

**Teaching Democracy**  
Political Science (POLS) 4318 – 001  
CRN: 18121  
The University of Texas at El Paso  
Fall 2017  
MW: 3:00pm - 4:20pm  
Liberal Arts Building 102

Instructor: Dr. Gregory S. Schober  
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Office Hours: MW, 1:45pm – 2:45pm (and by appointment)  
Class Website: Blackboard through your MY UTEP PORTAL

### **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.

### **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 STAAR by subject area (middle grades 6-8 and high school).

### Required Readings (available at the 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 up to the date of the midterm exam (25% 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 after the midterm exam (25% of grade).
- Essay: Students will be required to carefully read the Texas Civic Health Index ([https://moody.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/TX\\_CHI\\_TX.pdf](https://moody.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/TX_CHI_TX.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. **Late papers will be penalized one full letter grade for each class day they are late** (10% of grade).
- Civic Engagement Project: Students are required to write a research paper on a local historical topic that is selected by, and relevant to, the El Paso Museum of History. More information on this requirement will be distributed in class (20% 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 (20% of grade).

### University Policies

This instructor abides by university policies, such as excused absences and attendance, as stated in the UTEP undergraduate catalog: <http://catalog.utep.edu/undergrad/academic-regulations/curriculum-and-classroom-policies/>. It is the student's responsibility to understand their rights and university policies. In addition to university policies, I add the following policies below.

#### Attendance Policy

UTEP expects that students will not miss classes without valid excuses. Students will be asked to sign an attendance sheet for each class meeting. It is expected 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:

- Valid university excuses include religious holy days, officially recognized university activities (with Dean of Students letter), and military leave. Students must follow the required documentation procedure for each valid university excuse.
- 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.
- Missing any course assessments and work due to vacations and pre-booked travel arrangements are not valid excuses.

### **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.

### **Essay**

In this paper, you will have the opportunity to evaluate the state of civic health in Texas. To complete this paper, students must read and evaluate the Texas Civic Health Index ([https://moody.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/TX\\_CHI\\_TX.pdf](https://moody.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/TX_CHI_TX.pdf)). Further details and instructions will be provided in class (about 750 words, worth 10% of overall grade). Late papers will be penalized one full letter grade for each class day they are late. **Printed copy is due on 11/6 (at the start of class).**

### **Civic Engagement Research Project**

Students are required to write a research paper (minimum 15 pages - maximum 20 pages) on a local historical topic that is selected by, and relevant to, the El Paso Museum of History. Students must select one of the topics that are presented by the El Paso Museum of History. Further details and instructions will be provided in class, including a presentation of the available topics and a presentation on available resources that can be used to complete the research project. Students must discuss the results of their research project with other class members during a class session. **You must submit a printed copy of your research paper to the instructor by 11/29, at the start of class, to receive credit.**

### **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

As stated in the UTEP undergraduate catalog, “Any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Academic dishonesty includes, and is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. Proven violations of the detailed regulations, as printed in the *Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP)*, and available in the Office of Student Life and on the homepage of the Office of Student Life at [www.utep.edu/dos](http://www.utep.edu/dos), can result in sanctions ranging from disciplinary probation, to a failing grade on the work in question, to a failing grade in the course, to suspension or dismissal, among others.”

### 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](mailto: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](http://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

Mon	8/28	Introduction to the Course
Wed	8/30	<b>No Class</b>
Mon	9/4	<b>No Class (Labor Day)</b>
Wed	9/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oakes &amp; Rogers (O&amp;R), Prologue and Ch. 1, Unjust Schools</li> <li>• Kohn, Introduction</li> </ul>
Mon	9/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• O&amp;R, Ch. 2, The Limits of School Reform</li> <li>• Ravitch, Ch. 1, What I Learned about School Reform</li> </ul>
Wed	9/13	Civic Engagement Research Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class session location is at the UTEP library (specific room will be announced in class)</li> <li>• Presentations by the El Paso Museum of History and UTEP Library</li> <li>• Description and Discussion of Research Paper</li> <li>• No assigned reading</li> </ul>

