Introduction to Politics (POLS 2310: CRN 33834)

Department of Political Science and Public Administration
College of Liberal Arts
Introduction to Politics
(POLS 2310 / CRN 33834)
Summer 2024: 10 June to 8 July 2024, with final exam completed by 9 July 2024.
Online course: materials and asynchronous online activities through Blackboard Ultra.
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Email: ptimmons2@utep.edu
Office hours: Virtually, by appointment via Zoom or Google Groups, email for appointment.

COURSE OVERVIEW
This course is a general introduction to the study of politics.

The primary goals of the course are to introduce you to several key concepts and theories within the scientific method of studying politics, increase your familiarity with different models of democratic governance, and help you develop a better understanding of U.S. and Texas political practices and institutions.

We will cover topics such as political culture, ideologies, institutional structures, and political economy with comparisons and references to the United States.

UPDATED COURSE & METHODOLOGY
This course is completely updated and revised from all other POLS 2310 courses I have taught at UTEP. Please be aware that you belong to the first group of students enrolled in this newly revised summer class. This course has been revised and updated to reflect new trends in the source materials we use to study politics in the United States and beyond.
The methodology by which we will study politics in this class rests on your reading/viewing primary, secondary and tertiary materials and made available through Blackboard. Each week focuses on a different graphic memoir (a primary source) based on the experiences of people who lived through the experiences documented in the graphic memoir.

The subjects covered by these graphic memoirs are: Japanese and Japanese-American Internment documented by a male Japanese American; the Civil Rights Movement in the Deep South, documented by a male African-American activist; the Civil Rights Movement in the Deep South, documented by a female Latinx; and, the struggle to desegregate Houston, TX in the 1950s and 1960s, documented by young people. Each of these subjects has been chosen because of the significance and value of a particular graphic memoir documenting the experiences behind periods of social and political change in the United States.

In each of the four weeks (or learning modules), you will find the primary source of a graphic memoir, a film (often a documentary but not always), a scholarly article or chapter of a book to help you contextualize the primary source, and likely other sources that will aid your comprehension.

In any given week, you must always start studying by reading the graphic memoir. Then you should read the other written sources and follow them with the film (the film may be either a documentary or a dramatized/fictionalized version of the event. Only once you have worked through the materials for the week should you take either the test (weekly) and/or begin the discussion board (in weeks 2 and 4).

The discussion boards are not casual exercises in reaction to a subject. The discussion boards are spaces for you to practice formal, written, academic English. At all times this means you must have a command over the primary and secondary sources found in the week’s Blackboard folder, and also over your use of scholarly voice.

You will need to be rigorous and disciplined for this summer class. It takes place only over four weeks and if completed successfully gives you the same credits as a class taken in a regular semester.

This class will demand and require your attention. Do not take this class unless you can devote 15 to 20 hours per week to its study.

Miner Learning Center Tutor

This class has been provided with an MLC Tutor. The MLC Tutor, Victoria Cea, will be in touch with the class via Blackboard. Should you wish to get in touch with Victoria Cea about her tutoring services for this class, the email to use is: cvcea@miners.utep.edu.

Course Modality

This class is fully online and asynchronous as activities (readings, lectures, viewings, tests, discussion boards and exams). This class is a four-week University class that occurs in the Summer 1 semester.
Office Hours: Virtually, via Zoom
I can hold office hours by appointment, via Zoom, should you wish.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

• To define, understand, and apply the concepts, principles, and practices of politics as background for the study of U.S. and Texas political institutions. (Targeted Edge advantage: Communication, Critical thinking, Problem solving)

• To recognize the analytical methods and approaches that political scientists use for the scientific study of politics. (Targeted Edge advantage: Critical thinking, Problem solving)

• To apply and critique a body of factual knowledge and theories relevant to understanding different domestic political structures. (Targeted Edge advantage: Communication, Critical thinking)

