

AP Comparative Politics
Summer Reading Assignment

Welcome. By enrolling in this class, you have decided that you want to become a more informed American citizen and you have shown a willingness to understand the multitude of threats facing the human race. This class will strengthen your ability to help solve the world's most fundamental problems by comparing the way a myriad of nation-states accomplish the daily grind of governing. You are a future leader, and to be effective in this leadership you must develop political skills and a depth of political expertise that will allow you to achieve a global perspective and an understanding of power. Taking AP Comparative Politics is an important first step in your growth as a citizen of the future.

Required Summer Reading:

Fareed Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007.

It is also highly recommended that you buy and start reading the *AP Comparative Government and Politics Essential Coursebook and Study Guide* by Ethel Woods. This can be found on Amazon. Make sure you buy the most recent edition.

Assignment: Part One

First, begin reading Zakaria's book while carefully considering the questions on the next page. Even though this book was written in 2007 and is admittedly problematic in many respects, it contains vitally important arguments and ideas that we will keep returning to throughout the school year.

While reading the book you will take notes using a **dialectical journal**. This is a double-entry note-taking process that will help you read actively while seeking to answer the questions below and build vital vocabulary. Not only does this journaling process develop critical reading, but also it forces you to identify and address new and unfamiliar concepts.

To begin, take a standard notebook and draw a vertical line down the middle of each page. In the left-hand column, record important quotes, political science vocabulary words you do not know, new terms that you do not understand, and important ideas. In the right-hand column, "comment" on the important text that has been identified. In other words, use the space to highlight a question you may have or attempt to assess the significance of Zakaria's arguments by analyzing your selected quote. By keeping a dialectical journal, you more easily make interpretations of the text, read critically, and analyze for deeper meaning.

I have attached a sample page from a dialectical journal used for an English class at the end of this assignment sheet. All entries in the left-hand column of the journal **MUST** include *page numbers*. When you finish, you will have a summary of the material you have read, **and this will be very helpful for the test you will have to take on this book during the first week of class**. You should have at least *one page of notes per chapter*. Thus, you will have at least *eight total pages of notes*, but keep in mind that the introduction and conclusion are very important, so these might require more attention. **HOWEVER**, you should **NOT** have more than *twelve-to-sixteen total pages of notes*. Limiting your notes will help you consolidate your learning: read the chapter, think about its broad themes, and then pick the *most important* quotes and ideas that Zakaria uses to try to prove his argument. **Use the dialectical journal to think about the questions below.**

THIS DIALECTICAL JOURNAL IS DUE ON THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS.

Assignment: Part Two

While reading the book and making your dialectical journal, consider the questions below. These are the questions that we will use to start class discussions when you return to school, and you should be able to draw specific examples and quotes (using your dialectical journal) to answer these questions in class. Some of these questions will also be found on the first test that you will take in this class. Therefore, you should be reading Zakaria from the first page with these questions in mind.

1. What does Zakaria mean by “illiberal democracy”? Why does he think that the number of governments that can be characterized as illiberal democracies is increasing? Cite three specific examples that Zakaria uses to illustrate the phenomenon of illiberal democracy.
2. According to Zakaria, what is the relationship between economic growth and democratization? Refer to two contrasting examples from the text. Does democratization lead to economic growth or does economic growth lead to democratization? What kind of economic growth is best? Are you persuaded by Zakaria’s explanation? Why or why not?
3. How does Zakaria differentiate between “democracy” and “liberty”? Cite at least three specific examples that Zakaria uses in his book to illustrate the differences between these two terms.
4. Why did liberal democracies flourish in Europe and North America earlier than in other areas of the world? How did liberal democracy evolve in Europe and North America? Cite at least three specific turning points that Zakaria uses in this argument. Do you agree with Zakaria’s reasoning? Why or why not?
5. How does Zakaria account for the failure of liberal democracy to flourish in the Middle East? Why does he think that Islamic fundamentalism has become increasingly influential? What possible factors for the rise of Islamic fundamentalism are absent from his arguments?
6. To what extent is the United States becoming an illiberal democracy? What forces might be pushing the United States in an illiberal direction? Cite three specific challenges facing America that Zakaria discusses. Cite three specific challenges facing America that have developed over the last fourteen years that Zakaria does not discuss. Given the current political atmosphere in America, what are we to make of Zakaria’s argument in 2021?
7. What are the shortcomings of Zakaria’s book? What are the holes in his arguments? What questions are you still asking after you have read this book? What has happened since 2007 that supports Zakaria’s arguments or predictions? What has happened since 2007 that undermines Zakaria’s arguments or predictions?

Assignment: Part Three

Start following the news, especially anything having to do with these six countries: **United Kingdom, Russia, China, Mexico, Iran, and Nigeria.** Important news sources include: the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, the Washington Post, Fox News, The Economist, ForeignPolicy.com, BBC, Al-Jazeera, The Intercept, The Guardian, and Vox. Pay attention to the issues facing these countries. Also, you can watch Fareed Zakaria on Sunday mornings: his show is called GPS, which is on CNN. If you want to succeed in this course, you must be attuned to world news. **If possible, you should also watch competing American news sources. For example, if you regularly watch MSNBC, you should start watching Fox News, and vice versa. We need to objectively analyze American media during this chaotic and contentious time.**

GOOD LUCK, please feel free to email me (ilear-nickum@kingschoolct.org) over the summer with any questions, and congratulations on accepting the challenge of AP Comparative Politics.

Dialectical Journal – Example Note Page

Things Fall Apart Dialectical Journal Sample Entries

Quotes from the Text (concrete)	Commentary (abstract)
"fame rested on solid personal achievements . . . brought honor to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat." pg. 3	Okonkwo is physically strong and very popular because of it; shows cultural pride in strength/power
"He was tall and huge, and his bushy bushy eyebrows and wide nose gave him a very <u>severe</u> look . . . he seemed to walk on springs, as if he was going to pounce on somebody. And he did pounce on people quite often." pg. 4	physical traits; "severe" has a negative connotation - possibly a mean personality; he's obviously violent or hot-tempered to "pounce" on people
"He had had no patience with his father." pg. 4	I wonder what his father did.
"Unoka . . . was lazy and improvident and incapable of thinking about tomorrow." pg. 4	This doesn't sound like Okonkwo; foil (exact opposite) characters; could be motive for Okonkwo's intolerance for others