

# POLS 2310 Introduction to Politics

Dr. Joseph Yingnan Zhou

Fall 2024

Class Hours: New lectures posted on Mondays and Wednesdays  
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Online Office Hours: 11 am-2 pm Wednesdays

## 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

- All readings will be available through Blackboard.

## Course Format

This is an asynchronous online course, **with the exception of the course introduction, which will be delivered live on Zoom from 11-noon Monday August 26.** All other lectures are pre-recorded and posted on Blackboard. Most lectures, including films, have embedded quizzes for you to complete while watching. Discussions are conducted on collaborate documents on Blackboard.

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. I have disabled fast-forwarding to prevent 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.**

**A lecture quiz is due the next Friday after it is posted.** After this deadline, you cannot take the quiz but can still watch the lecture in the “Lectures without Quizzes” folder.

## 2. Collaborative Discussions (30%)

You will have five collaborative discussions. To facilitate collaboration, I break the whole class into small groups of 10 members. **You will conduct the discussions only within your small group.** I will announce your group number in the folder named “Collaborative Discussions.”

Please **read the following instruction carefully.** In each discussion, I will post a Word document with a topic and a few questions. Your goal as a group is to collaboratively generate a thoughtful and informed answer. In each discussion, there are two discussion leaders. The first discussion leader initiates the discussion by drafting an answer. This answer can be very tentative and open-ended with the purpose of inviting other members’ input. For example, you may write an answer and say “These are all the points I can think of now. Did I miss anything?” or “I can’t wrap my head around this part. Scholar X seems to have an explanation but can someone help me understand what he means?” You may also set the general directions other members can go in, such as “let’s find 2 arguments for and 2 arguments against.”

All members will participate by adding comments and suggesting changes (remember to enable track changes). Add new ideas, correct errors, and answer questions. Feel free to contribute in the most meaningful and creative ways. **Since everyone can edit the document, exercise caution when using keys that might turn your work into a blank page.**

The second discussion leader is responsible for writing up a final answer of the group. Your focus at this stage is summary and organization rather than introducing new ideas. Occasionally, there are two leaders 2. In that case, the two of you should collaborate. **Keep your final answer between 200-300 words.** This requires concision but can be done. **Do not overwrite your collaboration process. I need it to grade other participants.**

When grading a discussion, we will first form a group average based on your final answer and then grade each participant by making adjustments. Participants’ grades are anywhere between 10 points plus or minus the group average. **We pay close attention on how well you engage with your group members.**

**The first discussion leader’s initial answer is due on the Wednesday after a discussion becomes available, and the final answer is due the Friday the same week.** Since all discussions become available on a Monday, a simple rule of thumb is: initial answer due Wednesday and final answer due Friday. **If the designated Leader 1 and Leader 2**

**do not participate on time, other members may volunteer to take their place. Volunteers will receive a 5-point bonus and the Leader 1 or Leader 2 who fails to participate on time will receive a 5-point penalty.**

### 3. Exams (55%)

There are a midterm exam (25%) and a final exam (cumulative, 30%). They are conducted on Blackboard through a lockdown browser with Respondus monitor." This requires a computer with a camera. I will post tutorials on how to set up the browser and monitor in the folder named "Exams and Study Guides." Once you start an exam, you have two hours to complete it. You may use your notes and assigned readings during the exam. **Searching the Internet for answers and collaboration with classmates during exam are strictly forbidden 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. See Section 1.2.3(a) in Handbook of Operating Procedures <https://www.utep.edu/hoop/section-2/student-conduct-and-discipline.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](mailto:cass@utep.edu)) at 302 Union East within the first two weeks of classes.

## **Important Dates (Put us on your calendar!)**

Monday 8/28: Discussion 1 available

Monday 9/16: Discussion 2 available

Monday 10/7: Discussion 3 available

Wednesday 10/16: Midterm live Q&A

Monday 10/21: Midterm exam on Blackboard from noon to 11:59 pm

Monday 10/28: Discussion 4 available

Friday 11/1: Drop/Withdrawal deadline

Monday 11/25: Discussion 5 available

Wednesday 12/4: Final exam live Q&A

Monday 12/9: Final exam on Blackboard from noon to 11:59 pm

## Timetable

The timetable for lecture watching is advisory but strongly recommended. **The deadlines for discussions and exams are firm.**

### **Mon, August 26: Course Overview**

- Read the syllabus closely
- Live course introduction at 10 am

### **Wed, August 28: What is Political Science?**

- Discussion 1 available

### **Mon, September 2: Labor Day, no lectures**

### **Wed, September 4: Freedom and Justice**

- Garner, Robert, Peter Ferdinand, and Stephanie Lawson. 2020. *Introduction to Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. Ch. 5.

