

Teaching Democracy
Political Science (POLS) 4318 – 001
CRN: 16993
The University of Texas at El Paso
Fall 2018
MW: 10:30am - 11:50am
EDUC 301

Instructor: Dr. Gregory S. Schober

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Office Hours: Monday: 3-5pm

Tuesday: 3-5pm

Wednesday: 3-5pm

(and by appointment)

Class Website: Blackboard through your MY UTEP PORTAL

Course Description

This course focuses on democracy, education 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).

Also, by the end of the semester, students should make improvements in the following skill areas related to the UTEP Edge initiative:

- Social responsibility
- Leadership
- Communication
- Critical thinking
- Teamwork

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 likely will 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 likely will 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 (20% of grade).
- Essay: Students will be required to carefully read the 2018 Texas Civic Health Index (https://moody.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/2018-Texas_Civic_Health_Index.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.** Through this requirement (and in line with the UTEP Edge initiative), students will have opportunities to exercise communication and critical thinking skills (10% of grade).
- Civic Engagement Project: Students will have the option of completing service-learning in the community through the Center for Civic Engagement or writing a research paper on community organizations and education in the local region. Through this requirement (and in line with the UTEP Edge initiative), students will have opportunities to exercise the skills of social responsibility, leadership, communication, and critical thinking (25% 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. In preparation for student-led discussions, presenting students may read and introduce outside material. Through this requirement (and in line with the UTEP Edge initiative), students will have opportunities to exercise the skills of leadership, communication, critical thinking, and teamwork (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 2018 Texas Civic Health Index (https://moody.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/2018-Texas_Civic_Health_Index.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 of your paper is due at the start of class on the due date for the essay (listed below in the Schedule of Classes).**

Civic Engagement Project

Students are to choose one of the following two options for the civic engagement project:

- **Option 1:** Complete a minimum of 20 hours of service-learning coordinated by the Center for Civic Engagement (CCE). We will have an in-class session to have class members registered and trained on how to do the project and another session where students will have an opportunity to share and discuss the activities they accomplished during the semester. You must submit your documentation verifying the hours of service-learning to the CCE by 5:00pm on the due date (the due date for service-learning is listed below in the Schedule of Classes) to receive credit. Further details and instructions will be provided in class.

- **Option 2:** Write a research paper (minimum 15 pages - maximum 20 pages) on local community organizations that provide assistance or resources (e.g., food, housing, health care services, etc.) to impoverished individuals in the region. What are the names of seven organizations in the local area that provide assistance or resources to poor individuals? How does each organization attempt to address a community need? How are their actions similar (and how are they different)? Do the actions of these organizations have implications for education in the local region? Why or why not? Do you think that the organizations' actions help to develop the talents of poor children? Why or why not? You should refer to relevant scholarly work as well as the official websites of the organizations that you are researching for the paper (minimum of 15 scholarly and official website sources). Students who choose this option also will have an opportunity to share and discuss their project with other class members during a class session. A printed copy of the paper is due at the start of class on the due date (the due date for the research paper is listed below in the Schedule of Classes). Further details and instructions will be provided in class.

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 disruptive or threatening behavior may result in immediate and follow-up responses by the instructor and/or relevant UTEP offices, including (but not limited to) the student being asked to leave the class and the student being dropped from the course.
- At the discretion of the instructor, a student can be dropped from a course because of excessive absences or lack of effort. A grade of "W" will be assigned before the course drop deadline and a grade of "F" after the course drop deadline. A grade of "F" received due to disciplinary action imposed by the University overrides a grade of "W" received through a student-initiated or faculty drop. Students will be notified of their drop through their UTEP e-mail account. Students may also be administratively withdrawn from a course during the semester for other reasons, with the concurrence of the instructor and department chair, or dean. Approved requests will be forwarded to the Registration and Records Office for processing. Students are responsible for checking their class schedules in Goldmine and for checking their official UTEP preferred e-mail accounts to determine if they have been dropped from a class.
- Outside work and other non-class related activities are not permitted in our classroom.
- Cell phone/smart phone/PDA usage is not permitted during exams or at other times when it might pose a class disruption. Laptops, tablets, or other electronic devices used for note-taking are permissible, but students using such must not engage in any activities that disrupt 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, 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, 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.

Other Resources for Students

- UTEP Writing Center
 - Library Building, Room 227
 - (915) 747-5112
 - <http://uwc.utep.edu/>
- UTEP Career Center
 - 103 W Union Building
 - 915-747-5640
 - <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/careers/>
- UTEP Counseling and Psychological Services
 - Union West, Room 202
 - 915-747-5302
 - After Hours Crisis Line: 915-747-5302
 - <http://sa.utep.edu/counsel/>

- University Police Department
 - 915-747-5611
 - <https://www.utep.edu/police/>
- UTEP Student Health Center
 - 915-747-5624
 - <https://www.utep.edu/chs/shc/>
- Center Against Sexual and Family Violence
 - 580 Giles Road
 - 915-593-7300
 - 24/7 Crisis Hope Line: 1-800-727-0511
- UTEP Student Food Bank (Student Engagement and Leadership Center)
 - Union West, Room 106
 - 915-747-5670
- UTEP Student Support Services for Challenges with Finances (FHAR)
 - Academic Advising Center
 - 915-747-5290
- If you would like to access other resources, please contact me and I will do my best to help you search for additional resources.

