Course Overview

Comparative Government and Politics is a critical field of study for young people. Events around the globe have a direct impact on our lives, and students throughout the country are faced with the challenge of understanding many puzzling international events. The AP Comparative Government and Politics course centers on government and politics in other countries and provides a conceptual framework to compare political systems around the world. The goals for this course is to gain a better understanding of the political complexities in this increasingly globalized world, and to deepen awareness of the similarities and differences among modern political systems. This course will provide students with the opportunity to examine six nations: the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Russian Federation, the People’s Republic of China, the United Mexican States, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The European Union will also be examined as a multi-national organization. The course is taught for one full academic year and is equivalent to one semester of a college level seminar course.

Learning Goals

• To examine modern political systems globally, and to understand the existing similarities and differences.
• To gain greater awareness and comprehension of how different governments operate both on a day-to-day and long-term basis.
• To be an active and productive participant in all aspects of the class.
• To gain experience working in collaborative working environments.
• To produce successful presentations using technology.
• To improve research (text, electronic, live) and writing skills.
• To gain mastery of the curriculum and be successful on the AP Comparative Government and Politics exam.

Essential Questions

1. How does the history of a nation impact its political structure?
2. How are governments organized and how do they operate to make policies and decisions?
3. What is the role of the state in economic management?
4. What are the pressures for more democracy and the challenges of democratization?
5. What is the political impact of diverse attachments and sources of group identity, including class, gender, ethnicity, and religion?
Grading Policy

Major Assessments (Tests, Papers, Projects & Presentations) 60%
Homework/Classwork 20%
Participation 20%

Curricular Requirements (AP)

• Introduction to Comparative Politics
• Political Institutions
• Sovereignty, Authority, and Power
• Citizens, Society, and the State
• Political and Economic Change
• Public Policy

Textbooks


Supplementary Readings & Resources

Print Media (Journals and Newspapers)

The *New York Times* and *The Economist* are essential; they are used weekly for written and oral current events assignments and are available in the school library. Additionally, the following periodicals and newspapers will be helpful and can be used to complete current event assignments: *The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, The Boston Globe, US News & World Report, Time, and Newsweek*. 

Electronic Media

One Learning Goal for this course is to improve student’s research skills. There are a number of ways to get access to current events involving the nations we are studying in this course. It is strongly suggested that students listen to National Public Radio (NPR, WNYC 93.9 FM) and watch the Nightly News including the British Broadcasting Company (BBC). The political Sunday talk shows are also recommended viewing, including, but not limited to *Meet the Press, Face the Nation* and *The McLaughlin Report*. They will provide students first-hand viewpoints of political leaders, media specialists, etc. Other news related programs are suggested and sometimes will be assigned including: *60 Minutes, Frontline, Frontline World,* and *PBS NewsHour*. Many news programs are available...
online as podcasts. Websites that are suggested at the end of each chapter in the textbook are expected to be used during the study of the nations.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

As this course introduces students to the interpretation and analysis of data relevant to comparative government and politics, you will be reviewing several types of data including, but not limited to, graphs, quantitative data, tables, and maps. There will be quizzes and exams that contain or focus on maps (including geographic, economic, social, political) and other types of data including charts, visuals, comparative reading, and videos that demonstrate evidence of use of data for analysis and evaluation.

Expectation & Requirements

• Students are expected to carry themselves with respect for all members of the class.
• Students are expected to be punctual and attend class daily.
  o Excessive tardiness will negatively affect your participation grade.
• Students are expected to be active and productive participants in discussions.
• Submit all assignments on time.
  o Points will be deducted for any late assignments
  o Contact the teacher before the assignment is due if any extensions are needed
• Use the school website for homework, calendar, and class information.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is a very serious academic offense and will not be tolerated. Students found guilty of plagiarizing will be subject to academic discipline according to school policy.

