

POLS 2310: Introduction to Politics Syllabus

Spring 2021

Professor: Dr. Marcos Menchaca

Class time: MW 12:00-1:20pm

Class meeting place: Undergraduate Learning Center 106

Instructor Information

Email

mmenchaca@utep.edu

Office Location

Benedict Hall 308

Office Hours

Tue 3:15-5:00, Thur 3:15-4:15
and by appointment

General Information

Description

This class will introduce you to the discipline of political science. You will learn some of the basic methods of the social sciences (this includes a review of basic statistics). The topics will include political theory, comparative politics, and international relations. In essence, you will learn the basics of how to think like a political scientist in their various subfields.

This class has a political economy flavor to it. These parts will be scattered throughout all of the class topics. You will learn such concepts such as collective action problems, Pareto efficiency, and other related topics. You may be surprised that political scientists use math to analyze the political world. However, I will always keep the formal theory topics I teach you very simple and easy to understand at an undergraduate level.

Course Goals

After the completion of this course, students should have the following skills or knowledge:

- Have a basic understanding of social scientific principles.
- Have a comprehension of major concepts and principles of political science.
- Have some foundation to analyze politics in an objective manner.

UTEP EDGE

Students will be able to:

- Communicate information clearly and effectively using a variety of tools, media and genres (oral, written, iconographic) in varied contexts for a variety of purposes.
- Demonstrate strategic and adaptable thinking patterns in learning and working conditions.
- Apply analysis, synthesis, and evaluative processes that enable productive problem solving and decision-making to strengthen performance in university and workforce setting.
- Reflect and assess their interests, abilities, responsibilities, cultural understanding, and ethics in order to more effectively pursue their academic, career and life goals.

- Use real world digital tools, research, and resources to access, evaluate, and apply information appropriate for authentic tasks.

Course Details

Quizzes

There will be 9 quizzes worth 5% each. They are meant to take some of the weight and pressure off of the midterms and final. Quizzes will need to be completed at 11:59pm on the day they are due. You are required to follow the instruction in the Taking Exams in Blackboard document. If you have technical problems with the quizzes, you can ask Blackboard (blackboard@utep.edu).

Exams

There will be three exams. The first exam will cover material since the beginning of class up until then. The second exam will cover the material since the first exam until then. The third exam will only cover material that is covered since the second exam. All material that is in the assigned book chapters and all lecture material is fair game for the exams. The exams are scheduled to be in-class. However, if we go back to online instruction, the online midterms will need to be completed at 11:59pm on the day they are due.

Class Lectures

The class is taught in-person. However, the university is monitoring the COVID-19 situation, and we may need to switch to online learning at some point in time if the administration decides to do so. Then the lectures will be videos posted to Blackboard. During class time, you need to devote your attention to my lecture. Talking amongst yourselves is prohibited.

Required Text

[TSOP] Colomer, Josep. (2010). *The Science of Politics: An Introduction*. Oxford University Press. Please note that some editions say the publication date is 2011. I do not know why this is, but it is the same book.

Course Schedule

| Day | Topic | Reading | Task Due |
|--------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------|
| Jan 19 | Introduction to Studying Politics | Syllabus | |
| Jan 24 | The Scientific Study of Politics | TSOP Intro, Methods Primer | |
| Jan 26 | Classical Political Theory I | Plato, The Republic, books 1-2 | Quiz 1 |
| Jan 31 | Classical Political Theory II | | |
| Feb 2 | Formal Political Theory I | | |

| Day | Topic | Reading | Task Due |
|--------|---|----------|---------------|
| Feb 7 | Formal Political Theory II | TSOP 1-3 | Quiz 2 |
| Feb 9 | The State & Authority I | | |
| Feb 14 | The State & Authority II | | |
| Feb 21 | Democracy | TSOP 8 | Quiz 3 |
| Feb 23 | Freedom & Justice | | |
| Feb 28 | Exam 1 | | Exam 1 |
| Mar 2 | Political Ideology | | |
| Mar 7 | Political Institutions, Constitutions, & Federalism | TSOP 5-6 | Quiz 4 |
| Mar 21 | Legislatures | TSOP 14 | |
| Mar 23 | Executive Politic | TSOP 4 | Quiz 5 |
| Mar 28 | Agenda Formation | TSOP 11 | |
| Mar 30 | Authoritarian Regimes | TSOP 7 | Quiz 6 |
| Apr 4 | Exam 2 | | Exam 2 |
| Apr 6 | Public Opinion | | |
| Apr 11 | Elections, Voting, and the Media | TSOP 10 | Quiz 7 |
| Apr 13 | Political Parties | TSOP 16 | |
| Apr 18 | Party Systems & Interest Groups | TSOP 12 | Quiz 8 |
| Apr 20 | Intro to Global Politics | | |
| Apr 25 | Theories of International Relations | | |
| Apr 27 | Security & International Organizations | | Quiz 9 |
| May 2 | International Political Economy | | |
| May 4 | Exam 3 | | |

Grading

Your final grade will be calculated with the following elements.

| | |
|---------|-----|
| Quizzes | 45% |
| Exam 1 | 15% |
| Exam 2 | 20% |
| Exam 3 | 20% |

Letter grades will be given according to your place in the distribution of the cumulative scores (the class will be curved).

Additional Information and Resources

Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, or otherwise seek additional information, 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 Union East, Room 106. CASS' staff are the only individuals who can 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, quizzes, or other needs.

Absences During Exams

Student athletes are automatically given the ability to take exams on dates other than the ones stated on the syllabus if they provide documentation. Other than that, generally only documented medical excuses will be accepted as valid excuses for absences during exams. But if something does come up, you can ask me or your TA and we will instruct you on what to do.

Academic Integrity

You are expected to abide by the strictest standards of academic integrity. If you are unsure of what this means, please read more about it at <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/student-conduct/academic-integrity.html>

Covid-19 Precautions

Please stay home if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we can work on appropriate accommodations. If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you are encouraged to report your results to covidaction@utep.edu, so that the Dean of Students Office can provide you with support and help with communication with your professors. The Student Health Center is equipped to provide COVID 19 testing.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people in areas of substantial or high COVID-19 transmission wear face masks when indoors in groups of people. The best way that Miners can take care of Miners is to get the vaccine. If you still need the vaccine, it is widely available in the El Paso area, and will be available at no charge on campus during the first week of classes. For more information about the current rates, testing, and vaccinations, please visit epstrong.org

Miner Learning Center Tutoring

This class is supported by the Mining Learning Center. The MLC provides assistance in challenging core curriculum class sections in order to improve academic performance. Academic support services include tutoring and peer-led study sessions known as Peers Assisting Student Success (PASS) sessions. The tutor for this class is Zoe Andritsos (zaandritsos@miners.utep.edu).

Note

I do not plan on making changes to the syllabus. But if I do, I will always inform you of any changes that I make.