

AP Comparative Government & Politics 2017-2018

(Periods 1, 2, 3, & 6)

“The 21st century has taught us that we cannot ignore the world around us. Happenings around the globe now directly impact our lives, and social studies teachers and students around the country face the challenge of interpreting complex, puzzling events. The AP comparative course focuses on government and politics in other countries and provides a theoretical framework to compare political systems around the world.”

~Ethel Wood, AP Comparative Government & Politics: A Study Guide

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Office Hours: Monday & Thursday 8:30 – 9:30AM; Tuesday & Wednesday 4:05 – 5:00PM;
Tuesday – Thursday Enrichment A

Course Description: This year-long course is designed to give students an analytical perspective on global politics. Students will focus on the governments and the diverse political structures of the United Kingdom, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia, China, and Iran. Comparisons will be made in terms of power structures, political institutions, citizen participation, political and economic change, and public policy. Students will be exposed to different theoretical and practical frameworks that are the foundation for a variety of political systems.

Course Objectives: By the end of this course, students will:

1. *Define and describe major comparative political concepts, themes, and generalizations, including:*
 - a. *An introduction to comparative government (5% of the exam)*
 - b. *Sovereignty, authority, and power (20% of the exam)*
 - c. *Political institutions (35% of the exam)*
 - d. *Citizens, society, and the state (15% of the exam)*
 - e. *Political and economic change (15% of the exam)*
 - f. *Public Policy (10% of the exam)*
2. *Support generalizations with relevant factual information pertaining to the governments and politics of China, Great Britain, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, and Russia*
3. *Analyze typical patterns of political processes and behavior and their consequences*
4. *Compare and contrast political institutions and processes across countries and to derive generalizations*
5. *Analyze and interpret basic data relevant to comparative government and politics*

Organization: By virtue of choosing this course, it is assumed that the student is capable of college level work or is motivated to work consistently toward performance at that level. Class meetings are reserved largely for discussion, individual and small group study, lecture, and evaluation. Accordingly, many assignments—from textbook readings to current events and other readings—must be completed at home. Instruction is through a combination of lecture, small group analysis, cooperative learning activities, readings, writing workshops, Socratic seminars, and film/video study. All materials require students to reflect through a formative assessment in their AP Comparative Government & Politics notebook on their iPad (GoodNotes).

Summative assessment for each unit is through an AP-style multiple choice exam, immediately followed by at least one Free Response Question (FRQ). There will be a thorough review and practice for the AP Comparative Government & Politics Exam in April, followed by the AP exam on Thursday, May 17th, 2018 at 7:30AM. Students are **expected** to take the AP exam in lieu of a final exam; those who do not WILL take the cumulative final.

Materials: Required materials for this course include the textbook, writing notebook (iPad), binder/folder with paper, writing utensils, highlighter, and a positive attitude toward success.

Primary Readings:

O’Neil, Patrick, Karl Fields, & Don Share. *Essentials of Comparative Politics with Cases*, 5th AP Edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2015.

Wood, Ethel. *AP Comparative Government and Politics: An Essential Coursebook*. 7th Edition. Germantown, NY: WoodYard Publications, 2015.

Evaluation of Student Achievement: I grade to let you know: **(1)** how well they know specific content; and **(2)** how well they have performed on learning goals/standards throughout the semester/year. Any grade given to a student is a teacher judgment based on a variety of different sorts of evidence.

Assignments will fall into one of three categories, each contributing to a percentage of the student’s overall grade:

1. Traditional Assessments – 40% (i.e. tests, quizzes, etc.)
2. Written Assignments – 30% (essays, free response questions, book reviews, etc.)
3. Social Studies Notebook – 30% (end of quarter demonstrations of learning)

The various aspects of traditional assessments (multiple choice and FRQs) will be worth varying point values. Written assignments will be graded based on the AP grading criteria for free response questions. The social studies notebook will be assessed at the end of each quarter based on completion and organization.

I use a four-point grading scale to determine the overall letter grade (i.e. A, B, C, etc.) for each semester. The breakdown of grades and percentages is as follows:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent Range</u>
A	100.0 - 92.51%
A -	92.50 - 85.91%
B +	85.90 - 77.51%
B	77.50 - 70.01%
B -	70.00 - 62.51%

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent Range</u>
C +	62.50 - 55.01%
C	55.00 - 47.51%
C -	47.50 - 40.01%
D +	40.00 - 32.51%
D	32.50 - 25.00%
F	24.99 - 0.00%

This grading scale is the standard for the building and is used by many of the high school and middle school teachers at VSAA.

