

# AP Comparative Government and Politics Syllabus

Period 6 in Room 328  
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## Course Description

AP Comparative Government and Politics is a college level political science semester class that provides students a concrete understanding on important political concepts, the qualitative and quantitative tools of data analysis and a genuine understanding of different communities around the globe through specific analysis of six different countries: the United Kingdom, Russia, China, Iran, Mexico and Nigeria. The instructor will refer to the United States of America and/or Japan as familiar references when introducing certain concepts. However, students should be aware that AP Comparative Government will test students only on the above six countries. While mastery over certain political concepts and domestic/international affairs are important, the goal of this course is to allow students to walk away confident in their skills of research, analysis, and argumentation.

## Course Structure

As a class, we will explore the content thematically in the following order:

- Political Systems, Regimes, and Governments (Unit 1)
- Party and Electoral Systems and Citizen Organizations (Unit 4)
- Political Institutions (Unit 2)
- Political and Economic Changes and Development (Unit 5)
- Political Culture and Participation (Unit 3)

As we explore these five different units, students will explore all six AP countries through various methods, including lectures, reading, activities, discussions, etc. This course will not be taught per country. As we will be addressing all six countries little by little throughout the semester, students are encouraged to take notes.

In addition, there are five big ideas that we will continually revisit throughout the semester:

1. Power and Authority (PAU);
2. Legitimacy and Stability (LEG);
3. Democratization (DEM);
4. Internal/External Forces (IEF); and
5. Methods of Political Analysis (MPA).

All five ideas will be taught through multiple units. The goal is for students to discover meaningful connections between course concepts.

## Required Texts

- Kesselman, Mark, et al. *Introduction to Comparative Politics: Political Challenges and Changing Agendas*. 8th ed., Cengage, 2019.
- Required article readings from news sources such as BBC, Reuters, *The Guardian*, *The Economist*, CNN, *The New York Times*, Al Jazeera, Pravda, *Russia Today*, Xinhua News Agency, *South China Morning Post*, etc.
- Online sources such as Fragile State Index, CIA Factbook, Freedom House, the United Nations, Transparency International, the World Bank and videos from YouTube
- Supplementary reading provided by the teacher

## Equipments

- Textbook
- Chromebooks
- Note taking material. I recommend paper looseleafs and A4 Loose Leaf Binders or Clearfile, as students can reorganize their notes by country or theme when reviewing for in-class tests and the AP Exam.

## How you'll be graded...

Minor 30%: Homework, Quizzes, Data analysis, Debates/Discussions, etc.  
Major 70%: DBQ, Unit Tests, Papers, Projects, etc.

Each assignment will be clearly identified as minor or major grade.

## Late Work Penalty

- 1 day - 10% of grade earned
- 2 days - 20% of grade earned
- 3 days - 30% of grade earned
- 4+ days - may not be accepted for credit

If there are situations that prevent students from submitting things on time (sickness, family issues, etc.), it is the student's responsibility to contact the teacher.

I will be entering 0 into the gradebook to allow students to recognize which items are missing. Once submitted, your work will be evaluated with the late work penalty and you will be receiving a new grade.

## Class Expectations

Our class rules are simple and can be summarized in one word: **Respect**. In order that we can all enjoy and grow in our understanding together, we will try to communicate and collaborate with the qualities of the Fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control). I expect students not only to respect their teachers but also to respect their classmates, student body, OCSI community and the local community.

**Communication is also key in this classroom.** Without active communication, it will be hard for me to figure out whether I am going too fast or too slow with class content. As this is an AP class, I expect students to actively communicate and provide feedback so we can all thrive and grow not only in this subject but also as individuals.

## Chromebook Usage Policy

Students are expected to bring their chromebooks to class. Students should not use their chromebooks unless the teacher asks them to do so. Usage other than class content and approved times can result in warnings and/or tardies.

## Arriving to Class

Students should be in their seats ready to go when the second bell rings. If students fail to be in the classroom prior to the second bell, they will be marked as tardy. Forty minute classes are shorter than usual class lengths, please respect your peers and teachers by being ready for class!

## Cellphone, Food and Drinks

Students are not allowed to use their phones during class. If students desire to use their phones for group projects (e.g. filming), students must discuss with the teacher. Students are not allowed to consume food or non-water beverages in class.

## **Plagiarism**

As written on the OCSI Handbook, academic integrity is crucial for your growth. Plagiarism is not only an offense to the original author but also a harm to your education. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, directly quoting without acknowledging the source (e.g., textbooks, primary and secondary sources, etc.), presenting a non-original idea as your own, copying each other's written assignments, etc. Students must acknowledge sources by using MLA Citation Format.

Students who are caught of any form of plagiarism will automatically receive a 0 on an assignment even if students unintentionally plagiarized, e.g. forgot to include in-text citations.

