

POLS 2310:24812 Introduction to Politics

Dr. Joseph Yingnan Zhou

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Class Hours: New lectures posted on Mondays and Wednesdays
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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

Texts and Readings

- All readings will be available through Blackboard.

Course Format

This is an asynchronous online course. Lectures are pre-recorded rather than delivered live. Lectures are updated on every Monday and Wednesday. Most 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 around 10 students in each. **You will conduct the discussions only within your small group.** I will announce your group number on the discussion form. In Discussion 1, you will introduce yourself to your group members.

In Discussions 2-5, which have 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.

As a rule, 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 Monday, your first post is due at midnight Tuesday and second post is due at midnight Wednesday.

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. I will post my grading rubric for online discussions.

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.

Resources in Challenging Times

Times can be challenging and you are not alone. UTEP is dedicated to students' mental health. Here is a list of on-and-off campus resources that you may find helpful. <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/resources/Mental-Health-Resources-for-UTEP-Students.html>.

Important Dates (Mark your calendar!)

Monday 1/23: Discussion 1 available (Self-introduction due on 1/25)

Wednesday 2/8: Discussion 2 available (1st post due on 2/9, 2nd post due on 2/10)

Wednesday 1/3: Discussion 3 available (1st post due on 1/4, 2nd post due on 1/5)

Wednesday 3/8: Midterm exam live Q&A: 11 am -12 pm on Blackboard

Monday 3/20: Midterm exam on Blackboard from noon to 11:59 pm

Thursday 3/30: Drop/Withdrawal Deadline

Monday 4/3: Discussion 4 available (1st post due on 4/4, 2nd post due on 4/5)

Wednesday 4/26: Discussion 5 available (1st post due on 4/27, 2nd post due on 4/28)

Wednesday 5/3: Final exam live Q&A: 11 am -12 pm on Blackboard

Monday 5/8: Final exam on Blackboard from noon to 11:59 pm

Timetable

You are strongly advised to read the readings before, and watch the video(s) on, each date. **The deadlines for discussions and exams are firm.**

Wednesday, 1/18: Course Overview

- Read the syllabus closely

Monday, 1/23: What is Political Science?

- No reading.
- Discussion 1 available

Wednesday, 1/25: Freedom and Justice

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

Monday, 1/30: Ideologies: Traditional Ideologies

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

Wednesday, 2/1: Ideologies: Challenges to Traditional Ideologies

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

Monday, 2/6: The State

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

Wednesday, 2/8: The State

- Documentary on national identity
- Discussion 2 available

Monday, 2/13: Democracy: Definition and Typology

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

Wednesday, 2/15: Democracy: Merits and Limitations

- No reading.

Monday, 2/20: 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.

Wednesday, 2/22: Authoritarianism

- Documentary on authoritarianism

Monday, 2/27: Authoritarianism: How Dictators Stay in Power

Wednesday, 3/1: 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.
- Discussion 3 available

Monday, 3/6: Documentary

- Documentary on democratization

Wednesday, 3/8: Midterm Exam Live Q&A

- 11 am-12 pm via Blackboard virtual office hours

3/13, 3/15: Spring break, no class

Monday, 3/20: Midterm Exam

- Available on Blackboard from noon to 11:59 pm

Wednesday, 3/22: Presidential vs. Parliamentary Systems

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

Monday, 3/27: Electoral Systems

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

Wednesday, 3/29: Political Participation

- No reading.

Monday, 4/3: 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.
- Discussion 4 available

Wednesday, 4/5: Political Culture

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

Monday, 4/10: 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.

Wednesday, 4/12: 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.

Monday, 4/17: Globalization and Immigration

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

Wednesday, 4/19: Global Political Economy

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

Monday, 4/24: Security and Insecurity

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

Wednesday, 4/26: Security and Insecurity

- Documentary on security
- Discussion 5

Monday, 5/1: No class. Study for the final exam.

Wednesday, 5/3: Final Exam Live Q&A

- 11 am-12 pm via Blackboard virtual office hours

Monday, 5/8: Final Exam

- Available on Blackboard from noon to 11:59 pm