

Teaching Democracy
Political Science (POLS) 4318 – 001
CRN: 28619
The University of Texas at El Paso
Spring 2016
MW: 3:00 - 4:20pm
Quinn Hall 206

Instructor: Dr. Gregory S. Schober
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Office Hours: MW, 1:45-2:45pm (and by appointment)

Course Description

This course focuses on democracy, educational policies, and the pedagogy of civic education. The course is designed for both political science majors and students doing the social studies composite in order to teach in middle and high school. Our central dilemma and challenge: with what sorts of policies and teaching strategies can the talents of ALL children be developed?

Each class session will contain a lecture component and/or a discussion component. During the lecture component, the assigned readings will be considered and/or new material will be introduced. Students are required to read the assigned readings before arriving to each class session, so that they can follow the lectures and/or participate in class discussion. Some discussion sessions will be directed by students. In addition, one class day will involve a field trip to community events, including the one-of-a-kind-in-the United States El Paso Museum of History's Digital Wall (<http://digie.org/>). Consider bringing historical photos to upload!

Outcomes (Learning Objectives)

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Understand power relations, access points, stakeholders, and decision-makers in school governance in democracies, including Independent School Districts (ISDs), the nonpartisan elected board trustees that govern them (EPISD, YISD, SISD), and the elected partisan 15-member State Board of Education
- Apply insights from other cities (e.g., Los Angeles, San Diego, New York) and their schools to El Paso and the State of Texas
- Explain the relationship between social studies standardized testing and teaching democracy
- Propose multiple strategies for civic learning in classrooms and course materials
- Understand the complexity of the continuously revised Texas Education Agency website Student Report Card campus data, PEIMS Financial Standards Reports (for per-pupil funding by campus), and TEKS by subject area (middle grades 6-8 and high school).

Required Course Books (available at UTEP Bookstore or elsewhere):

- Diane Ravitch, THE DEATH AND LIFE OF THE GREAT AMERICAN SCHOOL SYSTEM
- Jeannie Oakes & John Rogers, LEARNING POWER: ORGANIZING FOR EDUCATION AND JUSTICE
- Alfie Kohn, FEEL-BAD EDUCATION AND OTHER CONTRARIAN ESSAYS ON CHILDREN AND SCHOOLING

Course Requirements

- Midterm Exam: The midterm exam will likely consist of multiple choice questions and short answer questions, and it will cover material from the course readings, lectures, and/or discussion (30% of grade).
- Final Exam: The final exam will likely consist of multiple choice questions and short answer questions, and it will cover material from the course readings, lectures, and/or discussion (30% of grade).
- Essay: Students will be required to carefully read the Texas Civic Health Index (http://communication.utexas.edu/sites/communication.utexas.edu/files/attachments/straus/13-00395%20NCC%20CHI%20TX%20FINAL_web.pdf) and write a 750-word essay on the state of civic health in Texas. More information on this requirement will be distributed in class (10% of grade).
- Class Attendance and Participation: Students will be able to earn participation points each class session by attending and participating in class discussions. Students will work in teams on various projects, including the discussion and presentation of selected readings (30% of grade).

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory by university policy, and students will be asked to sign an attendance sheet for each class meeting. It is expected of you that you do not miss classes, which will result in a penalty to your grade. More specifically, after two unexcused absences, I will begin to deduct points from your attendance and participation grade for each subsequent unexcused absence. Note that the class participation portion of each student's grade is left solely to the discretion of the instructor.

Here are specific situations of absence and whether or not excuses will be accepted as valid or not:

- If you know you will be unable to attend a class due to a valid university excuse (NCAA sports, religious purposes, other university events, brief military duties) you must notify me ten days in advance by a letter provided by the Dean of Students.
- The instructor reserves the right to accept or not excuses related to medical issues. Naturally, it is not usually feasible to document in advance any time lost due to illness. The exception is planned surgeries and appointments (not normal check-ups). Any class time missed will not be excused without medical or other valid documentation. Documentation from Mexico is permissible. Students with severe medical problems that

result in missing a majority of the semester may want to consider a complete withdrawal from the university for medical purposes.

