AP COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT SUMMER ASSIGNMENT

The 7 countries/areas you will be studying next term are:
The Established Democracies: United Kingdom and European Union
Current and Former Communist Regimes: Russia and China
Developing Countries: Mexico, Nigeria and Iran

Part I: In order to gain more familiarity with the issues/problems facing these countries/regions, you should find 2 current news stories (from newspapers including the New York Times, magazines including news magazines and the Economist, and news websites including CNN) for each of the 7 areas. The articles should contain enough information for you to analyze. For each article you should prepare a summary, clearly indicating what issue is being discussed. You should also research and briefly summarize the origin/history of the issue and analyze the importance/impact of the issue. Attached is the list of themes for the course—this may help you decide what type of issues/questions are important to begin focusing on.

Due date: September 8, 2010

Part II: Read the excerpts in the handout and through page 42 in the Ethel Wood’s Study Guide. You will be tested on the information during the week of Sept 13th (I will give you more information once I know the class schedule). Write out definitions—do not simply copy from the book—so that you understand the terms from pages 40-42. These will be collected after the last quiz on that chapter.
COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT CURRICULUM

Theme 1: Introduction to Comparative Politics (0-10%)

--What are interdependence and globalization, and what are examples of them?
--What is meant by political and economic permeability of national borders and what effects does that have on political decision making?
--Distinguish between state, nation, regime, and government
--What do power, legitimacy, authority and the bases of political power have to do with one another?
--Can you describe several types of political and economic systems and distinguish the ways these systems approach common situations?

Theme 2: Sovereignty, Authority and Power: power arrangements and justifications (15-25%)

--What is state power? What is sovereignty?
--What are the origins of the nation-state system? What effect do those origins have on nation states today?
--What contemporary pressures for supranational systems are recognized and how powerful are they?
--How are political structures created and maintained?
--How do these structures affect nation states?
--How do various political systems go about establishing legitimacy?
--What roles do governments play in economies? How are those roles integrated into the political system?
--Describe the political cultures and belief systems—religious or ideological—of the 7 countries. Explain the process and effectiveness of socialization and political integration in the political cultures.

Theme 3: Political Institutions: regimes, how they function, political culture and Leadership (30-40%)

--Describe the basic formal and informal structures and operations of authority and policy-making systems in the 7 countries.
--Can you identify, describe and evaluate the relationships between parts of governments (degree of separation or fusion of powers) and between governments and between governments and supranational organizations for the AP7?
--What are the roles and relationships of executive, legislative, judicial, bureaucratic, military, security (intelligence), and non-governmental institutions?
--Describe the systems for selection and recruitment of power elites.
--Describe how powerful interests within the state exercise their power.
--Understand the operation and effects of electoral and party systems.
Theme 4: Citizens, Society and the State: how people relate to the political system (10-20%)
--What are the politically relevant cleavages and what effects do they have on political systems theoretically and on the political systems you studied?
--What are the interrelationships between institutions, political practices and cleavages?
--Theoretically and in practice what is the relationship between civil society and power (especially domestic and international advocacy groups)?
--What are the forms and efficacy of political action (including transnational forms)?
--What are the political roles of media in the AP7?
--Describe the forms, efficacy, and representativeness of various forms of citizen participation in the AP7 and theoretically.

Theme 5: Political and Economic Change: what causes it, how it happens, and its Ramifications (10-20%)
--What types of political and economic change are common?
--What are the interactions between political and economic trends?
  --what promotes democratization?
    (preconditions, processes, and outcomes)
  --what are the political ramifications of economic changes?
  --what does corruption have to do with all this?
  --in what ways are economic inequalities relevant to politics?
--Describe the role of supranational organizations and reactions to them.
--What cultural changes accompany political and economic change?
--What economic policies have changed in the AP7 during the past two decades?
--What is the relationship between globalization and political and economic change?
--Why and how has the convergence of elites’ attitudes been accompanied by the widening of ethnic, religious and economic cleavages?

Theme 6: Public Policy (in domestic and global contexts): combines topics 2-4 and emphasizes the results and limitations of the political process (5-15%)
--What are the influences on policy decisions?
  --describe the formal and informal institutional influences
  --what are the requirements of new policies?
  --what global pressures and institutions must be acknowledged?
--Identify the scope of policy agenda available to the governments you studied.
--What impacts the implementations of policy decisions?