• To comprehend and evaluate the effects of and the relationships among historical, social, political, economic, cultural, and global forces on the U.S. (Targeted Edge advantage: Global awareness, Critical thinking, Problem solving)

• To interpret and analyze factors influencing contemporary political relations within and between political systems. (Targeted Edge advantage: Problem solving, Critical thinking)

• To discern alternative explanations for different levels and types of political development among political systems. (Targeted Edge advantage: Critical thinking)

• To identify and understand differences and commonalities across political ideologies and cultures and over time. (Targeted Edge advantage: Critical thinking, Global awareness)

• To acknowledge and tolerate alternative points of view on historical and contemporary problems in politics. (Targeted Edge advantage: Global awareness, Social responsibility)

UTEP EDGE ADVANTAGE

You can learn about UTEP Edge, here: https://www.utep.edu/edge/about/index.html

This class fulfills the following targeted UTEP Edge Advantage skills:

Communication: Two online discussion boards, one book and one film review.

Confidence: Four tests to give you a deeper understanding of the subject matter, and a final exam.

Critical thinking: Appraising evidence that is in the form of primary, secondary, and tertiary sources.

Problem solving: Weekly tests, two discussion boards, one book and one film review (2 reviews), one exam.

Social responsibility: becoming aware of the positive and negative effects of public policies and their ideological foundations.
LEARNING MODULES

This course is designed using a modular format.

Required readings

The required texts, which are all available online via the UTEP Library reserves (you do not have to purchase any materials for this class), for this course, are:


Lila Quintero Weaver, *Darkroom: A Memoir in Black and White*.


Jorge Santos, *Graphic Memories of the Civil Rights Movement: Reframing History in Comics*.

Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*.

Most weeks you will have assigned reading (a chapter or so) from Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*. Loewen’s book helps us understand that knowledge and education are political acts, and to understand knowledge/education we must identify what it is about politics that distorts knowledge, education, and learning.

But while Loewen’s book is the central, ongoing reading throughout the semester, you will notice that the structure of the course is modular and based around the other books: one graphic memoir (by Takei about his experience of Japanese and Japanese-American internment during the Second World War) and a text-based “novel of ideas” (by Lukes).

You will also have other readings or viewings each week. These required readings or viewings will be posted in the Blackboard modules.

It is important that you begin each module and parts of a module doing the required readings or watching the videos and films posted online through our Blackboard page.

The course calendar points to the subjects we will study each week through these readings and, the specific listings are detailed on the Blackboard page. You can also find a calendar at the back of this syllabus.

Among other Edge Advantages, the required readings in this course align particularly well with the Edge Advantage “Global Awareness” that promotes a mindset in which students understand and appreciate people, cultures, and ideas that impact our community.
Films

The films we watch in this class are usually available through UTEP’s Library Subscription to Kanopy or Swank or Films on Demand, or other providers, and these will be available to you at no charge, but you will have to log into the library through your UTEP account.

It may be the case that a film may only be available via Amazon.com. If that is the case, then you will have to rent or purchase it via Amazon.com. It may also be the case that a film is only available via Netflix. Once again, accessing Netflix comes with a cost.
Grading Scheme

To receive a C or better in this class, all work is required. Unless you hand in all work required for this class, your grade is in jeopardy.

Tests x4 @ 50 points each test      200 points

Discussion boards x 2 @ 100 points each discussion board      200 points

Final      200 points

Book Review
x1 about any of the graphic memoirs used in this class.      200 points

Film Review
x1 about any of the films shown in this class.      200 points

Total: 1,000 points

The total point score is then divided by 10 to provide a percentage. The letter grades break down in the following way:

%   Letter
≥ 89.50  A
79.50-89.49  B
69.50-79.49  C
59.50-69.49  D
≤ 59.49  F

Graded work: instruction to contact the instructor

Late work is unacceptable. You are advised to contact the instructor before the due date if, for any reason, you are going to submit late work.
TESTS

After you do the assigned readings for a given module (not all modules!), you will take the test (which will have a varying number of questions). The tests are based on the materials you read, consult, or view each week. You shall submit your answers to the tests on the dates and times established in Blackboard.

