Overview

This course provides an introduction to the major issues in contemporary African politics. The questions we will consider include: What are the legacies of slavery and colonialism? What accounts for the variation in political institutions across Africa? Why have so many African countries experienced political violence? What explains Africa’s slow economic growth? And, how do political institutions influence development in Africa?

The course is divided into three sections. We will start by considering the political legacies of various moments in Africa’s history, including the organization of pre-colonial societies, the slave trade, colonial rule, independence, and the recent wave of economic and political liberalizations. The second section introduces a number of core concepts that are useful for understanding contemporary African politics, including clientelism, ethnicity, and the nature of the state in Africa. In the final section we will consider key issues such as economic growth, political violence, ethnic politics, and various aspects of electoral politics in Africa, including electoral fraud, vote-buying, political behaviour, and electoral accountability.

Throughout the course we will consider various theoretical arguments, and will attempt to evaluate them by studying events in particular countries, as well as examining broad patterns across countries.

Requirements

- Class participation - 10%
- Written reading responses – 15%
- Map quiz – 5%
- Midterm exam – 30%
- Final exam – 40%
The course will be a mixture of lectures and class discussion based around the required readings. You will be expected to engage in the discussions, and 10% of your grade will be based on your participation in class. You are also required to submit three written reading responses during the semester, one for each of the three sections into which the course is divided (historical legacies, core concepts, and contemporary issues). These should address the readings from one session, and must be submitted at the start of that session, otherwise they will not be accepted. These should be 500 words in length, and will highlight key themes and issues in the readings for that session. You must cover the required readings for that session, and you may also wish to consider any further readings for that session listed in the appendix to this syllabus. Each written response will contribute 5% to your overall grade.

There will be a short in-class map quiz in session 5 (1/30), in which you will be asked to identify a number of countries and name the country that colonized them most recently prior to independence. There will be an in-class midterm exam in session 15 (3/06), and a final exam at 8:30am on Friday, May 9, which will contribute 30% and 40% of your overall grade, respectively. In the midterm you will be required to answer two essay questions, covering material from sessions 2-13. In the final you will be required to answer three short answer questions covering material from the entire course, and two essay questions covering material from sessions 16-26.

Students in the W sections: You are required to write a 3,500 word paper in which you will evaluate the prospects for democracy and development, for a single country in sub-Saharan Africa (not including South Africa, or the islands), based on concepts introduced during the course. Word counts should not include references. The essay is due in Session 19 (3/27). I shall correct and return it with comments in Session 23 (4/10), and a revised version will be due in Session 27 (4/24). The overall grades for students in the W sections will be based on: participation 10%, written reading responses 15%, map quiz 5%, midterm exam 20%, essay 25%, final exam 25%.

Exam Policy

The exams are closed book and closed note (meaning also no internet access and no cell phones). The exam dates are firm, and missed exams may only re-taken under the following circumstances: (1) a death in the family, (2) participation in a University-sponsored academic or sporting event (extra-curricular events do not count), (3) unforeseen medical emergency. In the case of (1) and (2), you must inform me within 24 hours of the exam that you will miss it. In some cases I may require supporting documentation (e.g. a doctor’s note) out of fairness to the other students.

Paper Extension Policy

Hard copies of papers must be turned in at the start of class on the due date (e-mailed versions will not be accepted). Extensions will only be granted in the case of: (1) a death in the family, (2) an unforeseen medical emergency. In case of such an emergency, please let me know as soon as possible. In some cases I may require supporting documentation (e.g. a doctor’s note) out of fairness to the other students. Turning a paper in late without an agreed extension will result in the loss of one third of one letter grade for every 24 hours that the paper is late.
Academic Honesty

While I encourage you to discuss the course readings and assignments with your fellow students, all written work must be done independently. Papers require full citations listed in a consistent format. Lastly, all class activities must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester’s Academic Honesty Policy (http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty). Under UR rules I must report possible violations to the Board on Academic Honesty. Plagiarism is a very serious problem, and you should pay particularly close attention to the University’s rules on what constitutes plagiarism, and how to avoid it.