Students who admit to plagiarism can resubmit assignments with the following conditions:

1. Revised submission with proper citation
2. Submit a page long explanation why plagiarism is harmful or have a conversation with the teacher about plagiarism

Resubmitted work will be graded with a 25% grade deduction.

Plagiarism is a serious offense in college and the business world and can get you expelled, fired or legally charged. Even if you plagiarize by mistake, colleges or companies have the right to proceed with legal consequences. Practicing proper citation is a way to protect ourselves from troubles with life impacting consequences. Please make the habit to properly cite your work!

## **Communication out of class**

Students and parents can reach me via Jupiter message or email. I would prefer using Jupiter. I will respond to messages in a timely manner. I cannot guarantee an immediate response to messages after 9 PM and Friday night to Sunday night. If urgent, please contact me throughout the week as much as possible.

## **In the case of online schooling...**

In order to secure a smooth course experience, the teacher will be posting all materials on Google Classroom (other than quizzes/tests). Student work should be submitted in a timely manner. Students who decide to conduct online school will still be required to join classes via video call during normal classroom hours. In the case we go online, students should expect to join classes via Google Meets or Zoom (I will notify the students if this becomes a necessity).

When meeting via Google Meets or Zoom, I expect students to join with their cameras on. Students who fail to meet this expectation may see a lower grade for their participation grade. If there are concerns with privacy, please contact me at the beginning of the year.

## **By the end of this course, you will BE ABLE TO...**

- Apply political concepts and processes in authentic contexts
- Compare political concepts and processes among the course countries
- Analyze and interpret quantitative data represented in tables, charts, graphs, maps and infographics
- Read, analyze and interpret text-based sources
- Develop an argument that is supported by a defensible thesis, relevant evidence, coherent explanation, and refutation to alternative perspectives

## **Semester Layout: Topics and Activities**

The following information is a brief summary of the topics that will be covered in each unit throughout the semester and few activities students can expect when discussing these topics. Students will read their textbooks and additional resources assigned by the teacher in order to further understand the following five units and 6 AP countries. The course will not be taught in the recommended order; in order for students to review content, the instructor left the original unit number. At the end of each unit or key concepts, Personal Progress Checks will be provided in class or as homework assignments in AP Classroom.

### **Unit 1: Political Systems, Regimes, and Governments**

Big Ideas: PAU, LEG, DEM, MPA

Topics include...

- The Practice of Political Scientists
- Defining Political Organizations
- Democracy v. Authoritarianism
- Democratization
- Sources of Power and Authority
- Changes in Power and Authority
- Federal and Unitary Systems
- Political Legitimacy
- Sustaining Legitimacy
- Political Stability

#### **Activities**

1. Students will research Fragile States Index—Comparative Analysis and select two of the six AP countries. For the two countries, students will compare them in five categories: Cohesion Indicators, Economic Indicators, Political Indicators, Social Indicators, and Cross-Cutting Indicators. Students will need to define the indicators and then report the data they see in a table.

Students will then write a 2–3 page paper answering these questions:

- Which country appears to be more stable or “less fragile?” Cite three pieces of quantitative data to justify your view.
- Choose one indicator for one country. What changes over time do you see?
- Considering above, what is one possible policy implication based on what you observed?
- Choose another indicator for the other country. What patterns do you see? What are two possible explanations for the pattern(s) you see?
- What question do you have that the data doesn’t seem to answer? Pose the question and discuss the limitation of the data in answering your question.

(Disciplinary Practice 3, Big Ideas: PAU, MPA)

2. Students will consult data from the UN Human Development Report and Freedom House as well as the supporting narrative from Freedom House’s Freedom in the World Report for each of the six course countries. After assessing sources, students will:
  - Compose a chart that shows comparative data on selected economic, social, and political data for each country
  - Note, from Freedom House, whether each country can be classified as “Free,” “Partly Free,” or “Unfree”
  - Choosing two countries that are classified as “Partly Free” or “Unfree,” write a two page paper comparing political, social, and economic challenges in each
  - Debate/discuss, in class, prospects for democracy in these countries

(Disciplinary Practice 2, Big Ideas: DEM, PAU)

## Unit 4: Party and Electoral Systems and Citizen Organizations

Big Ideas: LEG, DEM

Topics include...

- Electoral Systems and Rules
- Objectives of Election Rules
- Political Party Systems
- Role of Political Party Systems
- Impact of Social Movements and Interest Groups
- Pluralist and Corporatist Interests

### Activities

1. Students will list major electoral reforms since 1980 in Russia, Mexico, Nigeria, and Iran. They will then write an argument essay as to which country has had the greatest advance in democracy since 1980. Class will be split into groups based on country they selected and debate their assertions.

