

The University of Texas at El Paso
Women's and Gender Studies
WS 4314 Women, Power, & Politics
POLS 4314 Women, Power and Politics
Course Syllabus
Fall 2024

Course Information

This is WS 4314 Women, Power, & Politics (CRN 17622) and POLS 4314 Women, Power and Politics (CRN 17933)

Term: Fall 2024

Delivery Method: Asynchronous via Blackboard

Instructor Information:

Instructor: Isela Peña, J.D., Ed.D.

Email: ipena3@utep.edu

Office Hours: Monday 9:00am – 10:30am, Wednesday 3:00pm – 4:30pm or by appointment

Unless otherwise requested, offices hours will be conducted online via Zoom. The Zoom link will be provided on Blackboard.

**WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES DEPARTMENT DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
STATEMENT**

Women's and Gender Studies supports an inclusive learning environment in which diversity and individual differences are understood, respected, and appreciated. We believe that all students benefit from training and experiences that will help them to learn, lead, and serve in an increasingly diverse society. All members of our program must accept the responsibility to demonstrate civility and respect for the dignity of others. Expressions or actions that disparage a person's race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, gender, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, age, veteran status, or disability are contrary to the mission of our program. All our faculty and staff are responsible for promoting inclusive spaces for all, including students with children and breastfeeding mothers. While a Women's and Gender Studies student, you will be given an equitable opportunity to contribute and succeed. The diversity of lived experiences and knowledge that you bring to our courses are considered a resource, strength, and benefit. Thank you for the diversity you bring to our program!

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Delivery

This course will take place asynchronously via Blackboard. As such, the course does not require synchronous (live) class meetings. To develop and cultivate a virtual learning community, you are expected to log into the course site regularly to stay up-to-date with any course developments, access course materials, upload assignments, and engage with your classmates and professor.

In addition, you will be required to devote an amount of time similar to what you would have spent in a face-to-face class, viewing and/or reading assigned course materials (approximately 3 hours per week). You will also be expected to allocate time (approximately 4-5 hours per learning module/unit) for completing course assignments, including actively participating in online discussion boards.

For additional support, I will be available during office hours or at a scheduled appointment time for real-time discussions on the readings and assignments as needed. This will help us connect throughout the semester and allow me an additional avenue to support your learning experience in the course.

Course Description

In this course, we will examine the treatment of gender in the U.S. legal system and consider the impact of the law on our collective society and in our everyday lives. We will also explore how societal norms and culture intersect and influence legal thought and judicial decisions. Incorporating historical and current trends, related course topics will include feminist legal theories, gender and the workplace, gender-based violence, family construction, reproductive rights, and gender in the context of school systems. We will also integrate the construction and intersection of political, economic, and socio-cultural factors, as well as power structures, privilege, and systemic and structural challenges to equality.

This course is not intended to provide definitive legal answers or answers in general to issues related to gender. Rather the course will provide students an opportunity to engage with relevant questions of law, identify assumptions underlying legal decisions and policies, question the perspectives and voices represented, engage in critical inquiry around the topics presented in the course, and contemplate changes in our culture, organizations, and legal system to construct a more equitable future.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a basic understanding of the U.S. legal system and structure, and major legal issues and concepts that frame sex equality
2. Recognize and explain the ways gender functions as a social and legal construction
3. Articulate the social, political, economic, and cultural dimensions of gender as they relate to disparities in power and privilege
4. Interpret, critique, and analyze legal theory and caselaw related to gender and the impact on society, policies, and practices
5. Interpret, critique, and analyze the impact of societal norms, culture, and thought on the legal treatment of gender and inequality
6. Identify options for changes in the legal and social construction of gender for positive collective change
7. Apply legal concepts and theories to their individual life experiences and society at-large

Required Text/ Resources

There are no required textbooks for this course. All assigned readings and resources will be provided in Blackboard in the corresponding learning module/unit.

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, a webcam, and a microphone. 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.

Course Content Notice

Throughout the semester, this course will include mature content related to sex, gender, sexuality, and interpersonal and structural violence (including sexual assault and rape). As we read the course materials, complete assignments, and engage in online discussion boards we will be discussing content that may be disturbing, potentially triggering, or traumatizing to some students. If you anticipate that some of this material will be emotionally challenging for you, I would be happy to discuss any concerns you may have and determine how to best address your needs together. Please email me to arrange a time for a live videoconference meeting as soon as possible.