Reading

The reading load is reasonable, and it will be necessary to complete at least the required reading if you wish to attain satisfactory grades for participation and the written reading responses. Statistical expertise is not a prerequisite, but you will still be expected to understand the arguments and conclusions of the more technical empirical academic articles. Your grade will be higher if you look at the further reading also, and you will learn more from the course. Lectures will build on the reading, not summarize it. You may wish to purchase the following books, since we will be reading significant portions of them:


All other materials, such as articles and book chapters, will be available on blackboard, although many can be found easily online.

Other resources

There are a variety of online resources that will enable you to keep up to date with politics in Africa, especially the daily Africa Today podcast from the BBC. You will inevitably get much more from this course (including a higher grade) if you have a good knowledge of African current affairs.

- http://allafrica.com/
- http://www.democracyinafrica.co.uk/
COURSE SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION

Session 1 (1/16): Countries and Context

Recommended:


SECTION 1 - HISTORICAL LEGACIES

Session 2 (1/21): Pre-colonial Africa


Session 3 (1/23): Legacies of pre-colonial rule


Session 4 (1/28): The slave trade


Session 5 (1/30): Colonial rule


Session 6 (2/04): Legacies of colonialism


Session 7 (2/06): Nationalism & Independence


Session 8 (2/11): Single party states & Big Man rule

**Session 9 (2/13): Democratization**


**SECTION 2 - CORE CONCEPTS**

**Session 10 (2/18): The state of African politics**


**Session 11 (2/20): The State in African politics**


**Session 12 (2/25): Ethnicity**


**Session 13 (2/27): Clientelism**


**Session 14 (3/04): Review session for midterm (optional)**

**Session 15 (3/06): Midterm exam**

**SECTION 3 - CONTEMPORARY ISSUES**

**Session 16 (3/18): Economic development**

Session 17 (3/20): Resource curse/Unearned income


Session 18 (3/25): Civil war


Session 19 (3/27): Ethnic politics


Session 20 (4/01): Electoral fraud and violence

- “How to rig an election” The Economist March 3rd 2012.
- “How to save votes” The Economist February 28th 2012.
- “Democracy 1, vote-rigging 0” The Economist April 14th 2011.

Session 21 (4/03): Vote-buying and clientelism


Session 22 (4/08): Voting behaviour


Session 23 (4/10): Political Parties


Session 24 (4/15): Elections and Accountability


Session 25 (4/17): Security (Terrorism & Piracy)


**Session 27 (4/24): Discussion of “An African Election”**

**Session 28 (4/29): Conclusion & review session for final exam**

APPENDIX: FURTHER READING

SECTION 1 - HISTORICAL LEGACIES

Session 2 (1/21): Pre-colonial Africa


Session 3 (1/23): Legacies of pre-colonial rule


Session 4 (1/28): The slave trade


Session 5 (1/30): Colonial rule


Session 6 (2/04): Legacies of colonialism


Session 7 (2/06): Nationalism & Independence

• *Lumumba* (film)

**Session 8 (2/11): Single party states & Big Man rule**

• *Mobutu, King of Zaire* (film)

**Session 9 (2/13): Democratization**


**SECTION 2 - CORE CONCEPTS**

**Session 10 (2/18): The state of African politics**


**Session 11 (2/20): The State in African politics**


**Session 12 (2/25): Ethnicity**


**Session 13 (2/27): Clientelism**

SECTION 3 - CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Session 16 (3/18): Economic development


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Session 19 (3/27): Ethnic politics


Session 20 (4/01): Electoral fraud and violence


Session 21 (4/03): Vote-buying and clientelism


**Session 22 (4/08): Voting behaviour**


• Kuenzi, Michelle and Gina M. S. Lambright. 2007. “Voter Turnout in Africa’s Multiparty Regimes.” Comparative Political Studies, 40(6), pp. 665-690.

**Session 23 (4/10): Political Parties**


**Session 24 (4/15): Elections and Accountability**


**Session 25 (4/17): Security (Terrorism & Piracy)**
