

Advanced Placement Comparative Government Course Overview

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The AP Comparative Government and Politics course is a college-level introduction to the comparative study of state systems and their political components. This course, redesigned for the 2019-20 school year, introduces students to a series of theories, paradigms and tools to develop a lifelong ability to critically analyze and compare political systems.

The course focuses on the study of political science theory and comparative methodology as well as the analysis of politics and government in specific nation-states. The six countries are the United Kingdom, the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, the United Mexican States, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

A primary goal of the course is to increase the students' understanding of the political traditions, culture, structures, and processes of different political systems. Students will gain understanding of, and develop judgements about, issues within each state and between states to develop an understanding of the problems inherent in governing a country. Students will then be able to draw conclusions about government and politics in general while also having a better understanding of the world.

As a college level course, expectations include extensive textbook, current events and ancillary reading, research, debate, lecture and very participatory discussion. Students are expected to work collaboratively through google docs (or other collaboration apps), [Canvas](#) and this website mrksapcompgov.pbworks.com/ to produce group presentations and prepare the two core assessments. A final course examination is required and students are encouraged to take the AP examination in May.

Required Class Behaviors

1. Respect members of the class, their ideas and their property.
2. **Participate actively.** Take intellectual risks, for you will learn from your own risk-taking as well as each other.
3. Ask whenever you have a question. "The only stupid question is the question that goes unasked." Donald K. Anderson, Clerk of the United States House of Representatives, 1990.
4. Be prepared everyday – pens, and pencil, notebook, agenda book/assignment book.
5. Be in the classroom before the bell rings. West's lateness policy is strictly enforced.
6. Complete all work to the best of your ability because homework, essays and classwork will help you to obtain the necessary and required skills and knowledge. Also, these learning activities will be evaluated through a combination rubric/points system. Summing all of the earned points divided by the total possible points will result in a percent score that will be the marking period grade. This score will then be calculated with the second marking period, two core assessments and the final exam to reach a final course grade. **No individual extra credit will be available.**
7. Complete all assignments by their due date. Daily homework assignments will lose 50% of their value if one day late, and will receive no credit beyond one day. Long-term assignments (over one week allotted for completion) will lose 10% for each day late.

Course Level Assessments

1. Demonstrate mastery of comparative government and politics concepts by scoring at least 60% on unit exams. Tests will be multiple choice and free response. Students must also score at least 60% on an objective question comprehensive final exam and final exam free response section.
2. Present a series of Unit Topic country review group presentations of up to 30 minutes in length.
3. Core 1: Complete a 12 article current events booklet (see directions for Core 1).
4. Core 2: Present a 10-15 minute group TED Talk-style group presentation (see directions for Core 2).
5. Demonstrate the ability to effectively complete analytical essay questions in a manner appropriate for the Comparative Government and Politics AP exam.

Course Outline

Textbook: Wood, Ethel. **AP Comparative Government and Politics: An Essential Coursebook**, 8th ed. (Germantown, NY: Woodyard Publications, 2018.)

Ancillary readings: To prepare students for the variety, volume and depth of college readings, as well as to offer students the ability to develop deeper and broader understanding of each unit, students will be assigned numerous ancillary reading opportunities. These readings will include, but not be limited to:

- Almond, Gabriel and G. Bingham Powell. "Comparing Political Systems" in *Comparative Politics Today* (Pearson, 2000) Chapter 2
- Krain, Matthew. *Briefing Paper: Globalization* (College Board, 2005)
- Levitsky, Steven & Daniel Ziblatt. "How Wobbly Is Our Democracy." *New York Times*, January 27, 2018
- McCormick, John. "What is Comparative Politics?" in *Comparative Politics in Transition*. (Thomson-Wadsworth, 2004)
- Schmitter, Phillipe and Terry Lynn Karl "What Democracy Is...and Is Not." *Journal of Democracy*. 1991.
- Wildavsky, Aaron. "The Formation of Political Preferences" *Political Science Review*. 1987.
- Yang, Wesley. "Democracy and Its Discontents - an Interview with Francis Fukuyama." *Esquire*. October 17, 2018.
- Zakaria, Fareed. "The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad." in Kesselman, et al. *Readings in Comparative Government*. (Houghton Mifflin, 2007).

Structure of Course: The CB West AP Course will be organized in 7 Units beginning with an introduction to Political Science and the Comparative Method followed by in-depth analysis of each of the 6 core countries.

Unit 1 – Fundamental Principles of Comparative Government – The following subsections are based on the framework of the 2019 College Board redesign’s Big Ideas and Unit Topics. We will introduce the details of the Unit Topics (UTs) in the first three or so weeks of this course in Unit 1 and then apply them as tools for analyzing and comparing the 6 core countries in succession. As we move from a country case-study to the subsequent country case-study we will expand our comparative abilities.

Big Idea 1: Power and Authority – Political systems and regimes govern societies and determine who has power and authority. They shape the level of legitimacy and produce different policy outcomes.

Big Idea 2: Legitimacy and Stability – political legitimacy is the degree to which a governments’ right to rule is accepted by the citizenry. Governments that maintain high levels of legitimacy tend to be more stable and have an easier time enacting, implementing and enforcing their policies.

Big Idea 3: Democratization – Democratization is a process that involves the adoption of free and fair elections, the extension of civil liberties, and the establishment of the rule of law. Democratization is a long-term and often uneven process that typically results in increased governmental transparency and greater citizen access and influence of policy making.

Big Idea 4: Internal/External Forces – Internal forces, such as political culture, citizen participation, civil society, interest groups, environmental pressures, and internal divisions based on class, religion, ethnicity and/or territory, can both challenge and reinforce regimes. External forces, especially globalization, include the increasing worldwide flow of goods, investments, ideas and people in a manner that is largely unconstrained by national borders.

