

IAS 3003: African Politics and Society

Department of International and Area Studies
University of Oklahoma
Fall 2017

Instructor: Professor Natalie Letsa

Class Schedule: MW 3:30 – 6:30pm; Farzaneh Hall, Room 330

Office: Farzaneh Hall, Room 315

Office Hours: Schedule a meeting at: <https://calendly.com/nwletsa>

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Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the politics, history, and social processes of sub-Saharan Africa. The first half of the course provides historical context for understanding the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial history of the continent. The second half of the course focuses on contemporary issues in Africa, including topics related to identity, customary authority, markets, violence, elections, democracy, and authoritarianism. In addition to learning about the histories and trajectories of individual countries, the course will also focus on sub-regional and cross-national similarities and differences, as well as contextualize African politics in a larger global history.

Course Goals

The first goal of the course is for students to acquire a working knowledge of African geography and history. By the end of the semester, students will have a basic understanding of politics of every country in Africa, and in-depth knowledge of at least one country. Second, students will acquire different lenses through which to analyze contemporary issues in Africa, including institutional, structural, behavioral and cultural approaches. Finally, students will continue to develop their research, writing, and presentation skills through the assignments required for the course. Overall, the course is designed to develop and hone critical thinking, reading and writing skills throughout the semester.

Readings

There is only one required text for the course:

Young, Crawford. 2012. *The Postcolonial State in Africa: Fifty Years of Independence, 1960-2010*. Madison, WI: Wisconsin University Press.

In addition, *laptops and other electronic devices are not allowed in class*, therefore, students should *print out all readings* before class and are expected to come to class having read the material and thought through the questions and comments they have for each reading.

Assignments and Grading

Assignments in this course are designed for you to accumulate case knowledge, practice academic writing, use critical thinking skills to synthesize and analyze readings, as well as demonstrate your knowledge of the course material. In addition to a midterm exam, you will write a research paper, and present your paper to the class. Class participation is worth 20 percent of your grade, and you are expected to contribute to class discussions and activities every week. The calendar of assignments is below:

Assignment #1: In-Class Map Quiz (5%)

Due: Wednesday, October 25

Assignment #2: Mid-Term Take Home Essay (25%)

5-page, 48-hour take home essay responding to an assigned prompt. Must cite sources from the syllabus.

Due: Friday, November 3 at 4pm

Assignment #3: Country research report (40%), presentation (5%), and peer review (5%)
10-page research paper that should cite at least five academic sources not listed on the syllabus.

Proposal Due: Monday, November 13

Rough Draft Due: Monday, November 27

Peer Review Due: Monday, December 4

Final Paper Due: Monday, December 11

Note for Students with Disabilities: The University of Oklahoma is committed to the goal of achieving equal educational opportunity and full participation for students with disabilities. Consistent with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, The University of Oklahoma ensures that no “qualified individual with a disability” will be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination solely on the basis of disability under any program or activity offered by The University of Oklahoma. Accommodations on the basis of disability are available by contacting the Disability Resource Center in Room 166, Goddard Center.

Writing Center: Most universities have a writing center, a place for students, faculty, and staff to meet and talk about writing. The Writing Center here at OU is a resource I encourage you to use. Part of good writing is seeking feedback from many different readers. The writing consultants at the Writing Center are able to talk with you about your writing—at any stage in the process and for any course you are taking. You can make an appointment (online or by phone, [405-325-2936](tel:405-325-2936)), or you can drop in whenever they are open. For more information, see <http://www.ou.edu/writingcenter.html>.

Course Schedule and Readings

Week 1: Precolonial African Politics and Society

Monday, October 16

Readings: *The Postcolonial State in Africa*, Chapter 1: p. 3 – 31.

Wainaina, B. 2005. "How to Write about Africa. Some Tips: Sunsets and Starvation are Good." *Granta* 92: p. 91-97. <https://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/>

Wednesday, October 18

Readings: Boahen, A.A. 1987. "The Eve of the Colonial Conquest and Occupation." *In African Perspectives on Colonialism*. New York, NY: Diasporic Press. p. 1-26.

Herbst, Jeffrey. 2000. *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 2: p. 35 – 57.

Assignments: Map Activity Due

Week 2: Colonization, Independence and the Postcolonial State

Monday, October 23

Readings: Crowder, Michael. 1964. "Indirect Rule: French and British Style." *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 34 (3): 197–205.

Herbst, Jeffrey. 2000. *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 3: p. 58 – 96.

Mamdani, Mahmood. 1996. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 2: 37 – 61.

NOTE: Dr. Liisa Malkki of Stanford University will be giving a talk on "The Need to Help: The Domestic Arts of International Humanitarianism" on Oct. 24 at 4:30pm in the Gould Hall Gallery

Wednesday, October 25

Readings: *The Postcolonial State in Africa*, Chapter 2 - 4: p. 32 – 157.