Schedule of Classes

Mon	8/27	Introduction to the Course
Wed	8/29	No Class
Mon	9/3	No Class (Labor Day)
Wed	9/5	Student Performance Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oakes & Rogers (O&R), “Prologue” and Ch. 1, “Unjust Schools” • Kohn, “Introduction” CCE Presentation: Service-Learning
Mon	9/10	School Reform <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • O&R, Ch. 2, “The Limits of School Reform” • Ravitch, Ch. 1, “What I Learned about School Reform”
Wed	9/12	Civic Engagement Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training by the CCE (Option 1) • Description and Discussion of Research Paper (Option 2) • No assigned reading

Mon	9/17	<p>Participatory Social Inquiry and Political Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • O&R, Ch. 3 and 4, “Participatory Social Inquiry: What John Dewey offers Equity Reformers”
Wed	9/19	<p>Progressive Education and the Standards Movement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kohn, Section I, Ch. 1, “Progressive Education” • Ravitch, Ch 2, “How the Standards Movement turned into the Testing Movement”
Mon	9/24	<p>Developing Challenging Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kohn, Section II, Chapters 2-3, on challenging students
Wed	9/26	<p>Teachers and School Performance Reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • O&R, Ch 5 on teachers ‘teaching to change’ • Training: the TEA website (www.tea.state.tx.us), the STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness) and Student Report Card data on campuses, districts, regions, and the state
Mon	10/1	<p>Examination of Standardized Test Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • No additional reading
Wed	10/3	<p>Comparative Case Studies: New York City and San Diego</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ravitch, Ch. 3, “The Transformation of District 2” • Ravitch, Ch. 4, “Lessons from San Diego” • Review Session
Mon	10/8	<p>Business Model in Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ravitch, Ch. 5, “The Business Model in New York City”
Wed	10/10	Midterm Exam
Mon	10/15	<p>Professional Development Workshop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No assigned reading
Wed	10/17	<p>Process of Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion and the selection of dates for student-led discussion groups • Kohn, Section II, Chapters 4-7, “The Nuts and Bolts of Learning”

Mon	10/22	<p>Environment, Interest, and Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kohn, Section III, Chapters 8-11, “Climate and Connection: How does School feel to Students?” • Student-led discussion (Group 1)
Wed	10/24	<p>Accountability Movement and Policy Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ravitch, Ch. 6, “NCLB [No Child Left Behind]: Measure and Punish” • Ravitch, Ch. 8, “The Trouble with Accountability.” • Student-led discussion (Group 2)
Mon	10/29	<p>Civic Health in Texas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018 Texas Civic Health Index report, available online (https://moody.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/2018-Texas_Civic_Health_Index.pdf)
Wed	10/31	<p>Goals and Policies in Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kohn, Section IV, Chapters 12-15, “The Big Picture: Education Policy” • Student-led discussion (Group 3)
Mon	11/5	<p>Strategies to Increase Civic Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay Due at the start of class (printed copy) • Discuss strategies to increase civic engagement • No assigned reading
Wed	11/7	<p>Tradeoffs of School Choice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ravitch, Ch. 7, “Choice” • Student-led discussion (Group 4)
Mon	11/12	<p>Grassroots Organizing and the Building of Power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • O&R, Ch. 6, “Building Power” • Student-led discussion (Group 5)
Wed	11/14	<p>Parent Involvement in Schools and Education Policy Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • O&R, Ch. 7, “Parent-U-Turn” • Student-led discussion (Group 6)
Mon	11/19	<p>Teacher Quality and Student Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ravitch, Ch. 9, “What Would Mrs. Ratliff Do?” • Student-led discussion (Group 7)

Wed	11/21	Foundations and Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ravitch, Ch. 10 on foundations • Student-led discussion (Group 8)
Mon	11/26	Lessons in Education and Pathways Forward <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ravitch, Ch. 11, “Lessons Learned” • Student-led discussion (Group 9)
Wed	11/28	Civic Engagement Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection Session • No assigned reading
Mon	12/3	Collaborations To Change Education Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • O&R, Ch. 8, “The Educational Justice Collaborative” • Review Session
Wed	12/5	Inequality, Justice, and Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic Engagement Project Due *Option 1 (service-learning): Due by 5pm *Option 2 (research paper): Due by the start of class (submit printed copy to the instructor) • Last Lecture
Fri	12/14	Final Exam: 10am-12:45pm