

## AP COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT: COURSE SYLLABUS

### **Instructor's Contact Information:**

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### **Course Introduction**

AP Comparative Government is a course that allows students to explore and analyze political systems and cultures around the world. As much as possible, we will use empirical evidence to describe and explain the behaviors of not only the leaders of nation-states, but the people within their borders. Though objectivity and a fair analysis of evidence are important, I cannot and will not ask that you completely suspend personal judgment in this mission. Ultimately, we as a class have to use the study of governments and people to answer some vital questions such as “What basic rights should be provided for citizens?” “What are the needs of citizens and how can governments work to ensure they are met?” “What are the responsibilities of citizens who don’t serve in any official capacity for the state or the government?” In answering these questions, you will likely arrive at your own judgments about “Good” or “Bad” government. This class seeks not to prevent that judgment, but to inform it. Our discussion of these countries political systems will focus around the major themes of sovereignty, authority, and power; political institutions; citizens, society, and the state; political and economic change; and public policy.

### **Course Overview**

In the beginning of the year, we will explore important political concepts so that we can use them as building blocks to look at 6 countries more specifically later in the year. In particular we will discuss:

**Nation and State:** How do nations and states differ? What happens when the functions of the state do or do not meet the needs of the nation? This will include a discussion of:

- the creation of the modern concept of the nation-state
- the difference between nationality and statehood
- the disorder, confusion, and fragmentation that arises when national and state identity are not aligned.
- the increased role of “non-state actors” and “phantom states.” (you'll learn the vocabulary.)

**Data Analysis:** How can we attempt to objectively analyze and compare nation-states? What kind of judgments, assumptions, and predictions can we make about certain forms of government based on statistical analysis. We will be using several sources of data in order to make important comparisons, such as:

[The World CIA Factbook:](#)

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

The Freedom House Indexes:

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=1>

The Economist (New and Relevant statistics provided daily):

<http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart>

Students with an interest in international affairs and those who want to strengthen their analytical skills will find this part of the course a rewarding introduction to College-level Political Science. In addition to analyzing international events using a comparative framework, the course will cover a wide range of policies and issues.

We will use the following 6 countries as case studies:

***United Kingdom***

***Russia***

***China***

***Iran***

***Mexico***

***Nigeria***

We will work to apply the concepts learned in Unit 1 to our study of the above countries. Unit readings will come from current media sources as well as collections of academic journals listed in the reference section later in the syllabus.

Furthermore, our general knowledge of comparative politics and a more specific study of these countries will allow us to branch off into a study of other areas. This gives us flexibility to study pressing international issues as they come up throughout the year. For example, it is important that we stay informed of dramatic and tumultuous events in the Middle East. Our knowledge will allow us to compare the toppling of the Libyan regime to ongoing conflicts in Syria to the revolutionary sparks provided in Tunisia and Egypt last spring. This is knowledge you can use. Now.

### **Course Schedule**

- Introduction to Comparative Politics ( 2 weeks)
- Democratic Regimes: Great Britain (1week)
- Authoritarian and Theocratic Regimes: Iran (1 week)
- Communism and Post-Communism: Russia (1 week) and China ( 1 week)
- Emerging Economies, Illiberalism, and the Crisis of the Modern Nation-State: Mexico (1 week) and Nigeria (1 week)
- Final Thematic Comparisons (4 weeks)
- Review for AP Exam

#### **Subject Areas for Comparison**

- *Introduction to Comparative Politics* (5%)
- *Sovereignty, Authority and Power* (20%)
- *Political Institutions (Structures)* (35%)
- *Citizens, Society and the State* (15%)
- *Political and Economic Change* (15%)
- *Public Policy* (10%)

#### **Themes For Exploration**

*Crisis and Conflict*  
*Democratization*  
*Privatization & Market economies*  
*Globalization*

**Textbook:** *Comparative Politics Today, A World View*. Powell, G. Bingham, Jr. Et al. 20012.

**Supplemental Readings:**  
*As needed and assigned.*

### Class Format

**Lecture, Small Group, and Whole Class discussion:** We will use our time in class as an opportunity for me to introduce major concepts and provide specific examples. Much of our in-class time after that will be spent discussing topics and events in groups and as an entire class. It is extremely important that you are a respectful speaker and listener. I look forward to energetic and passionate discussion within the boundaries of respect for your fellow students.

**Assigned Reading:** You will be assigned reading from your class text as well as a great deal of supplementary reading that comes from other sources. These readings will come from current media outlets as well as academic journals. Many of these readings will include concepts that are unfamiliar to you and will challenge your intellectual ability as never before. You should see this as an opportunity, not a roadblock.

Major Projects: From time to time, you will be asked to learn and summarize important material so that it can be presented to the class in an engaging and understandable format. In addition, you will complete at least one major project every quarter.

**Quizzes:** During each unit, there will be several quizzes to test your specific knowledge of important vocabulary and themes.

**Tests:** At the end of each unit, there will be a test that will take up the entire class period. This test will be a combination of multiple-choice questions and free-response questions that replicate the format you will see on the Advanced Placement test. I will go into this format in more detail later.

**Current Events:** Every student will be required to be prepared for current events quizzes relating to the six case-study countries. Keeping up with current events is crucial for this class. Students are expected to stay informed about events in the nation and in the world. The course will emphasize events in the countries that we will be studying, but not exclusively so. Students should read a variety of relevant magazines and newspapers. Particularly helpful is *The Economist and the BBC*, but other well-written and edited journals are also helpful, including *New York Times*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Boston Globe*, *One World*, *World Press Review*, *NPR*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report* among others. You will receive more information about this assignment when we go to the media center tomorrow.

**FRQs:** Write answers to College Board analytical FRQs (Free-Response Questions) once a month.

**Due Dates.** Assignments and presentations are due when assigned. I must have a hard copy or an electronic copy by the beginning of class. Students who are absent may submit their work electronically. Only students with a verified excused absence may turn in their assignments on the day they return. Late assignments will be accepted within one day of the due date, with a penalty.

**In General:** As with other AP classes, you will be responsible for reading and analyzing a lot of material outside of the class so that we can focus on enriching and challenging activities and discussions during class. You will be responsible for all assigned reading, even if there is not a specific assignment or activity paired with the reading.

**Grading and Evaluation** (Point Values are approximate and subject to change, with advance notice)

*Major grades – 60% (tests and projects)*

*Minor grades – 40% (daily grades, quizzes, etc.)*