Mountain Time) ***

Module 8 (July 28 – 30)

Governmental Institutions (Textbook Chapter 8)

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?

*** Quiz #7 due July 30 by midnight (Mountain Time) ***

Module 9 (August 2 – 4)

Elections and Political Parties (Textbook Chapter 9)

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?

*** Quiz #8 due August 4 by midnight (Mountain Time) ***

Module 10 (August 4 – 6)

Political Economy: How do countries govern their economies? (Textbook Chapter 10)

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?

*** Quiz #9 due August 6 by midnight (Mountain Time) ***

Module 11 (August 9 – 11)

Democratization: The Magic Cure? (Textbook Chapter 11)

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?

*** Quiz #10 due August 11 by midnight (Mountain Time) ***

Module 12 (August 11 – 13)

Global Conflict: International and Civil Wars (Textbook Chapter 12)

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?

*** Quiz #11 due August 13 by midnight (Mountain Time) ***

Module 13 (August 16 – 18)

Cooperation in Our Globalizing World (Textbook Chapter 13)

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?

*** Quiz #12 due August 18 by midnight (Mountain Time) ***

Module 14 (August 18 – 20)

Comprehensive Examination due August 20 by midnight (Mountain Time).