

POLS 2310:18886 Introduction to Politics

Dr. Joseph Yingnan Zhou

Fall 2021

Class Hours: New lectures uploaded on T&R
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Course Description

This course provides you with an overview of political science as an academic discipline and as an approach to political phenomena. Together, we will explore the key problems and debates in political theory, comparative politics, and global politics. Specifically, we will cover topics such as political ideologies, democratic vs. authoritarian institutions, political culture, and globalization. By the end of the course, you will be equipped with important concepts and methods to understand and analyze the political world.

Learning Objectives

- Understanding key concepts and issues in political science
- Developing research skills
- Improving writing skills
- UTEP EDGE experiences
 - problem-solving
 - communication
 - global awareness
 - teamwork
 - critical thinking

Required Texts

- Robert Garner, Peter Ferdinand, and Stephanie Lawson. 2020. *Introduction to Politics*. 4th ed. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-19-882061-1
 - Available online or at University Bookstore

Course Format

This is an asynchronous online course. Lectures are pre-recorded rather than delivered live. Lectures are updated on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Many lectures, including films, have embedded quizzes for you to complete while watching. Discussions are conducted through Blackboard forums.

Asynchronous courses have the obvious advantage of flexibility. No one has to miss a class due to scheduling conflict or logistic difficulty. You can pause and rewind lecture videos at your own pace. Note-taking becomes more manageable. However, this advantage, when taken unwisely, can turn into serious disadvantages. Many students yield to the temptation to procrastinate and quickly become overwhelmed by the remaining work. Without the classroom environment, attention span, which isn't long to begin with, may be even shorter. When everything is available "out there," some people think it needless to take notes, often to their regret.

Therefore, it is critical to stick to a steady and disciplined schedule, be focused, and take good notes. A proven tip for success is diligently follow the recommended timetable.

Course Requirements

Finishing readings before class is key to success in this class because it underlines your success in all the following class components.

1. In-class Quizzes (15%)

Most of the lecture videos, including assigned films, come with an embedded quiz. The video pauses, a question pops up, you select the answer, and the video resumes. You may be quizzed about assigned readings or previous or current lectures.

Think of the quizzes as tests plus attendance. If you want to earn the quiz points, do watch the lecture videos. I have disabled fast-forwarding to discourage quiz-taking without watching videos. I understand the need for fast-forwarding especially when preparing for exams and therefore will upload all "fast-forwardable" lecture videos in a separate folder named "Lectures without Quizzes." **Note that only the videos with quizzes give you the option to earn quiz points.**

2. Online Discussions (30%)

You will have five online discussions. To make the discussions more manageable and effective, I break the whole class into small groups, with 8-10 students in each. **You will conduct the discussions only within your small group.** To find which group you are in, go to Discussion 1, thread "Find Your Small Group Here." Then introduce yourself in your group's thread. Please introduce yourself by **11:59 pm Thursday August 26.**

In Discussions 2-5, which have more substantive topics, you are required to submit **at least one post in reply to my topic and one post in reply to your classmates' posts. Your first post should be between 250 and 500 words.** There is no length requirement for your second post. You are welcome to post more than two posts. Please check ongoing discussions frequently in case some posts demand your replies.

The first post is due at midnight the day after the discussion becomes available. The second post is due at midnight the second day after the discussion becomes available. For example, if a discussion becomes available on Thursday, your first post is due at midnight Friday and second post is due at midnight Saturday. Note that we do not skip Saturdays and Sundays when counting the days.

To get a good grade for discussion posts, it is important to base your posts on knowledge gained from this class. It is OK to voice personal opinions but they must be supported by evidence and good arguments. Lively discussion is desired, but civility must always be preserved.

3. Exams (55%)

There are a midterm exam (25%) and a final exam (cumulative, 30%). Both are open-book and conducted on Blackboard. "Open-book" here means you are allowed to use the lecture recordings, your notes, and any assigned readings. **Searching the Internet for answers and collaboration with classmates during exam are strictly forbidden. They are easy to detect and will be handled as academic misconduct.**

Your letter grade will be assigned as follows:

Letter Grade	
90-100%	A
80-89%	B
65-79%	C
50-64%	D
0-49%	F

Course Policies

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, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another person's as one's own. And, collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. 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 Office of Student Life for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions. Refer to <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/student-conduct/academic-integrity.html> for further information.

Accommodations for Disabilities

Accommodations will be made for students with disabilities. Please discuss with me in person as soon as possible about any needs you might have. Or you may contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (phone: 5148, Email: cass@utep.edu) at 302 Union East within the first two weeks of classes.

COVID-19 Precaution

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

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

Recommended Timetable

Tuesday, 8/24: Course Overview

- Read the syllabus closely
- Discussion 1 available

Thursday, 8/26: What is Political Science?

- Textbook Ch. 1

Tuesday, 8/31: Freedom and Justice

- Textbook Ch. 5

Thursday, 9/2: Ideologies: Traditional Ideologies

- Textbook Ch. 6

Tuesday, 9/7: Ideologies: Challenges to Traditional Ideologies

- Textbook Ch. 7

Thursday, 9/9: The State

- Textbook Ch. 8

Tuesday, 9/14: The State

- Documentary on national identity
- Discussion 2 available

Thursday, 9/16: Democracy: Definition and Typology

- Textbook Ch. 4 p. 70-81, Ch. 15 p. 344-355

Tuesday, 9/21: Democracy: Merits and Limitations

- Textbook Ch. 4 p. 82-95

Thursday, 9/23: Authoritarianism: Typology and Measurement

- Textbook Ch. 15 p. 356-361

Tuesday, 9/28: Authoritarianism

- Documentary on authoritarianism

Thursday, 9/30: American Political Science Association, no class

Tuesday, 10/5: Authoritarianism: How Dictators Stay in Power

Thursday, 10/7: Democratization and Democratic Backsliding

- Textbook Ch. 15 p. 337-343

Tuesday, 10/12: Documentary

- Documentary on democratization
- Discussion 3 available

Thursday, 10/14: Midterm Exam Live Q&A

- 9-10:30 am via Blackboard virtual office hours

Tuesday, 10/19: Midterm Exam

- Available on Blackboard from noon to 11:59 pm

Thursday, 10/21: Presidential vs. Parliamentary Systems

- Textbook Ch. 11 p. 247-264, Ch. 13 p. 287-288

Tuesday, 10/26: Electoral Systems

- Textbook Ch. 11 p. 242-246

Thursday, 10/28: Political Participation

- Textbook Ch. 11 p. 240-242

Thursday, 11/2: Political Parties

- Textbook Ch. 12
- Discussion 4 available

Thursday, 11/4: Political Culture

- Textbook Ch. 9

Tuesday, 11/9: Global Politics: Introduction

- Textbook Ch. 16 p. 363-379

Thursday, 11/11: Theories of Global Politics

- Textbook Chs. 17-18

Tuesday, 11/16: Globalization

- Textbook Ch. 16 p. 379-385

Thursday, 11/18: Global Economy

- Textbook Ch. 22

Tuesday, 11/23: Security and Insecurity

- Textbook Ch. 19
- Discussion 5

Thursday, 11/25: Thanksgiving, no class

Tuesday, 11/30: Security and Insecurity

- Documentary on security

Thursday, 12/2: Final Exam Live Q&A

- 9-10:30 am via Blackboard virtual office hours

Tuesday, 12/7: Final Exam

- Available on Blackboard from noon to 11:59 pm