

# The University of Texas at El Paso

**Department of Political Science**

**College of Liberal Arts**

**Introduction to Politics**

**(POLS 2310 / CRN 35991)**

Summer 2020

Online through Blackboard

**Dr. Patrick Timmons, B.A. (Hons), M.Phil., Ph.D., LL.M.**

Email: ptimmons2@utep.edu

## **Office Hours**

Virtually, by appointment, see Blackboard course homepage.

## 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.

## 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: Discussion boards, position paper, book and film reviews.
- Confidence: Multiple choice tests to give you a deeper understanding of the textbook.
- Critical thinking: Relationship of judges to society, partly based on understanding how the Supreme Court has become the ultimate arbiter of Constitutional law.
- Problem solving: Multiple choice tests, book and film reviews.
- Social responsibility: examining the social forces that influence who judges are and the processes they govern.

## LEARNING MODULES

This course is designed using a modular format—that is, each week is “packaged” as a single module so that all the materials, lecture notes, submission areas, discussion posts are in one area for a given week.

## GRADING POLICY

Your final grade in this class will be based on the following requirements:

Course Requirement	Weight
Midterm Exam	200
Final Exam	200

Essay	250
Discussion Posts	210
Tests	140

All grades (including the final grade) are based on the following distribution of points:

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

I do not change grades or give individual-specific extra-credit opportunities to be fair to everyone. If you are concerned about your grade, please contact and/or visit me during my virtual office hours by appointment. This is particularly important if your grade on the first exam is not what you expected. I will not change the grade, but I can give you feedback and suggestions on how to improve your performance in the class.

### Required readings

The *required* texts, which have been ordered at the UTEP bookstore, for this course, are:

Danziger, James N. and Smith, Charles Anthony. *Understanding the Political World: A Comparative Introduction to Political Science*. 12th Edition. Pearson. 2015.

ISBN-13: 9780133952827

ISBN-10: 0133952827

- This book is available in digital format via the publisher, Routledge<sup>1</sup>.

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

ISBN-13: 9781844673698

ISBN-10: 184467369

- This book is available in electronic Kindle format via Amazon.com.

Each week you will have assigned readings from your textbook (Danziger and Smith) and the novel by Steven Lukes, *The Curious Enlightenment of Professor Caritat*.

For Danziger and Smith, the textbook, a chapter summary and lecture notes may be provided for each week's readings but simply reading the chapter summary and lecture notes will not be sufficient for effectively completing the course tasks.

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<sup>1</sup><https://bookshelf.vitalsource.com/books/9780133952827>

It is important that you begin each week by first carefully doing the required readings. The course calendar points to the subjects we will study each week, the week specific listings are detailed on the Blackboard page.

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.

### Grading Scheme

**Note well: Failure to submit any assignment, including submitting an incomplete assignment may result in failing the class or withdrawal from the class.**

#### **Tests (20 points each)**

Seven, due weekly. 140 points

#### **Discussion board (30 points each)**

Seven, due weekly. 210 points

#### **Midterm 200 points**

One, multiple choice

#### **Final 200 points**

One, multiple choice

#### **Critical Essay 250 points**

One, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12pts

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

### Descriptions of graded work

**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.**

## WEEKLY TESTS

After you do the assigned readings for a given week, you will take the test (which will have about 30 questions per week). The tests are based on the materials you read, consult, or view each week. You shall submit your answers to the tests by Sunday, 11:00pm (MT) each week.

## 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.

You will have **from Monday through Friday of two specific weeks** to complete the exam upon activation.

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.

## CRITICAL ESSAY

One of the key purposes of this course is to introduce you to the scientific study of politics.

An important part of this goal is to help you develop the analytical skills necessary to grasp the dynamics of systematically studying political phenomena.

Given this objective, you will write a critical essay about the relevance of studying political science at a university for an undergraduate degree that counts for 25% of your final grade.

The instructions for the essay task are provided in Blackboard.

## DISCUSSION POSTS/CLASS PARTICIPATION

This is the central activity of the class and **you will need to log into Blackboard several times during the week** to participate effectively in the discussion board for each week.

Each week you will submit:

(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 for a given week by Sunday, 11:00pm (MT) of that week to receive credit for your participation.

Class participation via discussion posts makes up a significant portion of your grade in this class **and is a key indicator of attendance**.

Check Blackboard for the instruction about the three-paragraph format. **The instructor will not read your weekly discussion post** if you do not use a three-paragraph format and the post will be returned to you with a **grade of zero** and an **instruction to resubmit your post for regrading**.

It is also a weekly requirement that you comment on other students' submissions on the discussion board. **The instructor will not read your discussion post** if you do not include at least one comment on another student's post, **you will receive a grade of zero**, and an **instruction to resubmit with a comment on another student's post for regrading**.

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*Each week you will submit:*

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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, the SCOTUS justice profile essay, and reviews.

