

PLSC 224 Government and Politics in Africa

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Office: Welles 3E; Hours: W 12:30 – 2:30 & TH 1:30 – 3:00

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Overview: *“Africa is a nation that suffers from incredible disease.” (George W. Bush)*

Most Americans know very little about Africa. Comprised of 53 sovereign countries and thousands of ethnic, cultural and social groups, Africa is often viewed as a place of war, famines, disease, and despair. Drawing our impressions from movies and the rare but sensationalist media coverage, many Americans perceive Africa as the home of destitute peoples, atavistic political systems, and war. While these perceptions may contain elements of truth (that could be applied anywhere in the world), Africa also contains robust democracies with vibrant civil societies, dynamic economies with strong linkages to the global market, and diverse cultural traditions including great novelists, poets, musicians and educational institutions. As a result, African Politics represents a fascinating area for study, raising questions regarding political institutionalization and change, economic development, and the nature of the international state system.

This introductory course explores political processes in post-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa. We will examine the roots of Africa’s diverse political processes and institutions, the challenges of state consolidation and political development, and the fundamental economic and social issues confronting the continent. By the end of the course, students will have: 1) Explored the political systems and patterns in Africa and topical issues confronting these systems; 2) Analyzed issues of economic development in the context of regional and global economic processes; and 3) Completed in-depth research on a particular country or topic relevant to African politics. Most importantly, I hope that we will be able to debunk some of the myths embedded in our perceptions of African political life.

Africa is a diverse place. This presents us with a problem in terms of our lens of analysis. Although we want to explore the broad themes in African political life, we run the danger of over-generalizing. Thus, I have designed the course to incorporate macro and micro-level perspectives on Africa. Each week will explore a broad theme in the literature (based on the readings and class lecture), which will be supplemented by micro-analysis of particular leaders, countries and debates (based on the student-led presentations). Hopefully this will allow us to appreciate both the major themes that have dominated discussions of African Politics and the unique variants and different paths that the countries have taken.

Required Books and Readings

- Alex Thomson, **An Introduction to African Politics, 2nd Ed.**
- Philip Gourevitch, **We Wish to Inform you that Tomorrow we will be Killed with our Families.**
- Bessie Head, **When Rain Clouds Gather.**
- Additional weekly readings will be available on MyCourses.

Course Requirements

Mid-term exam (20%): Either in-class or take-home essays.

Final exam (20%): Either in-class or take-home essays.

Quizzes (20%): 10 pop-quizzes worth 2 points each. Keep up with the readings!

Briefing paper/presentation (10%): Each student will make a 10-12 minute presentation to the class. The topics are listed under the course outline. As part of the presentations, students will also submit a three page (max!) double-spaced paper on the topic. These papers are to be submitted by e-mail prior to the start of class on the assigned presentation day. You are also required to prepare a power-point presentation to accompany the presentation. The briefing paper must include citations from at least one book (other than the course text), one citation from the course texts, two citations from scholarly articles in peer-reviewed journals, and two other news and current/historical events sources. You may not cite, or rely extensively on, Wikipedia. In addition, at least one of the cited sources must have been authored by an African.

Research paper (30%): Students, in consultation with the lecturer, will research and write a 10 page (max) double-spaced paper on a topic relevant to Africa. The topics can be either country-specific or comparative in nature. You are expected to schedule a meeting with the lecturer within the first three weeks of the semester to discuss topics. A one page proposal will be due by the fourth week of the semester. The paper must include citations from at least three books (not including course texts), five scholarly articles, and other news and current/historical events sources. You may not cite, or rely extensively on, Wikipedia. In addition, at least three of the cited sources must have been authored by an African.

My grading criteria for written work is as follows:

- "A" paper—contains well developed and relevant thesis that is defended systematically using citations drawn from the relevant literature; demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the course material and concepts; is elegantly organized and written; is thoroughly proofread.
- "B" paper—proves a coherent thesis which is articulated and defended; solid research base that reflects important works in the discipline relevant to the thesis; demonstrates an understanding of the course material; is well written.
- "C" paper—provides a somewhat coherent thesis; research and citations are minimally acceptable; demonstrates a basic understanding of the course material; is readable... but not necessarily a pleasure to read.
- "D" paper—provides a basic argument; uses minimal or no citations; demonstrates minimal understanding of the course material; is poorly written
- "F" paper—Paper is turned in but does not meet basic requirements (no discernable or coherent thesis, too short, does not answer the question, shoddy or no research, etc.).