### **Mon, September 9: Traditional Ideologies**

- Garner, Robert, Peter Ferdinand, and Stephanie Lawson. 2020. *Introduction to Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. Ch. 6.

### **Wed, September 11: Ideologies: Challenges to Traditional Ideologies**

- Garner, Robert, Peter Ferdinand, and Stephanie Lawson. 2020. *Introduction to Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. Ch. 7.

### **Mon, September 16: The State**

- Wolff, Jonathan. 1996. In *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Ch. 2.
- Discussion 2 available

### **Wed, September 18: The State**

- Documentary on national identity

**Mon, September 23: Democracy: Definition and Typology**

- Dahl, Robert. 2005. "What Institutions Does Large-Scale Democracy Require?" *Political Science Quarterly*. 120(2): 187-97.

**Wed, September 25: Democracy: Merits and Limitations**

- No reading.

**Mon, September 30: Authoritarianism: Typology and Measurement**

- Hague, Rod, Martin Harrop, and John McCormick. 2019. *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction*. New York: Red Globe Press. Ch. 6.

**Wed, October 2: Authoritarianism**

- Authoritarianism: How Dictators Stay in Power

**Mon, October 7: Authoritarianism**

- Documentary on authoritarianism
- Discussion 3 available

**Wed, October 9: Democratization and Democratic Backsliding**

- Geddes, Barbara. 2011. "What Causes Democratization" In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. 317-339.

**Mon, October 14, 2024: Democracy**

- Documentary on democratization

**Wed, October 16: Midterm Exam Live Q&A**

- 11 am-12 pm via Blackboard virtual office hours

**Mon, October 21: Midterm Exam**

- Available on Blackboard from noon to 11:59 pm

**Wed, October 23: Presidential vs. Parliamentary Systems**

- Mainwaring, Scott and Matthew Shugart. 1997. "Juan Linz, Presidentialism and Democracy: A Critical Appraisal." *Comparative Politics*. 29(4):449-71.

**Mon, October 28: Political Participation**

- No reading.
- Discussion 4 available

**Wed, October 30: Political Parties**

- Aldrich, John 2008. "The Case for the Importance of Political Parties." In *American Politics: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. edited by Alan Cigler and Burdett A. Loomis. Cengage. Learning.

**Mon, November 4: Electoral Systems**

- Hague, Rod, Martin Harrop, and John McCormick. 2019. *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction*. New York: Red Globe Press. Ch. 15.

**Wed, November 6: Political Culture**

- Putnam, Robert D. 1995. "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." *Journal of Democracy* 6 (1):65-78.

**Mon, November 11: Global Politics: Introduction**

- Garner, Robert, Peter Ferdinand, and Stephanie Lawson. 2020. *Introduction to Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. Ch. 16 p. 363-379; Chs. 17.

**Wed, November 13: Theories of Global Politics**

- Garner, Robert, Peter Ferdinand, and Stephanie Lawson. 2020. *Introduction to Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. Ch. 16 p. 363-379; Chs. 18.

**Mon, November 18: Globalization**

- No reading

**Wed, November 20: Immigration**

- Carens, Joseph H. 1987. "Aliens and Citizens: the Case for Open Borders." *The Review of Politics* 49 (2):251-273.

**Mon, November 25: Global Political Economy**

- Garner, Robert, Peter Ferdinand, and Stephanie Lawson. 2020. *Introduction to Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chs. 22.
- Discussion 5 available



**Wed, November 27: Security and Insecurity**

- Garner, Robert, Peter Ferdinand, and Stephanie Lawson. 2020. *Introduction to Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. Ch. 19

**Mon, December 2: Security and Insecurity**

- Documentary on security

**Wed, December 4: Final Exam Live Q&A**

- 11 am-12 pm via Blackboard virtual office hours

**Mon, December 9: Final Exam**

- Available on Blackboard from noon to 11:59 pm