



Introduction to Politics (POLS 2310: CRN 11523)

Department of Political Science

College of Liberal Arts and Extended University

Introduction to Politics

(POLS 2310 / CRN 11523) Fall 2023: 28 August to 16 October 2023, with final exam completed by 16 October 2023.

Online course: materials for reading viewing and listening, and asynchronous online graded and ungraded activities delivered through Blackboard.

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Office hours: Virtually, by appointment via Zoom, email for appointment.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is a general introduction to the study of politics and provides a broad overview of the world's political systems.

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 government, 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, as well as other countries.

Course Modality

This class is fully online and asynchronous as activities (readings, lectures, viewings, tests, discussion boards and exams). This class is a seven-week Extended University class. This means that we must cover the regular UTEP course content in half the time of a regular semester.

Office Hours: Virtually, via Zoom

I can hold office hours by appointment, via Zoom, should you wish.

My office hours are Tuesdays, 4.30pm to 5.30pm; and, Wednesdays 12pm to 1.15pm.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- To define, understand, and apply the concepts, principles, and practices of politics as background for the study of American 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 and international 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. and other political systems. (Targeted Edge advantage: Global awareness, Critical thinking, Problem solving)
- To interpret and analyze factors influencing contemporary political relations within and between political systems around the world. (Targeted Edge advantage: Problem solving, Critical thinking)
- To discern alternative explanations for different levels and types of political development among political systems around the world. (Targeted Edge advantage: Critical thinking)
- To identify and understand differences and commonalities across political ideologies and cultures. (Targeted Edge advantage: Critical thinking, Global awareness)
- To acknowledge and tolerate alternative points of view on historical and contemporary problems in comparative and international 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: In person class one day a week, online discussion boards, essay, book and film reviews.

Confidence: Tests to give you a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

Critical thinking: Appraising evidence.

Problem solving: Tests, book and film reviews, exams.

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 digital reserves, for this course, are:

John Lewis, *March*. (Three volumes). Top Shelf Production.

ISBN: 9781603093958

*This ISBN is for the three-volume box set. The volumes are individually available, too.

James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*. New Press. 2018 Edition.

ISBN: 9781620973929

DIGITAL ISBN-13: 9781595586537

Lukes, Steven. *The Curious Enlightenment of Professor Caritat: A Novel of Ideas*. Verso, 2009.

ISBN-13: 9781844673698

ISBN-10: 184467369

George Takei, *They Called Us Enemy*. Top Shelf Productions.

ISBN: 9781603094504

Each week you will have assigned readings 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 have to 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: two graphic memoirs (by Lewis and Takei) 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 from around the world 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

x 4 @ 50 points each test 200 points

Discussion boards

x 4 @ 50 points each discussion board 200 points

Midterm

100 points

Final **100 points**

Essay about solving the Rashomon effect **100 points**

Book Review **150 points**

x1 about either John Lewis's *March*, covering all three volumes, or Takei's *They Called Us Enemy*

Film Review

x1 about any of the films shown for this class, but not *Rashomon*. **150 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.

EXAMS

There are two exams for the course: a midterm and a final. Questions for the midterm are based on materials used in the weeks up to the midterm, and for the final from the midterm on.

The exams 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 exams will be administered via Blackboard.

The exams are to be taken individually—**it is not allowed to discuss the exam questions with the classmates or anyone else.**

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

MAKE-UP EXAMS

Make-up exams will be given *only* in the case of a *documented* emergency (see “excused absences” below). Note that make-up exams may be in a different format than the original exam and may require more intensive preparation. If you miss a test and your absence is not considered excused, you will receive a zero on the test. This policy will be strictly enforced.

ESSAY

An essay, two pages in length, about how to solve the Rashomon effect, supported by scholarly sources from the UTEP Library databases.

DISCUSSION POSTS/CLASS PARTICIPATION

There are four 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.

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

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.

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:

<http://catalog.utep.edu/undergrad/academic-regulations/curriculum-and-classroom-policies/>.

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):

☒ **Adobe Acrobat Reader.** To get this program, go

to <https://acrobat.adobe.com/us/en/products/pdf-reader.html> and follow the instructions.

☒ **Adobe Flash Player.** To get this program, go to <https://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/> and follow the instructions.

☒ **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](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.

COVID-19 Accommodations

For those of us (I include myself in this comment) who might confront difficulties because of COVID-19, I want to reassure you that I will be flexible and understanding.

There are policies and procedures in place for the possibility that you might go to campus.

You are required to follow these policies and procedures for the safety of our UTEP community, and residents of Ciudad Juárez/El Paso.

Nobody should come to campus when they have an active positive COVID-19 test, exposure or symptoms.