FINAL EXAM

There is one exams for the course: a final. The final will be an essay-based question.

The final must be completed by July 10th, 2024.

All exams and tests for this class will be “open book” so that you will be able to have all support materials you think are necessary to answer the exam questions.

The final exam will be administered via Blackboard.

The exam is to be taken individually—*it is not a collaborative piece of work*.

Please refer to the section on “Academic Integrity” below to review the University and instructor policies on cheating, collusion, and plagiarism.

MAKE-UP EXAM

I do not offer make-up exams.

DISCUSSION POSTS/CLASS PARTICIPATION

There are two opportunities in this class to discuss the material for a particular module in a written format. A discussion board requires the following from you:

(1) a discussion post in response to a guided question (minimum of 250 words and maximum of 500 words); and,

(2) respond to at least one of your classmates’ post (minimum of 100 words and maximum of 500 words).

Be sure to submit your discussion post and response to your peers by the time and date established in Blackboard to receive credit for your participation.

Some suggestions for successful posts:

Write with the curiosity of university students.

The instructor is more interested in doubts and the questions you raise rather than providing concrete answers. The expression of doubt and uncertainty is a skill and something to be practiced and developed.
A discussion board requires the following from you:

You are strongly encouraged to use the UTEP Writing Center for assistance in drafting all written work, including discussion boards, book and film reviews.

You are also encouraged, very strongly, to use the services of the MLC Pass Tutor for this class.

I expect everyone to actively participate in class and do so in a positive and appropriate way (see the “Online Etiquette and Effective Communication” section below). Keep in mind that class participation is more than just completing the scheduled assignments and taking exams—you should be willing to ask and answer questions and contribute intellectually to class debates via online discussion posts.

Before posting a discussion, you should complete the assigned readings and go over your notes of those readings. Exams will cover material from the readings, and our online discussions, so doing just one or the other will leave you at a disadvantage.

Full credit for a discussion post is reserved only for those that follow the online etiquette and effective communication rules below.

**Course/Instructor Policies**

**E-Mail Protocol**

UTEP e-mail is the best way to contact the instructor: ptimmons2@utep.edu. Please do not try to contact the instructor via the Blackboard messaging function.

Please **only** email the instructor from your UTEP email account. The instructor cannot respond to emails from non-UTEP accounts.

When e-mailing the instructor **from your UTEP account, please put the course number in the subject line.** In the body of your e-mail, clearly state your question. At the end of your e-mail, be sure to put your first and last name, and your university identification number.

The instructor will make every attempt to respond to e-mails within 24-48 hours of receipt during weekdays. The instructor will respond to weekend messages by Monday at the latest.

**Online Etiquette and Effective Communication**

It is essential that the **utmost respect and professionalism** be adhered in all exchanges between class members. This is a political science course and we will be discussing at times sensitive and controversial topics. Avoid any unnecessary arguments with other class members, such as political polemical arguments (e.g., negative partisan talking points targeting those of opposing ideological perspectives or particular political figures) or, even worse, personal attacks on others for having different views.

*No inappropriate behavior will be tolerated.*

Unprofessional conduct will be dealt with swiftly through the university and it is at the professor’s full discretion to have a student dropped from the course for any inappropriate behavior.
Online Etiquette and Effective Communication Policy

Please carefully read the following rules for online etiquette and effective communication:

**Language:** Given the absence of face-to-face clues, written text can easily be misinterpreted. Avoid the use of strong or offensive language, all capital letters, and the excessive use of exclamation points. If you feel particularly strongly about a point, it may be best to write it first as a draft and then to review it, before posting it, in order to remove any strong language.

**Respect:** A web-based classroom is still a classroom, and comments that would be inappropriate in a regular classroom are likely to be inappropriate in a Web-based course as well. Treat your professor and your fellow students with respect. Remember that members of the class and the instructor will be reading any postings.

