

Diablo Valley College – POLSC 220 – 9018: Comparative Politics  
Spring 2026  
Research Project

“America’s Future: Three Schools of Thought”

**Question:** It could be said that the field of comparative politics covers many things, but arguably the most important question would be why some countries (or empires) rise and others fall. Few today would argue against the idea that the United States is the most powerful country that has probably ever existed – politically, economically, militarily, and in many ways socio-culturally. This unrivaled power has allowed most Americans to believe that we are uniquely and historically positioned to lead the world, and within some circles, divinely so. However, others have suggested that the sun is setting on American power and influence and that we will soon take our place among previous fallen empires. Examine the evidence from three of the most prominent schools of thought on this question to answer whether you believe America will soon experience a renewal or a decline.

Sample Outline  
(But feel free to set this essay up as you wish)

**I. Introduction / Thesis Statement** – a brief statement outlining your position or something relevant about this issue (approximately 1 page).

**II. Body** – the bulk of the paper is here, in data taken from the readings and other evidence that you have found to support your position (approximately 10 pages).

- a. Text DPE – what does your textbook have to say about the question of the future of American power? If it says little or nothing, why do you think that is?
- b. Declinist DPE – starting with Kennedy and Wallerstein, explain the declinist school and analyze their data.
- c. American Exceptionalist DPE – examine the work of D’Souza, Nye, and others to present and analyze this school of thought.
- d. Neoimperialist DPE – primarily work from James Petras but also review others from this theoretical position.
- e. Outside DPE – are there other authors that you have examined that have a unique and/or important perspective on this question? They can of course come from any theoretical perspective.

**III. Conclusion** – where is America ultimately headed? Are there reasons to be concerned, or can we be confident that our power will remain supreme over the indefinite future (approximately 1 page)?

**Extras:**

1. All papers will be completed in APA style format. Make sure to include a citation every time you use a statement or an idea from the readings that I have provided, or that you found in your own independent research. Using other’s work without providing proper citation is plagiarism and grounds for immediate failure on this essay.

2. An “A” paper will be:

- a) fully documented and cited
- b) a *minimum* of 15 pages (meaning 12 full pages of text analysis)
- c) research *beyond* authors provided
- d) turned in *on time* (April 27, 2026).