AP Comparative Government & Politics Summer Assignment 2026

Welcome to AP Comparative Government & Politics! We have an exciting year ahead as we explore the political regimes, structures, and systems of our six course countries: the UK, Russia, China, Iran, Mexico, and Nigeria. Along the way, we'll learn about the internal and external forces shaping each country's level of democratization or authoritarianism, assess the strengths and challenges of each country's civil society, and we will learn how history and political economy intersect with the important disciplines of political science and international relations and drive current global dynamics. By comparing and contrasting a variety of governments and the societies that shape them you will deepen your global perspectives, broaden your civic engagement and multi-cultural literacy and enhance your appreciation for the complexities of domestic politics and international affairs.

*We have designed this **required** summer assignment to provide you with the foundational themes and exposure to the course countries that will help you start the school year strong. These assignments are designed to be completed individually.* Group work, language provided by an outside tutor, or the use of any generative AI tool is not allowed. This assignment will be **graded** and also will provide the basis for a Harkness discussion and test during the first two weeks of school. Pace yourself accordingly and don't wait until the last minute to get started. **The assignments will take about 4 to 5.5 hours to complete. You will be able to submit the completed assignments for Part I and II in your section's course page in MyKing.** Contact Dr. Nealis with any questions: mnealis@kingschoolct.org.

Part I: **Qualitative Reading & Analysis:** Read and annotate these two articles: "History is Running Backwards: why reactionaries are taking over the world; and "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics: Do Realists Hold the Solution to Great Power Politics?." **(Approximate time to complete: 60-90 minutes)**
As you annotate focus on:

- How do the articles describe the trend in the post-Cold War liberal order, aka progress towards greater democratization, collective equality, and free trade?
- How are tensions between modernization and tradition fueling reactionism and realism?
- What role do ideas and ideologies play versus institutions and bureaucratic organization?
- Why has cooperative internationalism (countries working together toward a common good) struggled?

Part II: Quantitative Reading & Analysis: 2025 marked the twentieth consecutive year that global freedom has declined. To get a better understanding about why and to gain practice using a data-set that we will be using throughout the year, read and annotate Freedom House Report 2026, paying particular attention on the internal and external forces affecting this trend, what the trend has been in the United States, our 6 course countries (UK, Russia, China, Iran, Nigeria, and Mexico), and what the trend has been in "Partly Free" states. Additionally, Complete the Freedom House data scavenger Hunt and reflection here. **Approximate time to**

complete - reading the report: 30-45 minutes; completing the data and reflection tasks 60-90 minutes

Part III: Engaging in Current Affairs: Using at least two of the newspaper sources in Classlink/Newspapers (*New York Times, Washington Post,* or the *Wall Street Journal),* and at least one additional international news source such as *The Atlantic* (available in Classlink/Newspapers/Newsbank Access World News *search via A-Z Source List Tab) or *Foreign Affairs* (Classlink/EBSCO Academic Search Premier, Chatham House UK, or the Council on Foreign Relations) pick an international current affairs topic from any of the core course studies or any other non-US country. *The US can be involved directly or indirectly, but focus on the story from a non-US angle. Track the story over the course of the summer, and take notes to be able to verbally brief the class on the following: (**60 minutes total)**

1. What is the issue/topic you researched? (Who/What/Why/When/Where)
2. What were key developments?
3. What is the current trend: ongoing, intensifying, de-escalating, resolved?
4. What was the most interesting thing that you learned?
5. What is one question that you still have and want to know more about?