

AP Government and Politics Summer Reading 2021 – 2022

Study Guide

Book: *The Fifth Risk* by Michael Lewis (ISBN 9780393357455)

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU READ THIS STUDY GUIDE BEFORE ATTEMPTING THE ASSIGNMENT.

Introduction

Welcome to a course called Advanced Placement Government and Politics. The course will either be US Government and politics or two courses (APUS and AP Comparative merged into one). AP US Government and Politics is designed to provide an in-depth look at government and politics in the United States. AP Comparative Government and Politics is designed to introduce you to the discipline of political science and is concerned with comparing the governments and politics of various countries in the world. The countries we will compare will be The United States, The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, The Russian Federation, The People's Republic of China, The United States of Mexico, The Islamic Republic of Iran, and The Republic of Nigeria. The class will decide whether we do both or just AP US Government and Politics in the Fall. Both courses deal with both government and politics. Government is the structures and institutions through which a country makes decisions. Politics is the process through which attitudes about governments and citizenship are formed and the processes through which these attitudes are communicated to and transformed by the government. Both concepts involve the exercise of power (the ability to make another do something he/she ordinarily would not do) in a society. Politics is about whom should exercise power and what forms of power may be exercised over whom. Government is about the mechanisms that amass and administer this power. The two are obviously interrelated. It is the interrelation that is most fascinating, and it is because of this that we will be merging US Government and Comparative Government into one course that focuses on these interrelations.

Before we get to your assignment, I present, free of charge, a few critical preliminary lessons in politics and government.

Lesson One: Power and Politics

Except for the names of the countries to be studied and a few references to political theories, this entire summer reading guide was made up by me. You will not find the exact definitions and descriptions that I use in any book. The definitions and descriptions are not misleading, they are not untrue, but are useful and helpful in understanding this course. In defining these terms, I am exercising my power. One of the most important forms of power in any society is controlling information: knowledge is power, and ignorance is the absence of power. A critical aspect of controlling information or knowledge is the ability to define important terms. I trust that most of you will consider this a legitimate exercise of my power, as one of the functions assigned to the institution of "teacher" is to help students understand the subject being presented. By this time in your life, you have been socialized to expect certain things from a teacher. As long as I conform to these, you grant me legitimacy, which is the right to exercise

power and make rules. The concepts of socialization, legitimacy, power, and the interactions among these concepts are of great importance in political science. To return to the terms as they are used in the above paragraph, the institutions known as “school” and “teacher” are government. The definition of the above terms and your acceptance of these (or rejection) because of your acceptance of my legitimacy is politics. Because you would not ordinarily be considering the definitions of those terms, I have exercised power. So ends our first lesson in government and politics – the fundamental importance of power and the role that controlling information/knowledge plays in it.

Lesson Two: Politics is Everywhere

Our second lesson in government and politics will begin our discussion of the summer reading. I have assigned you to and read a book and complete some written assignments based upon it. These will be due the first full day of class for the 2017-2018 school year. The assignments should be types, printed out, and turned in the first full day of school in August 2016. You should also save a copy on your computer. In making these assignments, I have exercised power. (I am, of course, assuming that you wouldn't read the book and do these assignments over the summer outside of my assigning them to you.) If you read the book and complete the assignments, you are accepting my exercise of power as being legitimate either because you (1) feel that I believe that the assignments will help you do well in the course, or more problematically, (2) you fear that I will give you a “bad” grade, or some other “punishment,” if you do not do as I request. If you complete the assignments because of reason (1) above, then you accept my power as being exercised legitimately (because of my position in an institution—the school—or because of my personal reputation—good, caring teacher). In other words, you accept my authority to give you these assignments. If you complete the assignments only because of reason (2) above, you may be doing so only out of fear of unpleasant consequences (bad grade, mandatory tutorial sessions, water boarding, TAD, etc.) In these cases, you are perhaps not accepting my authority, or perhaps that of the school, and may be questioning the legitimacy of my power (or that of the school), but are only completing the assignments out of fear of these consequences. In that case I am exercising power not through the legitimate use of authority but through the more questionable use of force (the ability to inflict unpleasant consequences.) You may react this way because I may be abusing my position (acting illegitimately) or because you feel alienated (feeling of not belonging) from the social and institutional setting (Stratford, AP Government class) in which my authority is considered legitimate. You also may just decide not to complete the assignment. This could be because of alienation, rebellion (actively rejecting my and/or the school's authority), or apathy (not caring about yourself, the class, the teacher, the school, or any combination of these). All of these are political issues, political actions, and it is important to understand their causes and consequences. Why do we accept certain exercises of power as legitimate and reject others? Why do we accept authority? Are alienation and apathy the fault of society and institutions or of the individuals with those feelings? Is power being legitimately exercised if it must rely on force to gain compliance? It is my hope that the summer reading book and assignments will help us to begin to answer some of these questions.

