

IAS 3793: African Politics & Society

Department of International and Area Studies
University of Oklahoma
Fall 2020

Instructor: Professor Natalie Letsa

Class Schedule: T/Th 12:00 – 1:15pm; Farzaneh Hall 146

Office: Farzaneh Hall, Room 315

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

Email: nwletsa@ou.edu

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the history, politics and social processes of sub-Saharan Africa. The first part of the course provides historical context for understanding the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods on the continent. The second part of the course considers societal issues in Africa, including ethnicity, religion, customary authority and public opinion. The last third of the course focuses on contemporary issues in Africa related to politics in that region, such as political economy, regimes, elections, conflict, and international relations. 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 the historical knowledge necessary to understand contemporary politics in sub-Saharan Africa. They will be able to read beyond news headlines to understand the more complex processes underlying contemporary events. Finally, students will be able to articulate the key puzzles and challenges that African countries face today.

Required Books

Wilson, Lindy, Bereket Habte Selassie, Georges-Nzongola-Ntalaja, and Ernest Harsch. 2015. *African Leaders of the Twentieth Century: Biko, Selassie, Lumumba, Sankara* (Ohio Short Histories of Africa)

Achebe, Chinua. 1958. *Things Fall Apart*. Penguin Books

Assignments and Grading

Assignments in this course are designed for students to learn more about special topics in African history and politics, practice analytical writing, and demonstrate knowledge of the course material. The calendar of assignments is below:

Reading Quizzes: Eight total (15%); I will drop your lowest score

Two Vignettes: Date TBD (15%)

Country Presentation: February 25 – March 5 (10%)

Reading Response Paper: Thursday, March 24 (20%)

*Each student will read one of the biographies in **African Leaders of the Twentieth Century: Biko, Selassie, Lumumba, Sankara**. The response paper will discuss how the person's life reflects broader trends on the continent from the colonial and post-colonial periods.*

Research Paper:

Rough Draft: Thursday, April 16

Peer Review: Tuesday, April 21 (5%)

Final Draft: Thursday, April 30 (35%)

Extra Credit:

The African Studies Institute is holding four events this semester. I will add 2 points to your research paper grade for each event that you attend (8 points total). You must attend the entire event. Calendar of ASI events:

- 1) **February 13 at 4pm** (Zarrow 145): Dr. George Paul Meiu (Department of African and African American Studies, Harvard University): “Under Layers of Citizenship: Queer Objects, Intimate Revelations, and the Rescue Rush in Kenya”
- 2) Dr. Assan Sarr (Center on International Studies, Ohio University): “After the 2016 disputed elections in the Gambia: why are there more conflicts over land?”
- 3) **March 10**: Roundtable, “Arts in Contemporary Africa”
- 4) **April**: Film screening of *Ayanda and the Mechanic*

Class Policies: I do not take attendance or base your grade on participation. However, if you choose to be present in class, I expect you to respect the classroom. Your phone should be kept in your bag, and you should use your laptop exclusively for the class; e.g. taking notes, researching an idea or topic we are discussing. I will not accept late assignments unless you have a medical or personal emergency.

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to meet university standards for academic honesty on all course assignments. General information about these standards can be found at <http://integrity.ou.edu/>. You may also wish to consult the Student's Guide to

Academic Integrity, which is available at http://integrity.ou.edu/students_guide.html. If you have questions about how to avoid plagiarism, or about any other aspect of the university's policy on academic integrity, please contact me as soon as possible.

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 [\(405\) 325-4173](tel:4053254173)/TDD or [\(405\) 325-3852](tel:4053253852) Voice. More information is also available at: <http://www.ou.edu/content/drc.html> . The University of Oklahoma will reasonably accommodate otherwise qualified individuals with a disability unless such accommodation would pose an undue hardship, would result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of the service, program, or activity or in undue financial or administrative burdens.

Religious Observance: It is the policy of the University to excuse the absences of students that result from religious observances and to reschedule examinations and additional required classwork that may fall on religious holidays, without penalty.