- Absences due to conflicts with work, child care, etc. that make it impossible for you to regularly attend this class are not permitted. If you know you will have scheduling conflicts with this class, then you should make other arrangements or postpone this class until a future semester.
- 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 can 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.”
- Missed exams due to family hardship or family medical problems may not be accepted by the instructor as valid excuses. For example, helping family members move, picking up at the airport, driving family members to medical appointments when you know they conflict with class, and other such activities, will not be permitted as valid excuses. Emergencies such as deaths in the family must be documented, unfortunately.

Final Exam Policy

The date of the final exam is listed below in the Schedule of Classes. The final exam is considered over when the instructor is no longer in the room (all other students present have completed the exam), so do not be late. The exam must be taken on this day unless you have a valid university accepted excuse.

Midterm Exam Policy

The date of the midterm exam is listed below in the Schedule of Classes. No make-up midterm exam will occur without a student having provided to the instructor valid documentation explaining or excusing the absence. The instructor has the discretion to decide if a make-up is allowable outside the university excused absences. If you miss an exam due to an emergency or illness, you must notify me (and confirm with me that I have received your notification attempt) as soon as possible to arrange a make-up exam. A make-up exam may be of a different format than the original exam.

Other Course Policies and Expectations

- Debate and discussion are important in the critical evaluation of politics. It is expected that students will treat the instructor and other students with respect, including refraining from disparaging remarks, personal insults, derogatory comments, and other unprofessional behavior, in person or electronically. Any problem related to rude conduct, or any threats to violence, etc., likely will result in the student being dropped from the course by the instructor.
- Outside work and other non-class related activities are not permitted in our classroom.
- If you engage in behaviors that distract others or create a disturbance, you will be asked to leave the class. If you refuse to leave class, university police will be contacted.
- Cell phone/smart phone/PDA usage is not permitted during exams or at other times when it might pose a class disturbance. Laptops, tablets, or other electronic devices used for

note-taking are permissible, but students using such must not engage in any activities that disturb other students.

Email Protocol

When emailing me, please put the course and section number in the subject line. In the body of your email, clearly state your question. At the end of your email, be sure to put your first and last name. Please do not email me about information you can obtain from the syllabus. I generally do not answer substantive material from lectures or readings via email, as it is not an effective means of communicating. If there is class material you are confused about, please come see me during my office hours.

Academic Integrity and Dishonesty

Model integrity and ethical behavior! Students who copy exams or steal ideas and quotations without citations in their writing will be subject to discipline. Read

<http://sa.utep.edu/osccr/academic-integrity/>

UTEP Statement for Each Syllabus: “Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another person's as ones' own. And, 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 Dean of Students Office for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions.

Academic dishonesty is an assault upon the basic integrity and meaning of a University. Cheating, plagiarism, and collusion in dishonest activities are serious acts which erode the University's educational and research roles and cheapen the learning experience not only for the perpetrators, but also for the entire community. It is expected that UTEP students will understand and subscribe to the ideal of academic integrity and that they will be willing to bear individual responsibility for their work. Materials (written or otherwise) submitted to fulfill academic requirements must represent a student's own efforts. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violations will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions.”

Students with Different Abilities

If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu, or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please

visit the CASS website at www.sa.utep.edu/cass. CASS' Staff are the only individuals who can validate and if need be, authorize accommodations for students with disabilities.

The Student is responsible for presenting to the instructor any CASS accommodation letters and instructions before arrangements need to be made for exams or other needs.