**Be Forgiving:** If someone states something that you find offensive, mention this directly to the professor in an email. Remember that the person contributing to the discussion is also new to this form of communication. What you find offensive may quite possibly have been unintended and can best be cleared up by the professor.

**This is Permanent:** Think carefully about the content of your message before contributing it. Once sent, there is no taking it back. 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.

**Treat your professor and your fellow students with respect.**

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**Edit Your Work:** The grammar, spelling, and punctuation of a message are part of the grading criteria – you should not expect your professor and peers to decode misspelled words or poorly constructed sentences. It is a good practice to compose and check your comments in a word-processor before posting them.

**Test for Clarity:** Messages may often appear perfectly clear to you as you compose them, but turn out to be perfectly obtuse to your reader. One way to test for clarity is to read your message aloud to see if it flows smoothly and if you can read it to another person before posting it, even better.

**Follow the Parameters/Stick to the Point:** Follow the posting requirements and parameters set up by your professor. Contributions to a discussion should have a clear subject header, and you need to stick to the subject. Don't waste others' time by going off on irrelevant tangents. Also keep in mind that no credit will be received for yes/no answers. Posts should justify positions and provide specific examples. Students must demonstrate that they have read the assignment and their classmates' comments carefully and thoughtfully.

**Read First, Write Later:** Don't add your comments to a discussion before reading the comments of other students unless the assignment specifically asks you to. Doing so is tantamount to ignoring your fellow students and is rude. Comments related to the content of previous messages should be posted under
them to keep related topics organized, and you should specify the person and the particular point you are following up on.

**Excused Absences and Excuse for Late Work**

The instructor will excuse absences and late work *only* when a student participates in an official university-recognized activity, observes a recognized religious holiday of her/his faith that happens to coincide with a class session or due date for an assignment, is called to and participates in active military service for a reasonably brief period, or confronts a medical emergency.

To be excused, you must notify the instructor *in writing prior* to the date of absence.

That said, in cases where advance notification is not feasible (e.g. a medical emergency), you must provide notification *as soon as possible* following your absence. Such notification must include an explanation of why notice could not be sent in advance. You must also provide satisfactory documentation verifying the reason for the absence. In case of an illness, a doctor’s note is the proper documentation required. *For the instructor’s records, you should e-mail me a scanned copy of the documentation that verifies the reason for your absence (if you don’t have access to a scanner, you can take a photo of the documentation). Documentation that is not provided in a timely manner will not be accepted.*

*You must also provide satisfactory documentation verifying the reason for the absence.*

Please do *not* ask the instructor to excuse absences for minor illnesses or scheduling conflicts (e.g. sports practices, play rehearsals, meetings, conferences, appointments with other professors or advisors, student teaching, having your cable installed, having a bad headache, etc.). *The instructor is aware* that students have other interests and obligations, but you should nevertheless make this class a priority. If you are likely to have recurring conflicts, please take another course that better fits your schedule.

See academic regulations in UTEP Undergraduate Catalogue for a list of excused absences:


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.”

**Academic 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, collusion, and plagiarism.

*Cheating* may involve copying from or providing information to another student and possessing unauthorized materials during a test.

*Collusion* involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. One example of collusion is preparing a discussion entry for another person or having someone prepare a discussion entry for you. The instructor encourages students to study together and work collectively; however, working together to write any part of a written assignment, research paper, and/or exam is collusion.
*Plagiarism* is commonly defined as passing off the ideas, works, writing, etc., of another person as your own. Accordingly, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own work, even if you have the permission of that person. Be aware, just as the internet has made it easier to find material, it has also made it easier to trace the source of any written work. If you are unsure whether a citation is required, err on the side of caution and provide one.

**Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.** Violations will be taken seriously and will be referred to the Dean of Students’ Office for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions. Refer to the Office for Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution at https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/index.html.