Lesson Three: Why the State?

So far, we have discussed power in terms of a school setting. Parents and students (sometimes) grant schools the legitimacy to exercise authority over them because of perceived benefits that the school can deliver (solid education, entrance into a good college, social status, winning sports teams, etc.). Now it is time to move to the level of the state and ask why do individuals (subjects or citizens) cede authority to the state? What makes a state a legitimate possessor of authority? How much power should a state have?

We should begin by defining what we mean by the state (as opposed to a state such as Georgia, Alabama, etc.). The state is a set of political institutions and traditions that generate, carry out, and enforce policies over a definite group of people and within a delimited territory. The state claims to be sovereign (possessing supreme or paramount power) and to monopolize the legitimate use of force over the people it rules and the territory it governs. By this definition, the United States, the People's Republic of China, the United Kingdom, and Mexico are all states. The Palestinian Authority, the United Nations, the Zapatista Liberation Front, and Kurdistan are not states because they either lack sovereignty over a definite people and/or territory, and/or they do not monopolize the legitimate use of force over these people and in this territory.

Why the state exists and why individuals cede to it sovereignty is, next to the nature of power, the fundamental issue of political science.

The most comprehensive and accepted explanation for the state is found in a 1651 book called *Leviathan* by an Englishman named Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes was appalled by the excesses of the English Civil War and wrote his book to justify obedience to the monarch. Hobbes asked the reader to imagine a state of nature, where there is no organized society and each man lived equal to each other (after all each individual is created equal to another). He describes this state of nature in some of the most famous words written in modern literature:

...it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man. For war consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting, but in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of time is to be considered in the nature of war, as it is in the nature of weather. For as the nature of foul weather lieth not in a shower or two of rain, but in an inclination thereto of many days together: so the nature of war consisteth not in actual fighting, but in the known disposition thereto during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is peace.

Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man, the same consequent to the time wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death;

and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1651, Chapter XIII)

It is to provide for the security to accomplish the things Hobbes listed (and to provide for a life that is not “brutish and short”) that states are created. The state is made the sovereign (a “common power to keep them all in awe”) to end the state of war within the boundaries ruled by the sovereign state. Hobbes explains how the state acquires this sovereign power:

The attaining to this sovereign power is by two ways. One, by natural force: as when a man maketh his children to submit themselves, and their children, to his government, as being able to destroy them if they refuse; or by war subdueth his enemies to his will, giving them their lives on that condition. The other, is when men agree amongst themselves to submit to some man, or assembly of men, voluntarily, on confidence to be protected by him against all others. This latter may be called a political Commonwealth, or Commonwealth by Institution; and the former, a Commonwealth by acquisition. (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1651, Chapter XVII)

We will limit our discussion to the “political Commonwealth” that Hobbes mentions, because in post-colonial times, all states claim to be political commonwealths, that is ruling by the consent of the ruled. Regardless of the type, Hobbes argues that the state becomes organic (like a living being) and that the activities of all subjects and citizens must help sustain the state. Only the absolute sovereignty of a powerful state can prevent the insecurity that defines the state of nature. In carrying out its duties to provide security, the acts of the state are fiat—that is commands—which Hobbes says are equivalent to the creative power of God—or, in other words, absolute and accountable to no one.

For by art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMONWEALTH, or STATE (in Latin, CIVITAS), which is but an artificial man, though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended; and in which the sovereignty is an artificial soul, as giving life and motion to the whole body; the magistrates and other officers of judicature and execution, artificial joints; reward and punishment (by which fastened to the seat of the sovereignty, every joint and member is moved to perform his duty) are the nerves, that do the same in the body natural; the wealth and riches of all the particular members are the strength; *salus populi* (the people's safety) its business; counsellors, by whom all things needful for it to know are suggested unto it, are the memory; equity and laws, an artificial reason and will; concord, health; sedition, sickness; and civil war, death. Lastly, the pacts and covenants, by which the parts of this body politic were at first made, set together, and united, resemble that fiat, or the Let us make man, pronounced by God in the Creation. (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1651, Introduction)

Writing later in the 17th century, John Locke, agreeing with Hobbes on the contractual nature of government, argued for more limitations on and accountability for the state. But Locke allowed that when the security of the state was threatened, the executive had prerogative powers to exercise extraordinary un-checked powers during a limited “state of emergency.” Although Locke defined the needs of state security more narrowly than Hobbes, he agreed that maintaining security was the unquestionable goal of the state and the area in which it could exercise the most extreme powers.