Class Schedule & Appointments

The class will meet in Room 328

I can be reached via email at epark@erhsnyc.net and will be available for extra help in Room 328 at various times each week. Appointments to meet with the instructor can be made upon request.
Curricular Requirements

Unit 1 – Introduction to Comparative Politics (Weeks 1-3)

Topics Studied:
- Introduction to Comparative Politics
- Political Institutions
- Sovereignty, Authority, and Power
- Citizens, Society, and the State
- Political and Economic Change
- Public Policy

Readings:
- Bingham Powell, Chapters 1-7 o Introduction(Chapters1and2) o SystemProcessandPolicy(Chapters3-7)
- Wood, Ethel, “Introduction to Comparative Government & Politics”
- Kesselman, Readings in Comparative Politics Barber, Benjamin. “Jihad vs. McWorld”
- Fukuyama, Francis. “The End of History?”
- Van Creveld, Martin. “The Fate of the State”
- Sassen, Saskia. “The State and Globalization”
- Sen, Amartya. “The Importance of Democracy”
- Ross, Robert J., and Anita Chan “From North-South to South-South”
- Stiglitz, Joseph E., “Globalism’s Discontent”
- Schmittlet Philippe C., and Terry Lynn Karl. “What Democracy is...and Is Not”
- Sen, Amartya, “Democracy as a Universal Value”
- Wilensky, Harold L. “Migration and Politics: Explaining Variation Among Rich Democracies in Recent Nativist Protest”
- Connor, Walker. “A Nation is a Nation, Is a State, Is an Ethnic Group, Is a ...”
- Katzenstein, Mary Fainsod. “Stepsisters: Feminist Movement Activism in Different Institutional Spaces”
Note: Students will write several comparative papers using the articles above, which will also serve as class discussion topics. We will incorporate more recent events from current sources as needed.

Summer Assignment: Students will create a blog examining, analyzing and evaluating current events in the countries of study. Students will then review peer blogs and give feedback to one another.

Unit II – Great Britain (Weeks 4-7)

Topics Studied

- Policy Challenges Facing the British Government
- Historical Foundations: constitutionalism, legitimacy, nation/state, liberal democracy
- British Citizens, Society, and the State: demographics, cleavages, civil society
- Political Institutions: political parties/elections, Westminster Model, Parliament (House of Commons and House of Lords), the Cabinet and the Prime Minister
- Role of the E.U.: Sovereignty
- Public Policy: Thatcherism, N.Ireland, Role of NHS, Immigration, Tony Blair’s Third Way, the E.U., relationship with the U.S., Devolution.

Readings

Comparative Politics Today, Chapter 8 “United Kingdom of Great Britain” – Richard Rice

The following articles are from Colin Hay’s British Politics Today

Kavanagh, Dennis “The Paradoxes of British Political Parties”
Sanders, David “Electoral Competition in Contemporary Britain”
Coates, David “The New Political Economy of Postwar Britain”
Rosamond, Ben. “Britain’s European Future”

Wright, Tony “The Political Constitution” “Accounting: Heckling the Steamroller”

Nairn, Tom. Pariah: Misfortunes of the British Kingdom (Selected Articles)

Additional Readings:

Additional Readings: Selected articles from the New York Times, the Economist, BBC, and British governmental websites.

Activities:

- Prime Minister’s Question Hour (from CSPAN)
• Group PowerPoint Presentation
• MP Commercial – Students create a one-minute commercial of an MP (political parties and elections are focus)

Unit III – The European Union (Weeks 8-9)

Topics Studied

• History of EU: Major Treaties, Periods of Expansion, Legitimacy.
• Political Institutions: The European Economic Community, The European Community, the European Union, The Commission, the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament, and the European Court of Justice.
• Citizens, Society, and the State: Representation
• Political and Economic Change: The Euro, Immigration (member and non-member states)
• Public Policy: Single Internal Market, Union of Monetary Policy, Common Agricultural Policy, Terrorism.