Title IX Resources: For any concerns regarding gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, stalking, or intimate partner violence, the University offers a variety of resources, including advocates on-call 24.7, counseling services, mutual no contact orders, scheduling adjustments and disciplinary sanctions against the perpetrator. Please contact the Sexual Misconduct Office [405-325-2215](tel:4053252215) (8-5) or the Sexual Assault Response Team [405-615-0013](tel:4056150013) (24.7) to learn more or to report an incident.

Adjustments for Pregnancy/Childbirth Related Issues: Should you need modifications or adjustments to your course requirements because of documented pregnancy-related or childbirth-related issues, please contact your professor or the Disability Resource Center at 405/325-3852 as soon as possible. Also, see <http://www.ou.edu/eoo/faqs/pregnancy-faqs.html> for answers to commonly asked questions.

Mental Health Support Services: If you are experiencing any mental health issues that are impacting your academic performance, counseling is available at the University Counseling Center (UCC). The Center is located on the second floor of the Goddard Health Center, at 620 Elm Rm. 201, Norman, OK 73019. To schedule an appointment call (405) 325-2911. For more information please visit <http://www.ou.edu/ucc>.

Course Schedule and Readings

Week 1: The Politics of Talking about African Politics

Tuesday, January 14

Readings: NONE

Thursday, January 16

Readings:

Hatcher, Jessica. 2013. "Africa's Drinking Problem: Alcoholism on the Rise as Beverage Multinationals Circle" *Time*. <http://world.time.com/2013/08/09/africas-drinking-problem-alcoholism-on-the-rise-as-beverage-multinationals-circle/#ixzz2dNU8d1Oc>

Arit, John. 2013. "Confusing a Country for a Continent: How We Talk About Africa." *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/08/confusing-country-continent-how-we-talk-about-africa/311621/>

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/>

PART I: A SHORT HISTORY OF THE CONTINENT

Week 2: Precolonial African Politics & Society

Tuesday, January 21

Readings:

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

Achebe, Chinua. 1958. *Things Fall Apart*. Penguin Books (start reading).

Thursday, January 23

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.

Achebe, Chinua. 1958. *Things Fall Apart*. Penguin Books (keep reading).

**Quiz #1 today (map quiz)

Week 3: The Colonial Period

Tuesday, January 28

Readings:

Achebe, Chinua. 1958. *Things Fall Apart*. Penguin Books (finish reading).

Vignette: Von Trotha's Proclamation

Thursday, January 30

Readings:

Shillington, Kevin. *History of Africa*. Macmillan Publishers. Chapter 25-26: 388-416.

Vignette: The Aba Women's Riot

Week 4: Independence and the Postcolonial State

Tuesday, February 4

Readings:

Ade Ajayi, J.F. 1982. "Expectations of Independence." *Daedalus* 111(2), p. 1-9.

Vignette: March 6, 1957

**Reading Quiz #2 today

Thursday, February 6

Readings:

Young, Crawford. 2012. *The Postcolonial State in Africa*. The University of Wisconsin Press. Chapter 4: p. 122-157.

Vignette: Zombie and the Kalakuta Republic

Week 5: Patrimonial Rule

Tuesday, February 11

Readings:

Bratton, Michael and Nicolas van de Walle. 1997. *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2: p. 61 – 82.

Vignette: The African Versailles

Thursday, February 13

Readings:

"The Road to Hell Is Unpaved." *The Economist*. December 21, 2002.

Collier, Paul and Jan Willem Gunning. 1999. "Explaining African Economic Performance," *Journal of Economic Literature* 37(March): 64-111.

Vignette: The Cement Armada

Week 6: The Wave of Democratization

Tuesday, February 18

Readings:

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

Vignette: Villes Mortes

**Reading Quiz #3 today

Thursday, February 20

Readings:

In-class film

NO READING

PART II: CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN SOCIETY

Week 7: Identity: Ethnicity & Religion

Tuesday, February 25

Readings:

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

Vignette: The Death of S.M. Otieno

Thursday, February 27

Readings: Ellis, S. and G. ter Haar. 1998. “Religion and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa.” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 36(2), p. 175-201.

Vignette: The Return from Exile of Cheikh Amadou Bamba

Week 8: Customary Authority

Tuesday, March 3

Readings: Baldwin, Kate. 2016. *The Paradox of Traditional Chiefs in Democratic Africa*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2: p. 20 – 52.