**Individual Resources for UTEP Students**

- **Military Student Success Center**: Assists personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.
- **Center for Accommodations and Support Services**: Assists students with ADA-related accommodations for coursework, housing, and internships.
- **Counseling and Psychological Services**: Provides a variety of counseling services including individual, couples, and group sessions as well as career and disability assessments.

**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.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you require specific accommodations and support services, please contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Please keep in mind that accommodations need to be requested at least two weeks (or a month if advance planning, such as the acquisition of books-on-tape, is required) prior to the beginning of the semester. Here is the contact information for CASS: web: http://sa.utep.edu/cass/; phone: (915) 747-5148; fax: (915) 747-8712; e-mail: cass@utep.edu; location: UTEP Union Building East Room 106.

**SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS**
You will need the following software on your computer to efficiently work in this course (your computer may already have some of these programs installed):

QuickTime Player. To get this program, go to http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/ and follow the instructions.

Microsoft Office. If you do not have a word-processing software, go to https://my.apps.utep.edu. Using My.Apps interface, UTEP students can access most software offered in student computer labs (including Microsoft Office) from their personal computing devices. Students can use any laptop, tablet, or smartphone with an Internet connection and use the software from anywhere at any time. For more information, go to http://admin.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=73740 and follow the instructions.

UTEP TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The University of Texas at El Paso offers complete technical information and Help Desk support at: http://issweb.utep.edu/techsupport/.

ALTERNATE MEANS OF SUBMITTING WORK IN CASE OF TECHNICAL ISSUES

The instructor strongly suggests that you save all your work (answers to discussion points, quizzes, exams, and essays) in a separate Word document as a back-up in case there is a technical issue with the course website, network, and/or your computer.

This way, you will have evidence that you completed the work and will not lose credit.

If you are experiencing difficulties submitting your work through the course website, you can always email the instructor (ptimmons2@utep.edu) your back-up document.

However, this communication is only to prove you completed the assignment on time. The instructor will ask you to resolve your technology issues and submit the assignment via Blackboard once they are resolved.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND TASKS* – WEEKS AT A GLANCE**

* The materials listed here for viewing and reading will be augmented with other materials made available to you via Blackboard.

** The designated time zone for the submission of all course assignments and tasks is Mountain Time (MT).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week #</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Week #, Central Source, and Subject Matter</th>
<th>Materials in Blackboard</th>
<th>Assignment(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>06/10 to 06/17</td>
<td>Week 1: They Called Us Enemy, by George Takei Japanese and Japanese-American Internment During the Second World War</td>
<td>Check Blackboard. Read/view all materials. Make sure you understand the differences and similarities between the primary and secondary</td>
<td>Your personal introduction to the class Syllabus Test Test #1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>Course Title</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Additional Info</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>06/18 to 06/24</td>
<td>Week 2: <em>March</em>, volume 1, by John Lewis</td>
<td>Check Blackboard. Read/view all materials. Make sure you understand the differences and similarities between the primary and secondary sources.</td>
<td>Discussion Board #1 Test #2</td>
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<td>Resistance to Jim Crow and Segregation in the Deep South in the 1950s and 1960s</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>06/25 to 07/01</td>
<td>Week 3: <em>Darkroom</em>, by Lila Quintero Weaver</td>
<td>Check Blackboard. Read/view all materials. Make sure you understand the differences and similarities between the primary and secondary sources.</td>
<td>Test #3</td>
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<td>Documenting the African-American experience of disenfranchisement from a Latinx perspective</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>07/02 to 07/08</td>
<td>Week 4: <em>The Silence of Our Friends</em>, by Long and Demonakos</td>
<td>Check Blackboard. Read/view all materials. Make sure you understand the differences and similarities between the primary and secondary sources.</td>
<td>Discussion Board #2</td>
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<td>Houston, Texas in the time of desegregation and civil rights.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>07/08 - 07/10</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>All materials for class.</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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*Please remember to evaluate the course. UTEP, the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, the College of Liberal Arts and your professor value your assessment!*