Both Locke and Hobbes agreed that the state was sovereign; there is therefore no power superior to the state or to whom the state must answer. (In the United States, we developed the concept of popular sovereignty—that is the state must ultimately answer to the people. But even so, the Lockean concept of prerogative powers has been held by the Supreme Court to be a fundamental principle in American law. President George W. Bush claimed that the president can take any actions he deems necessary to protect the security of the United States; Presidents Obama and Trump have not fundamentally disagreed. This means that outside of the state, the state of nature still reigns. Any form of international action is dependent upon state agreement for its enforcement. Therefore, there is no such thing as universal law and rights. Referencing Hobbes, either a state agrees to international principles because they enhance the states security and power or it is forced to by conquest (ask Saddam—oh wait, you can't--exactly).

States are created to guarantee security and/or the rights of those subject to them. As this is their prime directive, they may take whatever actions are necessary to carry this out. This, said German political philosopher Carl Schmitt, is the true nature of state sovereignty. According to Schmitt, talk of contracts and limits on state power was nice, but states exist to provide security and, referencing Hobbes, without a state, there can be no security. Thus, a state can do whatever it takes to ensure its survival. This makes the state unique. All other institutions and individuals have legal limits on what actions they may take. The state, however, is sovereign because “it is he who decides on the exception,” (Schmitt, *Political Theology*) or in other words, the state can exempt itself from all rules and norms. Locke and even Hobbes admitted to this “state of exception,” as we have seen, but believed it to be exceptional and rare. Schmitt asked what if it became the norm? What if the state saw multiple threats to its survival at all time? What if a state, to maximize power (the ultimate goal in politics), were to “manufacture” threats? If the state of exception becomes the norm, then what limits are there on state power? As Hannah Arendt notes, in Nazi Germany this meant killing millions to preserve the security of the state. But least we think this is simply historical curiosity, the U.S. President has the unchecked power to destroy all life if he thinks it necessary to preserve the state (as he can launch around 1500 nuclear warheads.).

Lesson Four: The Individual and the State.

The most effective way to maintain security would be to strip everyone naked and force them to maintain set, patterned routines. Because of modesty, in place of nakedness, a rather spare uniform will do. This is what happens in prisons, of course (and in some schools). If no one can conceal anything and each person must be in a specified place at a specified time, it is relatively easy for the state to maintain security. In fact, as social philosophers from Jeremy Bentham to Michel Foucault have demonstrated, it is all too easy. Once people become socialized to the idea of having no privacy, once they come to accept the state as panopticon (all seeing), they no longer must be watched. They will cease to question or resist the system and simply accept it as “normal.”

Most individuals do not wish (or at least think that they do not wish) to be stripped and disciplined as though they were prisoners. To defend the individual against the state, modern democracies have created a distinction between public and private lives. Everyone (whether subject or citizen) is entitled to a private life exempt from state control (and usually protected by a bill of rights) and also lives a public life which is subject to the state. The boundaries of what is public and private are subject to dispute and change over time. (For example, for a long time

neither women nor children were thought to have a public life. They were in the home, which was considered private. They were not subject to state control—hence the tradition that juveniles were not put in jail—but also were outside of the state’s protection. This allowed the father-husband complete control. Today, women and to a great extent, children, are thought to have a public life and are therefore subject to state control and protection. Keep in mind, whenever the state protects, it expands its power to control. Think of the abortion debate. One side argues that a woman’s body and hence the fetus enclosed is private and beyond state control and protection. The other side argues that the woman’s body and the fetus enclosed is public and subject to state control and protection.)

Because involvement in public life and the resulting state control usually causes an individual to confront situations that are in opposition to his or her personal ethic and often force an individual to act in ways that are not consistent to his or her sense of self, there is a moral or psychological cost to such involvement. Most individuals handle this psychological crisis by “doubling,” that is creating a public and a private self. The psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton defines doubling as “the division of the self into two functioning wholes, so that a part-self act as an entire self.” (Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors*, 418) Each self is fully contained and is essential to function within its respective environment. Unlike the psychological condition known as multiple personalities, in doubling each personality is aware of the other and compatible with it. Although the private self holds certain values as absolute (deontological) the public self generally has to compromise for the good of the majority (utilitarian pragmatism). The most obvious example of such doubling is the kind, loving father who goes off to war and becomes a soldier capable of killing on orders. If a sense of balance is maintained between the two personas, the individual can function and maintain a status of psychological health.

There are two other possibilities, however. One is the individual who is so devoted to his or her private ethic that he or she refuses to create a public self. This persona, which I call an anarchic singularity, might be a religious devotee or a fanatic. They might join a militia movement and move out in the middle of the woods. They might just become apathetic. However, it manifests itself, the individual is alienated from political life. The results could be benign or dangerous for others. The second, is the individual whose public self absorbs the private self or as Lifton says, “this second self can become the usurper from within and replace the original self until it ‘speaks’ for the entire person.” (Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors*, 420). This individual, who lacks a true private self, I call a “totalitarian singularity. How a state operates and administers power will go a long way to determining what personality types exist in a country.

