

# POLS 2310: Introduction to Politics Syllabus

Fall 2023

Professor: Dr. Marcos Menchaca

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

Class meeting place: UGLC 116

## Instructor Information

### Email

mmenchaca@utep.edu

### Office Location

Benedict Hall 308

### Office Hours

Tue 10:20am-1:20pm

## 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

This course will focus on how political scientists think critically about political issues. This will be of great benefit to you even if you are not a political science major. Just as you need to exercise to build muscle strength, so also you need to work out your critical thinking skills to build your intellectual capability. 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 10 quizzes worth 5% each. They are meant to take some of the weight and pressure off of the exams. Usually, quizzes will need to be completed at 11:59pm on the day they are due. The official due dates will be announced on Blackboard—the dates on the calendar below are just the approximate times when you will be taking the quizzes. You are required to follow the instruction in the Taking Exams in Blackboard document. I highly recommend completing them at least a day before they are due. If you have technical problems with the quizzes, you can ask Blackboard ([blackboard@utep.edu](mailto:blackboard@utep.edu)). Retakes of completed quizzes are not allowed.

### Exams

There will be three exams. The first exam will cover material from 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. During exams, you may not

- Walk out of the classroom (especially if you have the exam with you);
- Use a smartphone, smartwatch, or anything of the like;
- Talk to each other during the exam.

These are just some of the examples of the prohibitions I put during the exam; but they are not limited to these. If you are not sure that you can do something, just ask us (me or one of the TAs) first. There are things that I do allow, such as writing on the exam sheet.

### Class Lectures

The class is taught in-person. During class time, you need to devote your attention to my lecture. Talking amongst yourselves is prohibited (especially if it is loud enough to disturb others).

### Announcements

If there is important information for this class, I will announce it using Blackboard announcements. These carry the weight of official policy, and it is your responsibility to know them. Think of them like official class reading.

### 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	Quiz Target
Aug 28	Introduction to Studying Politics	Syllabus	
Aug 30	The Scientific Study of Politics	TSOP Intro, Methods Primer	
Sep 6	Classical Political Theory I	Plato, The Republic, books 1-2	Quiz 1
Sep 11	Classical Political Theory II		
Sep 13	Formal Political Theory I		Quiz 2
Sep 18	Formal Political Theory II	TSOP 1-3	
Sep 20	The State & Authority		Quiz 3
Sep 25	Democracy		
Sep 27	<b>Exam 1</b>		
Oct 2	Freedom & Justice		Quiz 4
Oct 4	Political Ideology		Quiz 5
Oct 9	Political Institutions	TSOP 5	
Oct 11	Constitution & Federalism	TSOP 6	Quiz 6
Oct 16	Legislatures	TSOP 14	
Oct 18	Executive Politics	TSOP 4	Quiz 7
Oct 23	<b>Exam 2</b>		
Oct 25	Agenda Formation	TSOP 11	
Oct 30	Democratic & Authoritarian Regimes	TSOP 7	
Nov 6	Public Opinion		Quiz 8
Nov 8	Elections, Voting, and the Media	TSOP 10	
Nov 13	Political Parties	TSOP 16, 12	
Nov 15	Interest Groups		Quiz 9
Nov 20	Intro to Global Politics		

Day	Topic	Reading	Quiz Target
Nov 22	Theories of International Relations		
Nov 27	Security		
Nov 29	International Organizations		
Dec 4	International Political Economy	Subramanian, The Inevitable Superpower	Quiz 10
Dec 6	<b>Exam 3</b>		

## Grading

Your final grade will be calculated with the following elements.

Quizzes	50%
Exam 1	15%
Exam 2	15%
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](mailto: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 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. Given this policy, you should do everything possible to show up to the exams on time. For example, on exam days, make a decent effort to cross the U.S.-Mexico border early if that is something you have to do because occasionally border crossings take longer than usual. Student athletes who need to be away for their athletic activity need to inform me of their absence for the exam at least two week before the date of the exam (and preferably they should inform me at the beginning of the semester).

### **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>

### **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.

### **Land Acknowledgement Statement**

We, the UTEP Department of Political Science, acknowledge that we are in the unceded territories of the Indigenous Peoples who, along with countless generations of ancestors, are the guardians and keepers of this land, both throughout history and in contemporary times: the Tigua, Mansos, Sumas, Ndé, the Piroso, Mescalero Apache, Chiricahua Apache, Tarahumara, Yaqui, Jumano, Comanche, Kiowa, Rarámuri, Tohono O'odham, Yaqui, Kickapoo, Diné, Hopi, Zapotec, Mixtec, Aztec-Nahua-Mexica, Huichol, Tepehuan, Coahuilteco, Chichimeca, and the other Native communities who comprise our multinational region. As scholars and people who reside and work in these lands, we respect and honor the millennia-long history of Native peoples on this land and their ongoing presence today.

### **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.