Big Idea 5: Methods of Political Analysis – Political scientists collect data and make observations in order to describe patterns and trends and explain the political behavior of individuals, groups, disciplines, organizations, and governments. They use data and ideas from other disciplines such as economics, sociology, history and geography when drawing conclusions.

Unit Topics (and AP Exam Weighting)

Unit Topic 1: Political Systems, Regimes, and Governments (18-27% of exam)

- 1.1 The practice of Political Scientists
- 1.2 Defining political Organizations
- 1.3 Democracy vs. Authoritarianism
- 1.4 Democratization
- 1.5 Sources of power and Authority
- 1.6 Federal and Unitary Systems
- 1.7 Political Legitimacy
- 1.8 Sustaining Legitimacy
- 1.9 Political Stability

Unit Topic 2: Political Institutions (22-33% of exam)

- 2.1 Parliamentary, Presidential and semi-Presidential Systems
- 2.2 Comparing Parliamentary, Presidential, and Semi-Presidential Systems
- 2.3 Executive systems
- 2.4 Executive Term Limits
- 2.5 Removal of Executives
- 2.6 Legislative Systems
- 2.7 Independent Legislatures
- 2.8 Judicial Systems
- 2.9 Independent Judiciaries

Unit Topic 3: Political Culture and Participation (11-18% of exam)

- 3.1 Civil Society
- 3.2 Political Culture
- 3.3 Political Ideologies
- 3.4 Political Values and Beliefs
- 3.5 Nature and Role of Political participation
- 3.6 Forces that Impact Political Participation
- 3.7 Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
- 3.8 Political and Social Cleavages
- 3.9 Challenges from Political and Social Cleavages

Unit Topic 4: Party and Electoral Systems and Citizen Organizations (13-18% of exam)

- 4.1 Electoral Systems and Rules
- 4.2 Objectives of Election Rules
- 4.3 Political Party Systems
- 4.4 Role of Political Party Systems
- 4.5 Impact of Social Movements and Interest Groups
- 4.6 Pluralist and Corporatist Interests

Unit Topic 5: Political and Economic Changes and Development (16-24% of exam)

- 5.1 Impact of Global Economic and Technological Forces
- 5.2 Political Responses to Global Market Forces
- 5.3 Challenges from Globalization
- 5.4 Policies and Economic Liberalization
- 5.5 International and Supranational Organizations
- 5.6 Adaptation of Social Policies
- 5.7 Impact of Industrialization and Economic Development
- 5.8 Causes and Effects of Demographic Change
- 5.9 Impact of Natural Resources

Units 2 through 7: Country Case Studies – *Each of the following units will cover about ten school days of the course. Within each case study, students will be expected to apply the five Unit Topic terms and concepts to understand the politics of that nation-state while addressing the 5 Big Ideas. As the course moves to other case studies, greater emphasis on comparison will increasingly occur.*

Unit 2 – Politics in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Unit 3 – Politics in the People’s Republic of China

Unit 4 – Politics in the Russian Federation

Unit 5 – Politics in the United Mexican States

Unit 6 – Politics in the Federal Republic of Nigeria

Unit 7 – Politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Core Assessments: AP Comparative Government and Politics requires the completion of two related assessments that augment AND demonstrate the key competencies of the course design: The 5 Big Ideas and the 5 Unit Topics as well as the Disciplinary Practices.

Core Assessment 1: Current Events Booklet

To adequately compare governments, the information about the systems, structure, processes and culture must be current. Further, to deeply understand how nation-states' political systems work, we must keep current about the issues facing these political systems. Therefore, you are required to keep current about the issues facing the six country case studies covered by the AP exam. To demonstrate that you are keeping current, each week you must present two current news stories about different political issues in one or more of the covered nation-states. These stories will be summarized briefly. More importantly, the written assignment must also include an **in-depth explanation of how the story illustrates one or more concepts we are studying related to all 12 of the Checkmarks that relate the 5 Big Ideas to the 5 Unit Topics.** Each written assignment's heading will also include the title, author, source, date and time of the story (MLA format).

The current events booklet Core Assessment must be maintained in a separate section of your Comparative Government Notebook. During the middle of the 2nd marking period, you will combine 12 current news story written assignments into a packet to be evaluated for completeness and understanding of the related topic. See directions on mrksapcompgov.pbworks.com/ and/or [Canvas](#).

Core Assessment 2: Big Idea Presentation

Students will demonstrate understanding of the Big Ideas of Authority and Power, Legitimacy, Democratization, or the Effects of Internal and External forces. Students will demonstrate the ability to use the tools and concepts of the Comparative Government and Politics course and the Methods of Political Analysis of Big Idea 5 to compare **three** or more countries to draw conclusions about one assigned Big Idea. Students will demonstrate effective writing and presentation skills. Groups of students will answer one of the following Big Idea Prompts in a "TED talk"-style presentation using empirical evidence found in their combined current events analysis projects from Core Assessment 1. See directions on mrksapcompgov.pbworks.com/ and/or [Canvas](#).

Vocabulary

This course is rich in vocabulary that will be needed to become a competent comparativist. To help understand and be able to use these complex concepts effectively, students should create a vocabulary file in their computer, alphabetized with a definition and described examples from more than one country. This self-made glossary should be constantly revised and edited. The following is an entry example:

Religious fundamentalist – def. *pious religious follower who believes in the "inerrancy" of their respective holy scriptures. These groups often militantly defend their "fundamental truths" against secularization.*

Example – *Fundamentalist Christians in Kansas tried to gain control over the State Board of Education in order to to remove the requirement to teach evolution in biology or life science classes. Attempting to thus defend the absolute truth of the biblical creationism explanation of the development of life, the Religious Fundamentalists demonstrated their absolute faith.*