

POLS 2310 Introduction to Politics

Dr. Joseph Yingnan Zhou

Spring 2024

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

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 January 15.** 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 that contains 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 (track changes will be enabled). 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. **Keep your 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. **The first discussion leader’s initial answer is due on the Tuesday after a discussion becomes available, and the final answer is due the Friday after the discussion becomes available. Use of AI bots such as ChatGPT are prohibited.**

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. 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.

Important Dates (Put us on your calendar!)

Monday 1/15: Discussion 1 available

Monday 2/5: Discussion 2 available

Monday 2/26: Discussion 3 available

Monday 3/4: Midterm live Q&A

Wednesday 3/6: Midterm exam on Blackboard from noon to 11:59 pm

Monday 3/25: Discussion 4 available

Thursday 3/28: Drop/Withdrawal deadline

Monday 4/22: Discussion 5 available

Wednesday 5/1: Final exam live Q&A

Wednesday 5/8: 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, January 15: Course Overview

- Read the syllabus closely
- Discussion 1 available

Wed, January 17: What is Political Science?

- No reading.

Mon, January 22: Freedom and Justice

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

Wed, January 24: Traditional Ideologies

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

Mon, January 29: Ideologies: Challenges to Traditional Ideologies

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

Wed, January 31: The State

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

Mon, February 5: The State

- Documentary on national identity
- Discussion 2 available

Wed, February 7: Democracy: Definition and Typology

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

Mon, February 12: Democracy: Merits and Limitations

- No reading.

Wed, February 14: 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.

Mon, February 19: Authoritarianism

- Authoritarianism: How Dictators Stay in Power

Wed, February 21: Authoritarianism

- Documentary on authoritarianism

Mon, February 26: 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

Wed, February 28, 2024: Democracy

- Documentary on democratization

Mon, March 4: Midterm Exam Live Q&A

- 11 am-12 pm via Blackboard virtual office hours

Wed, March 6: Midterm Exam

- Available on Blackboard from noon to 11:59 pm

March 11, 13: Spring break, no class

Mon, March 18: Presidential vs. Parliamentary Systems

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

Wed, March 20: Political Participation

- No reading.

Mon, March 25: 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

Wed, March 27: No Class

Mon, April 1: Electoral Systems

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

Wed, April 3: Political Culture

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

Mon, April 8: 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, April 10: 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, April 15: Globalization

- No reading

Mon, April 17: Immigration

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

Mon, April 22: Global Political Economy

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

Wed, April 24: Security and Insecurity

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

Mon, April 29: Security and Insecurity

- Documentary on security

Wed, May 1: Final Exam Live Q&A

- 11 am-12 pm via Blackboard virtual office hours

Wed, 5/8: Final Exam

- Available on Blackboard from noon to 11:59 pm