Readings

Excerpts from Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe


EU.org (Official EU Site)


Activities:

• Research Paper
Unit IV – The Russian Federation (Weeks 10-14)

Topics Studied:

- Russia: Developing Democracy?
- Historical Foundations: Absolutism, Cultural Heterogeneity, 20th Century Revolutions, Fall of USSR, Transition to Democracy
- Political Institutions: Federal Government Structure, Political Parties, Elections, Interest Groups: the Oligarchs/Russian Mafia/Media, the President & Prime Minister, Bicameral Legislature, the Judiciary, & the Military.
- Citizens, Society, and the State: Role of the Media, Citizens access to information, murder of journalists, & protest/demonstrations.
- Public Policy: The Economy (e.g. perestroika), Relations with CIS, Terrorism/War in Chechnya, Relations with World (U.S., WTO, EU, G-8), Oil & Gas, Democratic development, & Russia’s growing global influence.

Readings:

*Comparative Politics Today, Chapter 12 “Politics in Russia” – Thomas F. Remington

Breslauer: *Gorbachev and Yeltsin as Leaders* – Comparison Paper on Leaders

Sakwa: *Russian Politics and Society* – Brief Analytical Papers on the collapse of the USSR, political institutions, role of media

Brown: *Contemporary Russian Politics* – Several Excerpts read with short answer questions and outlining.


Activities:

- Political Parties Group Project
- Several Video Presentations on USSR & Russia
Unit V – Mexico (Weeks 15-19)

Topics Studied


- Political Institutions: Corporatist Structure, Camarilla, the Executive (sexenio), the Bureaucracy (role of para-statals), bicameral legislature (Chamber of Deputies & Senate), single-member districts vs. proportional representation, politicians (políticos) vs. technocrats (técnicos), the judiciary, and the military.

- Sovereignty, Authority, and Power: Legitimacy, Constitution, Formation of PRI (one-party rule), historical traditions, political culture, national identity, geographic influence, and the role of the Catholic Church.

- Citizens, Society, and the State: Cultural heterogeneity, political parties (PAN, PRI, PRD), elections, role of media, internet, interest groups, labor movements, liberation theology, cleavages (urban vs. rural, Mestizo vs. Amerindian, North vs. South), and patron-client system.

- Political and Economic Change: Economic development, NAFTA, maquiladoras, EZLN, Chiapas Revolt, relationship with U.S. (trade, immigration, drugs, tourism), development of tourism, Mexico’s growing leadership role in Latin America.


Readings

Comparative Politics Today Chapter 14 “Politics in Mexico”


Harvey: The Chiapas Rebellion: The Struggle for Land and Democracy Chapters 7 & 8, “Neoliberalism and Rebellion” & “The Zapatista Opening”

Additional Readings: Selected articles form the New York Times, the Economist, BBC, and Mexican governmental websites.

Activities:

- Video presentations on Mexican current issues/events.
- Major paper on bilateral relations between Mexico and the United States.
• Political advertisement/commercial for one of the major political parties in Mexico.

Unit VI – Nigeria (Weeks 21-24)

Topics Studied

• Historical Foundations: Pre-colonial era (trade, impact of Islam, kinship, political identities, democratic impulses), Colonial era (Authoritarian rule, interventionism, individualism, Christianity), Era since Independence (Parliamentarianism to Presidential system, ethnic conflict, military rule, personalized rule/corruption, federalism, economic dependence on oil), & geography.

• Political Institutions: The executive, military rule, patrimonialism, bureaucracy, para-statals, state corporatism, Senate, National Assembly, judiciary, political parties (esp. PDP, AD & ANPP), elections, interest groups (labor unions, business interests, human rights groups), media.

• Sovereignty, Authority, and Power: Constitutionalism, transition to democracy from military rule, shari’a law, federalism.