Academic Honesty

The PLSC department has a subscription to turnitin.com. This technology allows us to compare your work to: a) everything on the internet; b) publications and books that are not on the internet but are available through the service; and c) other undergraduate and graduate papers submitted throughout the country. By remaining in the course, you agree that your work will be submitted to turnitin.com.

Accommodations

SUNY Geneseo will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented physical, emotional or learning disabilities. Students should consult with the Director in the Office of Disability Services (Tabitha Buggie-Hunt, 105D Erwin, tbuggieh@geneseo.edu) and their individual faculty regarding any needed accommodations as early as possible in the semester.

Sites for Africa

The following sources provide up- to-date materials on Africa.

African News Online <http://www.africannews.org/index.html>

African Studies (University of Penn.) <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/Africa>

African Studies Internet Resources-Columbia <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/liraries/indiv/area/Africa/>

AllAfrica.com <http://www.allafrica.com>

BBC News World-Africa <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/default.stm>

Berkeley-Stanford Joint Center for African Studies <http://www-porfolio.stanford.edu/103667>

ENA (Columbia) <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/liraries/indiv/area/Africa/ejournals.html>

Harvard Africa Studies <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/cafrica/>

Washington Post- Africa Regional Page <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/africa.htm>



Course Schedule

WEEK 1 (9/1): INTRODUCTION

Readings: Thomson, Ch.1.

WEEK 2 (9/8): COLONIALISM

Readings: Thomson, Ch. 2; Ekeh, "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement;" Young, "Constructing Bula Matari."**

Presentations: The French in Cote d'Ivoire; The British in Nigeria; The Portuguese in Angola; Belgium in the Congo.

Presentations should focus on the structure of the colonial institutions. What attracted the colonizer, how was political control established, how did colonial administration function, how did the commodity and labor markets function? In your opinion, what were the net costs and benefits of the colonial project?

WEEK 3 (9/15): INDEPENDENCE, IDEOLOGIES AND NATION BUILDING

Readings: Thomson, Ch. 3; Nkrumah, "The Revolutionary Path;" Ajayi, "Expectations of Independence," *Daedalus* 111/2 (Spring 1982), p. 1-9.**

Presentations: Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana; Kenyatta in Kenya; Senghor in Senegal; Houphouët-Boigny in Cote d'Ivoire.

Presentations should focus on the ideological orientations of each of these individuals and their approach to governance in the political and economic spheres. Give a few words on the individual, how they were educated, how they came to power, and how their experiences in the anti-colonial movement shaped their world view. To what extent are these ideologies shaped by the colonial experience? More detail should be provided on the nature of the ideologies and how the ideologies translated into political institutions and policies. In your opinion, were the policies helpful or harmful in the long run, and how do they continue to influence (or not influence) the country today?

WEEK 4 (9/22): ETHNICITY AND RELIGION

Readings: Thomson, Ch. 4; Posner, "Accounting for Zambia's Ethnic Cleavage Structure;" Autesserre, "The Trouble with Congo."

Presentations: Clans and Lineage in Somalia; Stitching Together Nigeria; Sudan's North/South/East/West Divide; The Acholi in Uganda.

Presentations should focus on the sources and nature of ethnic/social/religious cleavages. To what extent has ethnicity become politicized, which groups maintain political power, how is power wielded over other groups, to what extent is ethnicity and religion addressed in the constitutional structures of the country, how have ethnic differences manifested in terms of political and economic stability and development?

WEEK 5 (9/29): CLIENTALISM, CENTRALIZATION & THE "BIG MAN"

Reading: Thomson, Ch. 6; Bates, "From Fable to Fact" and "Political Legacies."**

Presentations: *Jerry Rawlings; Yoweri Museveni; Robert Mugabe; Omar Bongo.*

Presentations should provide a brief biography of the leader, how they came to power, their ideological predisposition, and how their rule came to an end or might come to an end. More detail should be provided on how they consolidated political power, how political institutions work(ed), the extent to which their rule is/was authoritarian and or corrupt, key challenges they confront(ed) and how they responded to those challenges. In your opinion what is/will be their legacy?