If you visit campus, you must comply with established campus safety procedures.

COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

Under no circumstances should anyone come to campus when feeling ill or exhibiting any of the known COVID-19 symptoms.

If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible.

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).**

Week #	Dates	Module Number, Part, & Title	Reading/Viewing	Assignment(s)
1	08/28 to 09/04 <i>Note: Labor Day is 09/04.</i>	1A: Introduction: What do we see when we look?	<i>Rashomon</i> , dir. by Akira Kurosawa (film), available via link through Blackboard. “Preface” and the <u>two</u> “Introductions” to, <i>Lies My Teacher Told Me</i>	Your introduction to the class, via Discussion Board Syllabus Test
1	08/28 to 09/04	1B: Introduction: Why seeing is <u>not</u> believing?	What is a fact? What is evidence? What is interpretation? What is theory? Chapter 6: “John Brown and Abraham Lincoln: The Invisibility of Antiracism in American History Textbooks,” <i>Lies My Teacher Told Me</i> .	Finish <i>Rashomon</i> . Make sure you have completed all the assigned reading from Loewen, <i>Lies My Teacher Told Me</i> .
2	09/04 to 09/11	2A. Caritat’s Forced Displacement Begins	Lukes, <i>Caritat</i> , Introduction, and chapters 1 through 8.	Test #1

				The introductory paragraph to an essay about how to solve the "Rashomon effect"
2	09/04 to 09/11	2B. Caritat's Persecution Continues	Lukes, <i>Caritat</i> , chapters 9 through 17. Chapter 11: "Progress is Our Most Important Product," <i>Lies My Teacher Told Me</i> .	Discussion Board #1
3	09/11 to 09/18 <i>Note: 09/11/2023 is the 50th Anniversary of the Coup in Chile</i>	3A. Caritat Keeps Moving	Lukes, <i>Caritat</i> , chapters 18 through 22. Charter 7: "The Land of Opportunity," <i>Lies My Teacher Told Me</i> .	Test #2
3	09/11 to 09/18	3B. Can the refugee's journey ever end?	Lukes, <i>Caritat</i> , chapters 23 through 29, and further reading. Chapter 12: "Why is History taught like this?" and Chapter 13: "What Is the Result of Teaching History Like This?" <i>Lies My Teacher Told Me</i> .	Film: <i>The Last Conquistador</i> , via Vimeo, by Cristina Ibarra.
4	09/18 to 09/25	4A. White Nationalism and Social Death	Annihilation, Assimilation, Integration and Dispossession in the American West George Takei, <i>They Called Us Enemy</i> . Chapter 4: "Red Eyes" <i>Lies My Teacher Told Me</i> .	Discussion Board #2
4	09/18 to 09/25	4B. White Nationalism and Social Death	Dispossession George Takei, <i>They Called Us Enemy</i> .	Mid-term exam

5	09/25 to 10/02	5A. White Nationalism and Social Death, part 1	Japanese Internment George Takei, <i>They Called Us Enemy</i> .	View: <i>History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige</i>
5	09/25 to 10/02	5B. White Nationalism and Social Death, part 2	Righting a Racist Wrong? Remembering Japanese Internment George Takei, <i>They Called Us Enemy</i> .	Test #3 View: <i>Bad Day at Black Rock</i> .
6	10/02 to 10/09	6A. Racism, Segregation, Resistance, and the Presidency, part 1	Racism John Lewis, <i>March</i> , vol. 1. Chapter 5: "Gone with the Wind": The Invisibility of Racism in American History Textbooks," <i>Lies My Teacher Told Me</i>	Discussion Board #3
6	10/02 to 10/09	6B. Racism, Segregation, Resistance, and the Presidency, part 2	Segregation John Lewis, <i>March</i> , vol. 2. Chapter 9: "See No Evil: Choosing Not to Look at the War in Vietnam," <i>Lies My Teacher Told Me</i>	View <i>Selma</i> .
7	10/09 to 10/16	4. Racism, Segregation, Resistance, and the Presidency	Resistance, Obama's Presidency and John Lewis's Legacy John Lewis, <i>March</i> , vols 2 and 3. Film: <i>I Am Not Your Negro</i> .	Test #4 Book Review Due
7	10/09 to 10/16	4. Conclusion	What would Professor Caritat think?	Discussion Board #4 Film Review Due

			Loewen, "Afterword: The Future Lies Ahead -- and What to Do About It."	
Final	10/16	Final Exam	All materials for class.	Final exam

*Please remember to evaluate the course. UTEP, Extended University, the Political Science Department, the College of Liberal Arts and your professor **value** your assessment!*