Alternatively, please note that this is not a required course for your undergraduate degree and that you may have options to take a different course to fulfill an elective requirement. After careful consideration, if you elect to remain enrolled in this course, you are acknowledging your awareness of course content and consenting to engage with course materials and participate in class discussions. As we move through the semester, if you need emotional support related to course content, please contact me and/or seek out related campus resources through UTEP's Counseling and Psychological Services, <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/counsel/>.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Learning Modules

This course is designed utilizing learning modules comprised of eight units. Each unit covers the legal topics listed below.

Dates	Learning Modules
08/26 – 09/09	Unit 1: Introductions and Course Overview
09/10 – 09/23	Unit 2: Feminist Legal Theories
09/24 – 10/07	Unit 3: Economic Impact of Sex and Sexism
10/08 – 10/21	Unit 4: Family, Violence and Reproductive Rights
10/22 – 11/04	Unit 5: Learning Review, Reflections, and Engagement
11/05 – 11/18	Unit 6: Gender Issues and Schooling Systems
11/19 – 12/02	Unit 7: International Perspectives
12/03 – 12/09	Unit 8: Looking Ahead and Course Learning Reflections

Course Calendar

This is a tentative course schedule and is subject to change. Notice of any changes will be communicated through Announcements on Blackboard. Descriptions of each assignment are posted on Blackboard in the corresponding learning module/unit. Unless otherwise indicated in Blackboard, all assignments are due on the date the learning module/unit ends by 11:59pm MST.

Unit	Dates	Assignments
Unit 1- Introductions and Course Overview	Aug. 26 – Sept. 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment 1: Student Information Form and Syllabus Review Assignment 2: Discussion Board
Unit 2: Feminist Legal Theories	Sept. 10 – Sept. 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment 3: Journal Entry Assignment 4: Discussion Board
Unit 3: Economic Impact of Sex and Sexism	Sept. 24 – Oct. 07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment 5: Policy Brief Assignment 6: Discussion Board
Unit 4: Family, Violence and Reproductive Rights	Oct. 08 – Oct. 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment 7: Case Analysis Assignment 8: Discussion Board
Unit 5: Learning Review, Reflections, and Engagement	Oct. 22 – Nov. 04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment 9: Exam 1- Learning Review and Reflection (Due Date: Nov. 04)
Unit 6: Gender Issues and Schooling Systems	Nov. 05 – Nov. 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment 10: Position Paper
Unit 7: International Perspectives	Nov. 19 – Dec. 02	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment 11: Discussion Board
Unit 8: Looking Ahead and Course Learning Reflections	Dec. 03 – Dec. 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment 12: Final Exam (Due Date: Dec. 9)

Course Grades

All assignments will be submitted on Blackboard. A rubric for each assignment is posted in the assignment description in the corresponding learning module/unit.

Course Assignments	Points
Assignment 1: Student Information Form and Syllabus Review	60
Assignment 2: Discussion Board	60
Assignment 3: Journal Entry	80
Assignment 4: Discussion Board	60
Assignment 5: Policy Brief	100
Assignment 6: Discussion Board	60
Assignment 7: Case Analysis	100
Assignment 8: Discussion Board	60
Assignment 9: Exam 1 - Learning Review and Reflection	120
Assignment 10: Position Paper	100
Assignment 11: Discussion Board	80
Assignment 12: Final Exam	120
Total Points:	1000

Grade Distribution:

- 900 – 1000 = A
- 800 – 899 = B
- 700 – 799 = C
- 600 – 699 = D
- 599 and Below = F

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURE/POLICIES

Deadlines, Late Work and Absence Policy

Unless otherwise noted, all assignments and exams are due on the date the learning module/unit ends by 11:59pm MST. No late work will be accepted except under exigent circumstances.

If you are experiencing technical difficulties submitting your work through the course website, please contact the [UTEP Help Desk](#). E-mail me to let me know you are experiencing difficulties if the Help Desk is unable to resolve the issue. In this instance, you may also email me your assignment if needed.

This course does not have class meeting dates. However, while this course is asynchronous, you are required to log-in regularly and interact in our virtual learning community, submit assignments by the required due dates, and stay in communication with your professor. Your regular and active participation in the course is important not only for your learning and success but also to create an engaged community of learners.

In the event that a live session is provided, students will be expected to participate in these sessions with a webcam and microphone. You should not record the sessions. If the professor records the session to share with the class, you should not share the recordings outside of this course; this includes posting the recordings to any third-party sites outside of Blackboard. Doing so may result in disciplinary action.

Excused Absences and/or Course Drop Policy

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 may 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.” See academic regulations in the UTEP Graduate Catalog for a list of excused absences. Therefore, if I find that, due to non-performance in the course, you are at risk of failing, I will drop you from the course. I will provide 24-hour advance notice via email. If you feel that you are unable to complete the course successfully, please let me know and then contact the Registrar’s Office to initiate the drop process. If you do not, you are at risk of receiving an “F” for the course.