Schedule of Classes

Wednesday, January 20

- Introduction to the Course

Monday, January 25

- Oakes & Rogers (O&R), Prologue and Ch. 1, Unjust Schools
- Kohn, Introduction on the 12 obvious truths we shouldn't be ignoring

Wednesday, January 27

- O&R, Ch. 2, The Limits of School Reform
- Ravitch, Ch. 1, What I Learned about School Reform

Monday, February 1

- O&R, Ch. 3 and 4, "Participatory Social Inquiry: What John Dewey offers Equity Reformers"

Wednesday, February 3

- Kohn, Section I, Ch 1, "Progressive Education" and students' social inquiry
- Ravitch, Ch 2, "How the Standards Movement turned into the Testing Movement"

Monday, February 8

- Kohn, Section II, Chs 2-3, on challenging students

Wednesday, February 10

- Presentation by the Center for Civic Engagement
 - Opportunities for civic engagement
 - Introduction to the digital wall
- Training: the TEA website (www.tea.state.tx.us), the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills in social studies) and Student Report Card data on campuses, districts, regions, and the state

Monday, February 15

- O&R, Ch 5 on teachers ‘teaching to change’
- Bring a half dozen TEKS for middle and/or high school social studies and be prepared to discuss in teams and present to the larger group

Wednesday, February 17

- No Class (UTEP Closed)

Monday, February 22

- Ravitch, Ch. 3, on the transformation of a district in NYC
- Ravitch, Ch. 4, “Lessons from San Diego”
- Be prepared to work in teams to present major ‘take-aways’ from chapters 3 and 4

Wednesday, February 24

- Ravitch, Ch. 5, “The Business Model in New York City”
- Team work: how are these policy approaches different or similar to El Paso and the State of Texas?

Monday, February 29

- **Midterm Exam**

Wednesday, March 2

- Community Engagement Event (Location: El Paso Museum of History)

Monday, March 7

- Spring Break (no class)

Wednesday, March 9

- Spring Break (no class)

Monday, March 14

- Kohn, Section II, Chs 4-7, “The Nuts and Bolts of Learning”
- Be prepared to work in teams to present to the class

Wednesday, March 16

- Kohn, Section III, Chs 8-11, “Climate and Connection: How does School feel to Students?”
- Be prepared to work in teams to present to class

Monday, March 21

- Ravitch, Ch. 6, “NCLB [No Child Left Behind]: Measure and Punish”
- Ravitch, Ch. 8, “The Trouble with Accountability.”
- Be prepared to present these chapters in class. How do Ravitch and Kohn compare?

Wednesday, March 23

- Kohn, Section IV, Chs 12-15, “The Big Picture: Educational Policy;”

Monday, March 28

- Ravitch, Ch. 7 “Choice”
- What are the differences between charter schools and vouchers? Discuss in groups which you support and why.

Wednesday, March 30

- O&R, Ch. 6, Grassroots Organizing and Parents Organized

Monday, April 4

- Texas Civic Health Index, available online
(http://communication.utexas.edu/sites/communication.utexas.edu/files/attachments/strauss/13-00395%20NCC%20CHI%20TX%20FINAL_web.pdf)

Wednesday, April 6

- O&R, Ch. 7, Grassroots Organizing and Parents Organized

Monday, April 11

- **Essay Due by 5pm (submitted to the instructor by email)**
- Discuss strategies to increase civic engagement

Wednesday, April 13

- Ravitch, Ch. 9 on foundation plans

Monday, April 18

- Ravitch, Ch. 10 on foundation plans

Wednesday, April 20

- Kohn, Section V, Beyond the Schools

Monday, April 25

- Ravitch, Ch. 11, “Lessons Learned” in Education

Wednesday, April 27

- O&R Ch. 8, Activism and the Power of Inquiry and Organizing

Monday, May 2

- O&R Ch. 9, Activism and the Power of Inquiry and Organizing

Wednesday, May 4

- Discussion on Civic Education and Activism

Friday, May 6

- Review for Final Exam

Monday, May 9

- **Final Exam: 1pm -3:45pm**