Mon	9/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• O&amp;R, Ch. 3 and 4, “Participatory Social Inquiry: What John Dewey offers Equity Reformers”</li> </ul>
Wed	9/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kohn, Section I, Ch 1, “Progressive Education” and students’ social inquiry</li> <li>• Ravitch, Ch 2, “How the Standards Movement turned into the Testing Movement”</li> </ul>
Mon	9/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kohn, Section II, Chapters 2-3, on challenging students</li> </ul>
Wed	9/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• O&amp;R, Ch 5 on teachers ‘teaching to change’</li> <li>• Training: the TEA website (<a href="http://www.tea.state.tx.us">www.tea.state.tx.us</a>), the STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness) and Student Report Card data on campuses, districts, regions, and the state</li> </ul>
Mon	10/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring 6 STAAR questions for middle and/or high school social studies and be prepared to discuss in teams and present to the larger group</li> <li>• No additional reading</li> </ul>
Wed	10/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ravitch, Ch. 3, on the transformation of a district in NYC</li> <li>• Ravitch, Ch. 4, “Lessons from San Diego”</li> <li>• Review Session</li> </ul>
Mon	10/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ravitch, Ch. 5, “The Business Model in New York City”</li> </ul>
Wed	10/11	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
Mon	10/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No assigned reading</li> <li>• Discussion and the selection of dates for student-led discussion groups</li> </ul>
Wed	10/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kohn, Section II, Chapters 4-7, “The Nuts and Bolts of Learning”</li> </ul>
Mon	10/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kohn, Section III, Chapters 8-11, “Climate and Connection: How does School feel to Students?”</li> <li>• Student-led Discussion (Group 1)</li> </ul>
Wed	10/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ravitch, Ch. 6, “NCLB [No Child Left Behind]: Measure and Punish”</li> <li>• Ravitch, Ch. 8, “The Trouble with Accountability.”</li> <li>• Student-led discussion (Group 2)</li> </ul>

Mon	10/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texas Civic Health Index report, available online (<a href="https://moody.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/TX_CHI_TX.pdf">https://moody.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/TX_CHI_TX.pdf</a>)</li> </ul>
Wed	11/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kohn, Section IV, Chapters 12-15, “The Big Picture: Educational Policy;”</li> <li>• Student-led discussion (Group 3)</li> </ul>
Mon	11/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Essay Due at the start of class (printed copy)</b></li> <li>• Discuss strategies to increase civic engagement</li> <li>• No assigned reading</li> </ul>
Wed	11/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ravitch, Ch. 7 “Choice”</li> <li>• Student-led discussion (Group 4)</li> </ul>
Mon	11/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• O&amp;R, Ch. 6</li> <li>• Student-led discussion (Group 5)</li> </ul>
Wed	11/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• O&amp;R, Ch. 7</li> <li>• Student-led discussion (Group 6)</li> </ul>
Mon	11/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ravitch, Ch. 9 on foundation plans</li> <li>• Student-led discussion (Group 7)</li> </ul>
Wed	11/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ravitch, Ch. 10 on foundation plans</li> <li>• Student-led discussion (Group 8)</li> </ul>
Mon	11/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ravitch, Ch. 11, “Lessons Learned;”</li> <li>• Student-led discussion (Group 9)</li> </ul>
Wed	11/29	<p><b>Civic Engagement Research Project</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No assigned reading</li> <li>• <b>Civic Engagement Research Paper Due</b> (submit printed copy to the instructor at the start of class)</li> <li>• <b>Reflection Session</b></li> </ul>
Mon	12/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• O&amp;R Ch. 8</li> <li>• Student-led discussion (Group 10)</li> <li>• Review Session</li> </ul>
Wed	12/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• O&amp;R Ch. 9</li> <li>• Large Discussion</li> </ul>
Mon	12/11	<b>Final Exam: 1pm-3:45pm</b>