- **Extra Credit:** Extra credit is not an option, BUT students are encouraged to reattempt a summative project or assessment for a new grade. The process of reflecting on assignments and assessments will be covered in class. Reflections are not required, but strongly encouraged. Any unacceptable or potentially failing work may be resubmitted by the end of the particular quarter in which it was assigned.
 - **First Quarter:** August 30 through November 3, 2017
 - **Second Quarter:** November 6, 2017 through January 26, 2018
 - **Third Quarter:** January 30 through April 13, 2018
 - **Fourth Quarter:** April 16 through June 8, 2018
- **Late work:** Late work will not be given full credit; however, it will be accepted only through the end of the particular quarter in which it was assigned. (See above)
 - **If you know you will not be able to complete an assignment on time, speak with the teacher in advance, not the day it is due! Together we will work out a plan.** Homework is due promptly at the beginning of class.
- **Academic Integrity:** Submitting another student's or a professional's work as your own, copying verbatim with or without acknowledgements, falsifying information, and inappropriate paraphrasing are all intellectual stealing. I want to hear *your* ideas, not somebody else's. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated in class. For the first offense, you will receive a written referral, and you will have to redo the assignment under my strict supervision. For repeated plagiarism, you will receive a written referral and a zero on the assignment.

Attendance and Participation: All students need to be in class and on time every day. If a student has a parent-excused absence, **s/he are responsible** for gathering information about class assignments and make up the work to be done within the number of days absent (i.e. if you were gone one day, you have two days to make up the work). Students should come prepared to read (whether it's electronic or in print), write (a FULLY CHARGED iPad, paper,

pens/pencils, etc.) and review (have the previous day’s homework). Students should use a planner wisely to keep track of assignments and due dates.

We are a community of learners, helping each other, but also striving to be independent thinkers. Students must involve themselves fully in every activity so they will learn and have a little fun. Participation includes inquiring, discussing, creating, listening, reflecting, and connecting. Students will work closely and respectfully with a variety of groups of others. Study, plan, and learn together!

AP Exam: An expectation of this course is that you will take the AP Comparative Government & Politics Exam. You DO NOT have to pass the test, and your score WILL NOT be calculated into your final grade. Taking the exam will excuse you from taking the cumulative final in May and be in the same format and timeframe as the exam. The final, however, WILL count toward your final grade. The exam consists of the following sections:

Section	Part	Type	Questions	Time	Score
1		Multiple Choice	55	45 minutes	50%
2	A	Short-Answer Concept	5	1 Hour 40 Minutes	50%
	B	Conceptual Analysis	1		
	C	Country Context	2		

Course Outline/Units of Study

Below is a rough outline of the content we will cover, as well as the length of each unit. The goal is to complete our study of comparative government and politics by Spring Break, so we can review in April before the exam in May. Our final unit in May and June will consist of a Core-like experience resulting in a research paper and an artistic response/presentation of the topic. All projects and papers will be presented to the class.

Unit I – The Comparative Method

Focus: In an increasingly interdependent and globalized world, the actions of one nation can impact the lives of citizens from other nations.

Timeline: 9 Weeks (September – October)

Unit II – United Mexican States

Focus: Mexico is still in the formation process of its social, political, and economic institutions. It can be susceptible to both internal and external challenges as well as revolution. Mexico’s historical legacy is rooted in both revolution and imperialism.

Timeline: 3 Weeks (November)

Unit III – United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Focus: Great Britain is considered a model of consolidated/advanced democracy due to many social, political, and economic institutions. Understanding the historical legacy of Great Britain helps to explain the formation of the Westminster Model and other constitutional systems

worldwide. The European Union as a supranational organization dictates the behavior of countries and the people in a variety of ways.

Timeline: 4 Weeks (November – December)

Unit IV – Russian Federation

Focus: Russia derives its power differently compared to democratic regimes. Russia has social, political, and economic institutions, but they tend to keep the citizenry out of the social, political, and economic decision-making. Although it has different levels of government and electoral systems, Russia faces public policy challenges, social movements, and leadership struggles as other countries.

Timeline: 3 Weeks (January)

Unit V – People’s Republic of China

Focus: China derives its power differently compared to democratic regimes. China has social, political, and economic institutions, but they tend to keep the citizenry out of the social, political, and economic decision-making. Although China has different levels of government and electoral systems, it faces public policy challenges, social movements, and leadership struggles as other countries.

Timeline: 3 Weeks (February)

Unit VI – Islamic Republic of Iran

Focus: Iran derives its power differently compared to democratic regimes. Iran has secular social, political, and economic institutions, but its religious institutions tend to dominate the social, political, and economic decision-making. Although Iran has different levels of government and electoral systems, it faces public policy challenges, social movements, and leadership struggles as other countries.

Timeline: 3 Weeks (February – March)

Unit VII – Federal Republic of Nigeria

Focus: Nigeria is still in the formation process of its social, political, and economic institutions. It can be susceptible to both internal and external challenges as well as revolution. Nigeria’s historical legacy is rooted in both revolution and imperialism.

Timeline: 3 Weeks (March)

Unit VIII – Conclusions

Focus: The comparison of systems and institutions over time allows a better understanding of the world around us. Using data and making comparisons allows for the application of knowledge to other situations to add clarity. Globalization and Democratization continue to affect countries socially, politically, and economically. Understanding the foundational roots of government and politics is essential when facing future challenges.

Timeline: 6 Weeks (April – May)

Unit IX – Country Presentations

Focus: The final assignment will consist of creating a government for a country based on the knowledge gained from class. The government must be either unitary or federal; account for the executive, legislative, and judicial branches; and describe the role of the bureaucracy, political parties, civil rights and liberties, and other aspects of political life. Governments will then be presented to the class.

Timeline: 4 Weeks (May – June)