• Citizens, Society, and the State: Poverty, gap in wealth, health issues (AIDS/HIV), literacy rates, ethnicity, role of religion, regionalism, urban/rural differences, social class, prebendalism, voting behavior, public perception of government, corruption, protests, participation, and social movements.

• Political and Economic Change: Structural adjustment program (SAP), International Financial Institutions (IFIs), privatization, cultural diffusion, “national question”, Oil dependence, road to democracy, legitimacy of elections, interventionism, corruption, debt.


Readings:


Maier: *This House Has Fallen* (Preface & selected chapters) Aborisade & Mundt: *Politics in Nigeria* (selected chapters)

Suberu: *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria* (selected chapters)

Forrest: *Politics and Economic Development in Nigeria* (selected chapters)
Activities:

- Nigeria Development Project (groups propose ideas for Nigeria’s future/potential using above books and other resources)

Unit VII – Iran (Weeks 25-28)

Topics Studied

- Political Institutions: Theocracy, Supreme Leader, Guardian Council, Assembly of Religious Experts, the Expediency Council, Executive (President & Cabinet), Bureaucracy, Majles (Leg.), Judiciary (Laws – Shari’a and Qanun).
- Sovereignty, Authority, and Power: Constitution of 1906, traditional authoritarian dynastic rule, Qur’an, theocracy, Islamic Republic.
- Citizens, Society, and the State: Cleavages (Religion, ethnicity, social class, reformers vs. conservatives), role of women, Islam, political protests, shutting down of reformist media, flight of intelligentsia and elite.
- Political and Economic Change: Rise of the Pahlavi’s, Mohammed Mossadeq, White Revolution, rentier state, import substitution industrialization, Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, Ayatollah Khameini, Muhammad Khatami, and Mahmoud Ahmedinejad.

Readings:

Comparative Politics Today, Chapter 16 “Politics in Iran” – H.E. Chelabi and Arang Keshavarzian

Bill: The Eagle and the Lion (background reading on Iran-U.S. relations) Hiro: The Iranian Labyrinth (readings on Iran since the revolution)

Keddie: Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution (chapters 8-13 on politics in Iran)

Activities:

- Guest Speaker, filmmaker Bigan Saliani, Iran: Inside the Islamic Republic
- Viewing of several videos on Iran including above and nuclear weapons concern
- Mock United Nations Security Council Meeting on Iran’s nuclear aspirations
Unit VIII – China (Weeks 29-32)

Topics Studied

- Historical Foundations: Centralized authoritarian power (Dynastic Rule/Mandate of Heaven), Confucianism, bureaucratic hierarchy, the “Middle Kingdom”, Geographic Influences, Ethnocentrism, resistance to imperialism, Sun Yat Sen, Chiang Kai-shek and Nationalists, Long March, World War II, Maoism, Communism, Deng Xiao Ping.
- Political Institutions: Authoritarian, Executive (president, vice-president, premier), the Judiciary, Chinese Communist Party (CCP), National Party Congress, Central Committee, Politburo/Standing Committee, Non-Communist Parties, patron-client network (guanxi), nomenklatura, factionalism,
- Sovereignty, Authority, and Power
- Political and Economic Change: Dynastic Rule, Imperialism, Revolutionary upheaval, Soviet Model, land reform, five-year plans, Great Leap Forward, Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiao Ping’s “Four Modernizations”, China’s Economic Growth (Expansion into Africa).

Readings:

Comparative Politics Today, Chapter 13 “Politics in China” – Melanie Manion Lieberthal: Governing China: From Revolution through Reform (excerpts from several chapters)
Selected Articles from the NY Times and the Economist

Activities

- Group Project: Comparing the Non-Democracies (Iran & China) – PowerPoint/Visuals
- Video Presentations: China: A Century of Revolution and 60 Minutes (Excerpts)

Review for AP Exam

Post Exam: Major Research Paper on a Global theme, nation, conflict, or related topic of interest.