

# Comparative Case Studies: Group Project

This is a **classroom-ready, comprehensive group project** for **Comparative Case Studies**, designed specifically to build **AP-style comparative reasoning** (AP World, AP Euro, APUSH, AP Comparative Gov, AP Human Geo, AP African American Studies, etc.) and works for all students. This project has full structure, phases, roles, rubrics, templates, and AP-aligned skills.

**Students compare two historical cases—revolutions, empires, migrations, belief systems, or wars—using AP-style comparative reasoning.**

The goal is to identify **similarities, differences, causes, consequences, themes, patterns, turning points, and significance.**

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## I. Purpose of the Project

Students learn to:

- Apply AP-level comparative reasoning
- Analyze cause-and-effect across cases
- Synthesize information from multiple sources
- Evaluate continuity and change
- Interpret historical themes (economics, culture, politics, geography)
- Present arguments using evidence
- Collaborate in research and analysis
- Understand global interconnectedness

This project works across ANY content area.

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## II. Group Setup

**Group Size:** 3–5 students\*\*

**Roles:**

1. **Lead Historian** – gathers facts, timelines, turning points
2. **Thematic Analyst** – organizes evidence by themes (social, political, economic, cultural, environmental)
3. **Comparative Strategist** – leads comparison charts + argument building
4. **Visual Designer** – builds comparison charts, maps, timelines, graphics

5. **Presenter / Writer** – develops the final product + presentation script

Roles can rotate each phase.

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## III. Possible Case Pairings

### Revolutions

- American vs. French
- French vs. Haitian
- Russian vs. Chinese
- Glorious Revolution vs. Meiji Restoration

### Empires

- Roman vs. Han China
- British vs. French colonial empires
- Ottoman vs. Safavid
- Mali vs. Songhai

### Migrations

- Bantu vs. Indo-European
- Irish vs. Italian immigration to the U.S.
- Great Migration vs. Dust Bowl migration
- Mongol steppe migrations vs. Viking migrations

### Belief Systems

- Buddhism vs. Christianity
- Confucianism vs. Legalism
- Islam vs. Hinduism
- Enlightenment liberalism vs. Marxism

### Wars

- WWI vs. WWII
- Korean War vs. Vietnam War
- Peloponnesian War vs. Punic Wars
- Cold War vs. American Civil War (political vs. geographic division)

Teacher may assign or let groups choose.

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## **IV. Project Phases (60–180 minutes or multi-day)**

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### **Phase 1 — Context Briefing & Case Selection (5 minutes)**

Groups choose their two cases and complete a **Quick Background Form**:

- Where?
  - When?
  - Who was involved?
  - Why is it significant?
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### **Phase 2 — Deep Research (20–30 minutes)**

Each group gathers:

- Timeline of major events
- Causes + origins
- Key figures
- Political structures
- Social hierarchy
- Economy + trade
- Cultural beliefs
- Technologies
- Geography + environment
- Outcomes + legacy

Lead Historian compiles factual notes.

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### **Phase 3 — Thematic Comparison Charts (15–20 minutes)**

Thematic Analyst leads the group through a **Compare/Contrast Organizer**:

#### **Required Categories**

1. **Causes**
2. **Politics & State Building**
3. **Economy & Labor**
4. **Society & Class/Gender**
5. **Culture & Belief Systems**
6. **Geography & Environment**
7. **Consequences / Impacts**

For each category, groups fill in:

- Case A details
- Case B details
- Similarities
- Differences
- Historical significance of each similarity/difference

This builds AP-style comparative reasoning.

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## **Phase 4 — Argument Development (10–15 minutes)**

Comparative Strategist helps students write:

### **1. A Comparative Thesis Statement**

Must include:

- Clear similarities AND differences
- A defensible argument
- A theme or reason explaining *why* the comparison matters

Example AP-style thesis:

*“While both the French and Russian Revolutions overthrew monarchies and attempted radical social change, the Russian Revolution led to a long-term single-party state whereas the French Revolution fragmented, ultimately enabling the rise of authoritarian rule under Napoleon.”*

### **2. Three Comparative Body Claims**

Each must follow AP-style structure:

**Claim → Evidence from Case A → Evidence from Case B → Comparison Sentence → Reasoning (Why it matters)**

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## **Phase 5 — Visual Product Creation (20–30 minutes)**

Visual Designer leads creation of a polished product:

### **Required Elements**

- **Side-by-side timeline**
- **Comparison chart or Venn diagram**
- **Maps of both cases**
- **Infographic summary of causes & consequences**
- **Thesis statement + main arguments**
- **Key images or symbols representing each case**

Students may present digitally or on poster board.

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## **Phase 6 — Presentation (10 minutes per group)**

Presenter leads a clear comparative analysis presentation.

### **Presentation Structure**

1. Introduction + thesis
  2. Brief overview of each case
  3. Three major comparisons (similarities/differences)
  4. Visuals (maps, timelines, charts)
  5. Significance + modern connections
  6. Q&A with audience
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## **V. Optional Extensions**

### **1. Counterfactual Comparison**

“What if these two revolutions swapped contexts?”

### **2. Image Gallery Analysis**

Use political cartoons, propaganda, paintings, architecture.

### **3. Comparative Primary Source Set**

Read 2–4 short documents and compare viewpoints.

#### **4. Exam-Style Comparative Essay**

Turn the presentation into a full AP LEQ or SAQ.

#### **5. Debate Format**

Team A argues that similarity matters more; Team B argues differences matter more.

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## **VI. Final Products Required**

Each group submits:

- A polished comparison chart
  - A side-by-side timeline
  - A two-map comparison
  - A one-paragraph AP-style thesis
  - Three comparative body claims
  - At least two visuals (infographic, drawing, symbols)
  - A polished presentation or mini-lecture
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## **VII. Assessment Options**

### **A. Project Rubric**

- Historical accuracy
- Depth of comparison
- Evidence use
- AP-style reasoning
- Clarity + organization
- Visual quality
- Presentation quality
- Collaboration + teamwork

### **B. Reflection Questions**

Students answer:

1. Which comparison category was easiest? Hardest?

2. What surprised you most about the cases?
3. How do historians use comparisons to understand patterns?
4. What major theme (SPICE/T or others) best explains the comparison?
5. How might this comparison connect to today's world?