Bratton, Michael and Nicolas van de Walle. 1997. *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2: p. 61 – 96.

Assignments: In-Class Map Quiz

Week 3: The Postcolonial Economy and the Third Wave of Democratization

Monday, October 30

Readings: *The Postcolonial State in Africa*, Chapter 5: p. 158 – 193.

Bates, Robert. 1981. *Markets and States in Tropical Africa*. University of California Press. Chapters 1 and 2: p. 11 – 44.

Wednesday, November 1

Readings: Bratton, Michael and Nicolas van de Walle. 1997. *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge University Press. Introduction and Chapters 1 & 3: p. 1 – 60; 97 – 127.

The Postcolonial State in Africa, Chapter 6: p. 194 – 224.

Assignments: Midterm take home essay handed out today; Due Friday (11/3)

Week 4: Ethnicity, Patronage, and Customary Authority

Monday, November 6

Readings: Kasfir, Nelson. 1976. *The Shrinking Political Arena*. University of California Press. Chapter 2: 28 – 46.

The Postcolonial State in Africa, Chapter 8: p. 291 – 333.

Posner, Daniel. 2005. *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa*. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 4: p. 1 – 20; 91 – 129.

Wednesday, November 8

Readings: Baldwin, Kate. 2016. *The Paradox of Traditional Chiefs in Democratic Africa*. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 & 2: p. 3 – 52.

Boone, Catherine. 2013. *Property and Political Order in Africa: Land Rights and the Structure of Politics*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2: 19 – 51.

NOTE: Dr. James Ferguson of Stanford University will be giving a talk on “Presence and Social Obligation: An Essay on the Share” on Nov. 9 at 4:30pm in the Gould Hall Gallery

Week 5: Elections, Democracy, and Authoritarianism

Monday, November 13

Readings: Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi, 2005. *Public Opinion, Democracy, and Market Reform in Africa*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2: p. 34 – 64.

Kuenzi, Michelle and Gina Lambright. 2010. “Who Votes in Africa? An Examination of Electoral Participation in 10 African Countries.” *Party Politics* 17(6): 767 – 799.

Lindberg, Staffan. 2010. “What Accountability Pressures do MPs in Africa Face and How Do They Respond? Evidence From Ghana.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 48(1): 117-142.

Assignments: Research Paper Proposals Due

Wednesday, November 15

Readings: NONE

In Class Movie: *An African Election*

Week 6: Elections, Democracy, and Authoritarianism (Cont'd)

Monday, November 20

Readings: Cheeseman, Nic. 2015. *Democracy in Africa: Success, Failures, and the Struggle for Political Reform*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 5: p. 143 – 170.

Letsa, Natalie. Forthcoming. “The People’s Choice: Popular (Il)Legitimacy in Autocratic Cameroon.” *Journal of Modern African Studies*.

Branch, Adam and Zachariah Mampilly. 2015. *Africa Uprising*. Chapter 4: p. 67-85.

Wednesday, November 22

Readings: NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING BREAK)

Week 7: Violence and Civil War; Political Economy and International Aid

Monday, November 27

Readings: Burchard, Stephanie M., 2015. *Electoral Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Lynne Rienner Press. Chapter 2: p. 23 – 54.

The Postcolonial State in Africa, Chapter 7: p. 227 – 290.

Sawyer, Amos. 2004. “Violent Conflicts and Governance Challenges in West Africa: The Case of the Mano River Basin Area.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. 42(3): 437-463.

Assignments: Country Research Report Rough Draft Due; In-Class Presentations

NOTE: Dr. Paul Richards of Wageningen University will be giving a talk on “Ebola in Sierra Leone: A Humanitarian Crisis in Historical Perspective” on Nov. 28 at 4:30pm in the JJ Rhyne Community Room, Zarrow Hall.

Wednesday, November 29

Readings: van de Walle, Nicolas. 2001. *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979-1999*. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 & 2: p. 20 – 112.

Ferguson, James and I. Lohmann, 1994. “The Anti-Politics Machine: ‘Development’ and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho.” *The Ecologist*, 24(5): 176-81.

Mkandawire, Thandika, 2010. “Aid, Accountability, and Democracy in Africa.” *Social Research*. 77(4) pp. 1149-1182.

Week 8: Africa in the 21st Century

Monday, December 4

Readings: Severine Autesserre. 2015. “Trouble in Peaceland.” *Foreign Policy*, October.

Hickel, J. 2015. “The Death of International Development.” Available at: <http://www.redpepper.org.uk/essay-the-death-of-international-development/>

Assignments: Peer Review Due

Wednesday, December 6

Readings: Ferguson, J. 2006. “Globalizing Africa: Observations from an Inconvenient Continent.” In *Global Shadows*, Durham: Duke University Press, p. 25-49.

The Postcolonial State in Africa, Chapter 9: p. 334 – 374.

Assignments: Country Research Report Final Draft Due MONDAY, DECEMBER 11