WEEK 6 (10/6): MILITARY INTERVENTIONS AND COUPS

Readings: Thomson, Ch. 7; Clark, "The Decline of the African Military Coup."

Presentations: *Nigeria; Sierra Leone; Benin; Guinea Bissau.*

Presentations should cover the history of military interference in the political life of the country. How many coups? When and in response to what? What is the track record of military rule in the country in terms of promoting political stability, economic growth, reconciling social cleavages, and confronting corruption? How have military regimes been removed from power, and what is the state of civil military relations in the country today? In your opinion, has military rule harmed or helped the country, and what are the prospects moving forward?

WEEK 7 (10/13): FALL BREAK, NO CLASS

WEEK 8 (10/20): MID-TERM EXAM

WEEK 9 (10/27): CIVIL WAR

Readings: Thomson, Ch. 10; Gourevitch, All.

Presentations: *DR Congo; Liberia; Somalia; Sudan; Sierra Leone.*

Presentations should cover the various factors contributing to civil war in the country. Start with a brief overview of the country's history, colonial legacy, social cleavages/structure, economic and political development as they relate to the ultimate collapse of state institutions and violence. Then cover the triggers and nature of the conflict, the key actors and their aims, the role of outside powers, and some statistics regarding casualties and costs. Conclude with an update of current conditions and peace initiatives and processes that are (or might be) underway.

WEEK 10 (11/3): DEMOCRATIZATION

Readings: Thomson, Ch. 11; Gyimah-Boadi, "Africa: The Quality of Political Reform;" Widner, "Africa's Democratization: A Work in Progress." Kwasi Prempeh, "Presidents Untamed;" Barkan, "The Many Faces of Africa: Democracy across a Varied Continent."

Presentations : *The Autocrats Lose in Zambia; Persistent Democracy in Botswana; Electoral Violence in Kenya; Powersharing in Zimbabwe.*

This week's presentations represent a bit more thematic diversity than those to date. Please check with me to discuss key issues you should be covering.

WEEK 11 (11/10): FOREIGN RELATIONS

Readings: Thomson, Ch. 8; Broadman, "China and India Go to Africa;" Cooke, "Obama's Africa Agenda."

Presentations: France and the Francophones; The United States and the Region; The ICC Indicts Bashir; Piracy in the Horn: Causes and Effects.

The first two presentations should focus on the political, economic, and cultural interests and ties between the non-African state and the region. How has the relationship been institutionalized, to what extent can we identify dependency relationships, and has the relationship been beneficial to each party? Please note the extent to which trade and investment relationships are related to political considerations.

WEEK 12 (11/17): PROBLEMS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Readings: Collier & Gunning, "Why Has Africa Grown Slowly?" Amin, "Underdevelopment and Dependence in Black Africa: Origins and Contemporary Forms;" Nyrere, "The Policy of Self Reliance;" Lancaster, "Development in Africa: The Good, the Bad, the Ugly."

Presentations: Managing Diamond Wealth in Botswana; Export-led Growth in Mauritius; The Ugandan Miracle? The Resource Curse in Nigeria.

This week's presentations should explain the economic strategies and performance of various states with different factor endowments. Provide a brief overview of economic conditions at independence, and then detail how the state has managed the economy in the subsequent years. Identify the relevant economic schools of thought that have influenced policy-makers, and note any abrupt reversals of course. What are the commonalities/differences between your state and other states in the region?

WEEK 13 (11/24): ECONOMIC REFORM, AID, AND ADJUSTMENT

Readings: Thomson, Ch. 9; World Bank, "Spreading and Sustaining Growth in Africa." Van de Walle, "Introduction," & "The Crisis and Foreign Aid."

Presentations: Home-grown Adjustment in Ghana; Meeting the Terms of HIPC in Uganda; HIV Programs in Rwanda; Gabon's Letter of Intent to the IMF - December 2007.

This week's presentations focus on current economic challenges, assistance programs, and policy reform. Briefly describe the issues at stake, the government's response, the specifics of the program, and how the international community is playing a role. Are the programs and projects useful? What are the political, economic, and social opportunities and costs associated with the programs?

WEEK 14 (12/1): POLITICS OF THE AFRICAN NOVEL

Readings: Head, all.

WEEK 15 (12/8): PAPERS DUE & REVIEW FOR FINAL

Final Exam: Tuesday, December 22, 6:45 – 9:45 p.m.