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 or viewings. Exams will cover material from the readings, possible mini lectures, 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](mailto:ptimmons2@utep.edu)<sup>2</sup>. 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.

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<sup>2</sup><mailto:ptimmons2@utep.edu>

**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.

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*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.*



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

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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>.

### 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: <sup>3</sup>[cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu);<sup>4</sup> 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><sup>5</sup> and follow the instructions.<sup>6</sup>

☑ **Adobe Flash Player.** To get this program, go to <https://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/><sup>7</sup> and follow<sup>8</sup> 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<sup>9</sup> 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><sup>10</sup> and follow the instructions.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>3</sup><http://sa.utep.edu/cass/>

<sup>4</sup><mailto:cass@utep.edu>

<sup>5</sup><https://acrobat.adobe.com/us/en/products/pdf-reader.html>

<sup>6</sup><https://acrobat.adobe.com/us/en/products/pdf-reader.html>

<sup>7</sup><https://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/>

<sup>8</sup><https://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/>

<sup>9</sup><https://my.apps.utep.edu/>

<sup>10</sup><http://admin.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=73740>

<sup>11</sup><http://admin.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=73740>

## UTEP TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The University of Texas at El Paso offers complete technical information and Help Desk support at: <http://issweb.utep.edu/techsupport/>.<sup>12</sup>

## 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](mailto:ptimmons2@utep.edu)**) your back-up<sup>13</sup> 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\*

**NB: You must start reading Lukes, *The Curious Enlightenment of Professor Caritat* as soon as possible.**

Please be aware that the Blackboard page for our class contains the specific week level readings or viewings.

### **Week 1: 07/06 to 07/12**

#### **Political knowledge and theories of political behavior**

- Carefully read the syllabus
- Review the posted materials in the “Welcome and Course Introduction” folder
- Do this week’s readings:
  - - Danziger and Smith, Chapter 1: Politics and Knowledge
  - - Danziger and Smith, Chapter 2: Political Theory and Political Beliefs
- Lukes, Chapters 1 through 5
- Watch this week’s recommended documentaries and videos
- Submit your discussion post and comments

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<sup>12</sup><http://issweb.utep.edu/techsupport/>

<sup>13</sup><mailto:ptimmons2@utep.edu>

- Take the test

### **Week 2: 07/12 to 07/19**

#### **Political actions and Influences on beliefs and actions**

- Do this week's reading:
- Danziger and Smith, Chapter 3: Political actions
- Danziger and Smith, Chapter 4: Influences on beliefs and actions
- Lukes, *Caritat*, Chapters 6 through 9
- Watch this week's recommended documentaries and videos
- Submit your discussion post and comments
- Take the test

### **Week 3: 07/20 to 07/26**

#### **Political Systems, States and Nations; and, Political Institutions I**

- Do this week's reading:
- Danziger and Smith, Chapter 5: Political systems, states and nations
- Danziger and Smith, Chapter 6: Political Institutions I: Political Structures
- Lukes, Chapters 10 through 13
- Watch this week's recommended documentaries and videos
- Submit your discussion post and comments
- Take the test

### **Week 4: 07/27 to 08/02**

#### **Politics Institutions II (Arrangements); and Political Economy**

- Do this week's reading:
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- Danziger and Smith, Chapter 7: Political Institutions II: Political Arrangements
- Danziger and Smith, Chapter 8: Political Economy
- Lukes, *Caritat* Chapters 14 through 17
- Watch this week's recommended documentaries and videos

- Submit your discussion post and comments
- Take the test

**Midterm Exam – will be activated on Monday, July 27 @ 11:00am and due on Friday, July 31 @ 11:00pm (MT).**

**Week 5: 08/03 to 08/09**

**Public Policy, Power and Decision**

- Do this week's reading:
- Danziger and Smith, Chapter 9: Public Policy, Power and Decision
- Danziger and Smith, Chapter 10: Change and Political Development
- Lukes, Chapters 18 through 21
- Watch this week's recommended documentaries and videos
- Submit your discussion post and comments
- Take the test

**Week 6: 08/10 to 08/16**

**Politics across border and political violence**

- Do this week's reading:
- Danziger and Smith, Chapter 11: Politics across borders
- Danziger and Smith, Chapter 12: Political violence
- Lukes, Chapters 22 through 25
- Watch this week's recommended documentaries and videos
- Submit your discussion post and comments
- Take the test

**Critical Essay, due on Friday, August 14 at 11pm MT.**

**Week 7: 08/17 to 08/23**

**Politics across border and political violence**

- Do this week's reading:

- Danziger and Smith, Chapter 13: The Developed Countries of the Global North
- Danziger and Smith, Chapter 14: The Developing Countries of the Global South
- Lukes, *Caritat*, Chapters 26 through 29
- Watch this week's recommended documentaries and videos
- Submit your discussion post and comments
- Take the test

**Final Exam – will be activated on Monday, August 17 @ 11:00am and due on Friday, August 21 @ 11:00pm (MT).**

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

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