Incomplete Grade Policy

Incomplete grades may be requested only in exceptional circumstances after you have completed at least half of the course requirements. Talk to me immediately if you believe an incomplete is warranted. If granted, we will establish a contract of work to be completed with deadlines.

Course Communication

Maintaining communication with each other will ensure your success in this course. If a problem arises, you are encouraged to communicate with me as soon as possible. Do not wait and let the problem simmer. I will also solicit feedback from you throughout the course regarding the course materials, assignments, and course pacing. To facilitate this ongoing communication, we will utilize the tools below.

- **Office Hours:** My office hours will be held via Zoom during the hours listed below or by appointment. The link will be made available on Blackboard. Please email me in advance if you plan to stop by during office hours.
Monday, 9:00am – 10:30am
Wednesday, 3:00pm – 4:30pm

- Email: UTEP e-mail is the best way to contact me. I will make every attempt to respond to your e-mail within 24-48 hours of receipt. When e-mailing me, be sure to email from your UTEP student account and put the course number in the subject line. In the body of your e-mail, clearly state your question or concern. At the end of your e-mail, be sure to put your first and last name, and your university identification number.
- Discussion Board: If you have a question that you believe other students may also have, please post it in the discussion board titled Help Board found in Blackboard. Please respond to other students' questions if you have a helpful response.
- Announcements: Check the Blackboard announcements and your UTEP email frequently for any updates, deadlines, or other important messages regarding the course.

Netiquette and Online Learning Community

As we know, sometimes communication online can be challenging. Miscommunication of what we mean or the potential to misunderstand what our classmates mean given the lack of body language and immediate feedback is possible. Therefore, please keep these netiquette (network etiquette) guidelines in mind. Failure to observe them may result in disciplinary action.

- Always consider the audience. This is an upper-division undergraduate level course; therefore, all communication should reflect polite consideration of other's ideas.
- Respect and courtesy must be provided to classmates and to the instructor at all times. No harassment or inappropriate postings will be tolerated.
- When reacting to someone else's message, address the ideas, not the person. Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a face-to-face situation.
- Be mindful of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as different political ideologies and religious beliefs.
- Use good judgment when composing your written responses. Swearing and profanity should be avoided. Also consider that slang terms can be misunderstood or misinterpreted.
- Use good grammar and spelling in written communications.
- Blackboard is not a public internet venue; all postings to it should be considered private and confidential. Whatever is posted on in these online spaces is intended for classmates and the professor only. Please do not copy documents or screen shot material and paste them to a publicly accessible website, blog, or other space.

Keeping in mind that we are engaging in a collective learning experience, we will work together to create a learning environment where we support diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and experiences, and honor your individual identities. To help accomplish this:

- If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official UTEP records, please let me know.
- I (like many people) am still in the process of learning about diverse perspectives and identities. If something was said in class (by anyone) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it immediately.
- Assume good will
- Stay curious, challenge with care, and maintain an open mindset
- Be flexible when things do not work

Accommodations Policy

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, WS 4314 Women, Power, & Politics; POLS 4314 Women, Power and Politics
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services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Students who become pregnant or have parenting responsibilities may also request reasonable accommodations. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. The [UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#) (CASS) will process requests for accommodations based on a disability, pregnancy, or parenting. Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the [CASS portal](#).

Scholastic Integrity

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 as one's own. 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. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

Copyright Statement for Course Materials

All materials used in this course are protected by copyright law. The course materials are only for the use of students currently enrolled in this course and only for the purpose of this course. They may not be further disseminated. Do not upload course materials and/or videos not created by you onto third-party websites or share any content with anyone who is not enrolled in our course. By enrolling in this course, you agree to honor this request.

COVID-19 Testing at UTEP

UTEP offers students free, on-campus COVID-19 antigen testing in the UTEP Student Health and Wellness Center (SHWC) located in Union Building East, first floor. For information and specific details on COVID-19 Testing at UTEP, please visit <https://www.utep.edu/ehs/covid/>.

UTEP is no longer asking employees and students to report positive COVID-19 test results to the University. If you have any questions or concerns about COVID-19, please email covidaction@utep.edu for assistance.

Syllabus Disclaimer

This syllabus is intended to provide guidance as to what may be covered during the course. I will make every effort to follow it as closely as possible. However, as the instructor, I reserve the right to modify, supplement and make changes as the course needs arise. Some of these changes may be dictated by the ongoing course feedback I request from each of you. The intent is to provide the best learning environment and experience for all of us. I will communicate any changes in advance via Announcements in Blackboard.