(Disciplinary Practices 2 and 5, Big Ideas: LEG, DEM)

2. Election Debate: Among the AP course countries, Mexico and the UK have the most developed multi-party systems. Students will be broken into two groups—one for Mexico and one for the UK—and they will be further subdivided to advocate for a particular party (for Mexico, parties are PRI, PRD, PAN; for UK, parties are Conservatives, Labour, Liberal-Democrats, UKIP, and SNP). In small groups, students will conduct research on their parties. We will then organize a mock election debate on each party, with debaters making arguments advocating for their party and then responding to questions from each other and from the audience. If your country is not the topic of the debate, you will be in the audience and be able to “vote” for the winner, explaining your choice in a one page response.

(Disciplinary Practice 5, Big Idea: DEM)

## Unit 2: Political Institutions

Big Ideas: PAU, LEG, DEM

Topics include...

- Defining and Comparing Parliamentary, Presidential, and Semi-Presidential Systems
- Executive Systems, Executive Term Limits, Removal of Executive
- Legislative and Judicial Systems
- Independent Legislatures and Judiciaries

### Activities

1. After discussion of a parliamentary system as seen in the United Kingdom and a presidential system as seen in Mexico and Russia, students will write a two page argument essay assessing the pros and cons of each form of government and develop an argument as to which one better contributes to stability and governance.

(Disciplinary Practice 5, Big Ideas: LEG, DEM)

2. Students will make a T-chart examining the pros and cons of executive term limits. Students are to include examples and exclusions from all six AP countries. After the chart is completed, students are to write an essay that makes a defensible claim or thesis and establishes a line of reasoning on this question: “Do executive term limits help a country establish a stronger rule of law?” Their claim or thesis should be based on the stronger evidence from their T-chart.

(Disciplinary Practice 5, Big Idea: PAU)

3. Separation of Powers & Checks and Balances: As the study of each country's political institutions concludes, students will make a diagram of each institution and the relationship that it has with others, noting what powers and checks each has. After the diagram for each country is complete, students will analyze the relationships among institutions and rank them according to how much power each can exercise. The class will debate to a consensus as to why that institution is the most powerful in the country of study.

(Disciplinary Practice 1, Big Idea: PAU)

## Unit 5: Political and Economic Changes and Developments

Big Ideas: LEG, IEF, MPA

Topics include...

- Impact of Global Economic and Technological Forces
- Political Responses to Global Market Forces
- Challenges from Globalization
- Policies and Economic Liberalization
- International and Supranational Organizations
- Adaptation of Social Policies
- Impact of Industrialization and Economic Development
- Causes and Effects of Demographic Change
- Impact of Natural Resources

### Activities

1. Brexit Exercise: Students will read the following articles discussing motives for BREXIT and write a three page essay in which they 1) analyze each source in terms of perspective and bias, and—by comparing sources—see what each source may fail to consider in making its points, and 2) outline the main points on each side of the Brexit debate. Students should be prepared to argue, in class, the merits or weaknesses of each side.
  - “Eight Reasons Leave Won the UK’s Referendum on the EU,” BBC News, June 24, 2016.
  - “A Background Guide to ‘Brexit’ from the European Union,” The Economist, February 24, 2016.
  - Paul Mokuolu, “I Voted to Leave the EU. That Doesn’t Make Me an Idiot or a Xenophobe,” The Guardian, June 30, 2016.
  - David Frum, “Its Five Minutes to Midnight in the UK: A Short History of Brexit,” The Atlantic, March 2019.

(Disciplinary Practice 4, Big Ideas: LEG, IEF)

2. Students will examine the economies of China, Nigeria, Iran, and Mexico in respect to:
  - GDP growth rate and GDP by sector of the economy (industry, agriculture, services) (IMF DataMapper International Monetary Fund)
  - Economic equality (World Bank)
  - Unemployment rate (World Bank) Inflation rate (OECD Data)
  - Urbanization, electricity access, educational achievement (World Bank and CIA World Factbook)

Students will report data over a span of a minimum of 15 years, ending with the most recent year available.

Students will then posit what variables may most influence the divergence in data they see. Variables may include:

- Historical factors
- Geographic influences
- Liberalization policies

- Presence of multinational companies within the country
- Trade agreements ratified or cancelled

Based on the above, students will write a two page white paper making three recommendations for any of the countries above. Recommendations must include data points gleaned over time.

(Disciplinary Practice 3, Big Ideas: IEF, MPA)

3. Students will watch the YouTube video “Inside Nigeria’s Kidnap Crisis” (BBC).

In a two page essay, students will then analyze this problem by applying core concepts we have learned with respect to regimes, legitimacy, power, democratization, and political behavior.

Students will also participate in a discussion and respond to the following statement: “The kidnap crisis discussed in the video would be solved by the presence of a peacekeeping force, such as the United Nations.”