Lesson Five: What about the Sovereign Individual?

“Here, sir, the people rule:” is a famous response to the question of who rules in America. But what does this mean? If taken literally, it means that some entity, the people, producing what the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau called the “general will” will rule. Absent a “people” composed of identical clones or all being totalitarian singularities, this seems impossible to realize. People disagree and have private selves that they wish to preserve. There is no unified entity, no stable subject, that we can call the “people.” So let us more accurately say that the majority rules. This seems more plausible as in the United States most elections are won by a candidate gaining over 50% of the vote. But this also presents some problems. For one, seldom does more than 50% of the eligible voters show up to vote. This means that a candidate who received 50% of the vote cast, will have the support of closer to 25% of the

people. But the number is smaller than that, as many are ineligible to vote due to age, citizenship status, or the fact that they didn't register. Another problem with saying the majority rules is that it is not that unusual to find more than two candidates in a race. In this case, the victorious candidate might well end up with far less than 50% of the vote cast. In terms elections, it is simply not accurate to say that the majority rules in the United States.

But you might say, the majority could vote, and the fact that they don't shows that they have no problems with current leaders or policy. Thus, the majority rules, but through passive acceptance rather than through the actual vote. This is more plausible, as certainly public sentiment is a powerful force in the United States, but still leads us to a problem. If public sentiment is the true source of power, then it is possible for this sentiment to drown out all opposition. How does one oppose public sentiment outside of alienating or ostracizing oneself from the public? One simply cannot cast a vote in private in such a case. This is the problem that both James Madison and Alexis de Tocqueville saw and called the "tyranny of democracy." Both men feared that in a democracy there was nothing to check public sentiment's powerful psychological pull towards conformity, and that to oppose it meant social death, that is to be ostracized, a fate they considered worse than death.

This brings us to the final argument we will make about power and that is that, no matter what the system of government, ultimate sovereignty always rests in individuals. Hobbes was wrong; a state can do nothing without the consent of individuals. If power is that ability to make one do something he or she would not otherwise do, the individual always has the power to simply say "no" to the state. True, the state may kill the individual, but as long as the individual withholds consent, the state does not force him or her to act against his or her will, that is the state has no power. Indeed, in resorting to violence, the state conceded that it has no power. Hannah Arendt, in her book on Nazi Germany, *The Banality of Evil*, notes, "violence is 'utterly incapable' of creating power---that it 'does not promote causes, neither history nor revolution, neither progress nor reaction.'" Violence is the tool of powerless individuals and powerless states. States have power when individuals feel compelled to obey. Hobbes describes the state as "a common power to keep them (individuals) in awe." When the individual refuses to be in awe of the state, the state ceases to have power over the individual. This individual sovereignty is called "agency" by philosophers. The most powerful political force in the world is the human capacity to say "no." In saying "no" to the state, the individual asserts his or her ultimate sovereignty over the state.

Assignment--The Fifth Risk

"Michael Lewis is the poet laureate of computer-driven data analysis."

Joe Klein, New York Times

I love data analysis and especially risk-assessment. Michael Lewis writes the best books on these topics. Three, *The Big Short*, *Moneyball*, and *Liar's Poker*, have been made into Oscar-nominated motion pictures (another, *The Blind Side*, was also Oscar nominated, but has little to do with these topics.) *The Fifth Risk*, his latest book, deals with the federal government's bureaucracy. It may not sound like the most exciting subject ("bureaucratic" is basically an adjectival synonym for tedium) but Lewis does an excellent job of explaining why the government bureaucracy is critical—maybe the most important part of the government. He

also makes the areas of the bureaucracy that he investigates compelling. Read the book and answer the following.

1. Lewis interviews John MacWilliams a risk-assessor for the Department of Energy. MacWilliams says there are five risks that keep him up at night. What are the first four?
2. What is MacWilliams' fifth risk and why is it so critical?
3. Describe the critical function that Lewis explores in each of the following government agencies AND explain what the fifth risk issue is with each of them.
 - a. Department of Energy
 - b. Department of Agriculture
 - c. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/Weather Bureau
4. Using the analysis of power above, explain how power is exercised by the Presidential Administration and by the bureaucratic agencies in the book. Provide a couple of examples of each.
5. Compose a brief essay assessing the validity of the following prompt:

The fifth risk is the most important factor in determining the probability and consequences of the other four risks.

In your essay you must

- Articulate a defensible claim or thesis that responds to the prompt and establishes a line of reasoning.
- Support your claim or thesis with at least TWO pieces of accurate and relevant evidence.
- Use reasoning to explain why your evidence supports your claim or thesis.