(Disciplinary Practice 1; Big Ideas: LEG, IEF)

### **Unit 3: Political Culture and Participation**

Big Ideas: LEG, IEF, DEM, MPA

Topics include...

- Civil Society
- Political Culture
- Political Ideologies, Values and Beliefs
- Nature and Role of Political Participation
- Forces that Impact Political Participation
- Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
- Political and Social Cleavages
- Challenges from Political and Social Cleavages

#### Activities

1. Students will examine social movements in a selected AP course country. For example, students can trace the evolving social movement in Iran from the student movement in 1999 to the Green Movement in 2009 to the decentralized protests of 2018-19. In a two page essay, students will then discuss this claim: “Examining social movements in my country, it is clear that the country has been responsive to popular mass social movements.” The essay should both describe what the government has done and assess why it has/has not responded to the social movement.

(Disciplinary Practice 1, Big Ideas: LEG, IEF)

2. Voter Turnout Comparison

Students will research voter turnout in each of the AP course countries for national elections since 1990. A useful source is the IDEA online database. Students will make a spreadsheet with the data. Students will then write a two page essay suggesting why some countries may have higher turnout than others. We will discuss these in class, as well as discussing the importance of voter turnout for the stability and legitimacy of democracy.

(Disciplinary Practice 2, Big Ideas: MPA, DEM)

As mentioned on page 3, students are expected to complete Personal Progress Check Multiple Choice Questions and Free Response Questions at the end of the Unit. These questions will be a great way to confirm that you understand the concepts discussed in class. The questions will also help you prepare for the AP Comparative Government and Politics Exam.

### **What are my goals for you...**

- 1.12f Perform analyses of quantitative historical data
- 1.12.g Evaluate historians' interpretations of the past using a variety of sources.
- 2.12b Analyze how cooperation and conflict influence political, economic, and social conditions
- 3.12e Evaluate the relationship between human societies and the environment
- 3.12g Assess the impact of cultural diffusion (globalization) on societies in different parts of the world
- 4.12.k Examine the epistemological complexities of the postmodern age.
- 6.12.a Explain the roots and historical development of contemporary political systems
- 6.12.b Evaluate strengths and weaknesses of various kinds of political philosophies and ideologies
- 6.12.f Analyze how and why political institutions distribute benefits and burdens.
- 6.12.g Describe major responsibilities of political institutions for domestic/foreign policy.
- 6.12.h Examine the wide range of influences on policy makers.
- 6.12.i Evaluate various means of achieving specific political objectives.
- 6.12.j Discuss the significance of shared political and civic beliefs and values, and of economic prosperity, to the preservation of political organization.
- 6.12.k Examine the role of voluntary, community and non- governmental groups in society and their relationship to the functions of political organizations.
- 6.12.l Evaluate functions and responsibilities of, and challenges to, leadership.
- 6.12.m Compare and contrast the role of citizens in various forms of governance.
- 6.12.n Evaluate various ways different societies provide the judiciary function.

In addition to the above goals, it is my desire that you learn the importance of studying other countries and their political systems and understand the importance and responsibility of living as a citizen in a democratic country. It is also my desire that all of us can discuss and learn what it means to honor and love God and to love our neighbors in the realm of politics; (Matthew 22.37, 39, etc.); to pray for our leaders (Timothy 2.1-2, etc.); and to act responsibly in our communities (Philippians 2.1-11, etc.).

I look forward to all the discussion we'll have throughout the semester, I'm really excited to learn about political concepts and these 6 AP countries with all of you!

### **Non-AP Students...**

Due to class schedule, this course is a mixture of AP Comparative Government students and US Government students. Unfortunately, we will not be reviewing the US Government in detail. Non-AP students will have less reading/writing and different quiz/test formats. Therefore, please do not be overwhelmed with the workload AP students will be receiving! You are not responsible for the same amount of work. Assignments that are tailored to non-AP students will still be posted on the AP Comparative Government and Politics Google Classroom. Such assignments will clearly be labelled as non-AP either on the assignment title or the upper right hand corner of assignments.

### **About the Teacher...**

My name is Daniel Claxton. I have a B.A. in History and International Relations from Wheaton College, Illinois, a M.P.P. from GraSPP, The University of Tokyo and M.I.S. from GSIS, Seoul National University. This is my second year at OCSI. I am extremely excited that we get to learn about politics and global affairs together and discuss the importance of politics, economics and leadership. I look forward to meeting all of you and learning together.



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My child and I have read the syllabus and fully understand **Mr. Claxton's:**

- Class Expectations
- Grading Policies
- Late Work Penalty
- Classroom Culture of Respect and Communication
- Consequences of Plagiarism
- Necessity of joining video meetings with their cameras on (in case of online school)

Student's Name (Print) \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's Name (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Signature & Date \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's Signature & Date \_\_\_\_\_