Vignette: Ibrahim Mbombo Njoya and his brother Adamou Ndam

**Reading Quiz #4 today

Thursday, March 5

Readings:

Bob-Milliar, George M. 2009. "Chieftaincy, Diaspora and Development: The Institution of *Nkosuohene* in Ghana." *African Affairs*, 108: p.541-558.

Vignette: Mswati III

Week 9: Public Opinion

Tuesday, March 10

Readings:

Familiarize yourself with the Afrobarometer mission and data:

<http://afrobarometer.org/about>

Read through the Round 6 Questionnaire: <http://afrobarometer.org/data/merged-round-6-codebook-36-countries-2016>

Thursday, March 12

Readings:

Letsa, Natalie. 2017. "'The People's Choice': Popular (II) Legitimacy in Autocratic Cameroon." *Journal of Modern African Studies*. 55 (4): 647-679.

SPRING BREAK

PART III: CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN POLITICS

Week 10: Political Economy of Development

Tuesday, March 24

Readings:

Diamond, Jared. "The Shape of Africa" *National Geographic*: Sep. 2005. Vol. 208, No. 3; p. S25-30.

Rodney, Walter. 1972. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Verso Books. Chapter 3: 75-91.

Englebert, Pierre. 2002. *State Legitimacy and Development in Africa*. Lynne Rienner. Introduction, p.1-13.

*** *Reading response paper due today*

Thursday, March 26

Readings:

Matfess, H. 2015. "Rwanda and Ethiopia: Developmental Authoritarianism and the New Politics of African Strong Men." *African Studies Review* 58(2), p. 181-204.

Keefe, P.R. (2013). "Buried Secrets." *The New Yorker* (July 8, 2013), p. 50. Available online at: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/07/08/buried-secrets>

Vignette: ELF in Congo Brazzaville

**Reading Quiz #5 today

Week 11: Democracy and Authoritarianism

Tuesday, March 31

Readings:

Gyimah-Boadi, E. 2015. "Africa's Waning Democratic Commitment." *Journal of Democracy* 26(1), p. 101-113.

Vignette: The Assassination of Patrick Karegeya

Thursday, April 2

Readings:

Bleck, Jaimie and Nicolas van de Walle. 2019. *Electoral Politics in Africa Since 1990*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 3: 62-100.

Vignette: Ma Waxoon Waxeet

**Reading Quiz #6 today

Week 12: Elections

Tuesday, April 7

Readings:

Bleck, Jaimie and Nicolas van de Walle. 2019. *Electoral Politics in Africa Since 1990*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 7: 218-260.

Vignette: Bobi Wine

Thursday, April 9

Readings:

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.

Vignette: The Church in Kiambaa

**Reading Quiz #7 today

Week 13: Violence and War

Tuesday, April 14

Readings:

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.

Thursday, April 16

Readings:

French, Howard W. "Kagame's Hidden War in the Congo." *New York Times Review of Books*. September 24, 2009.
<https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2009/09/24/kagames-hidden-war-in-the-congo/>

***Rough draft of research paper due today

Week 14: Africa in the World

Tuesday, April 21

Readings:

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.

Amzat, Ajibola, Maite Vermeulen, and Giacomo Zandonini. "Europe Spends Billions Stopping Migration. Good Luck Figuring Out Where the Money Actually Goes." *The Correspondent*. December 2019. <https://thecorrespondent.com/154/europe-spends-billions-stopping-migration-good-luck-figuring-out-where-the-money-actually-goes/171168048128-fac42704>

Vignette: The Lake Turkana Fish Processing Plant

**Reading Quiz #8 today

Thursday, April 23

Readings:

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

Severine Autesserre. October 2015. "Trouble in Peaceland." *Foreign Policy*.

Vignette: AFRICOM

***Peer Review due today

Week 15: Africa Rising?

Tuesday, April 28

Readings:

“Emerging Africa: A Hopeful Continent.” *The Economist*. 406(8825): March 2, 2013.

Frankema, Ewout and Marlous van Waijenburg. “Africa Rising? A Historical Perspective.” *Africa is a Country*. October 17, 2018.

<https://africasacountry.com/2018/10/africa-rising-a-historical-perspective>

Thursday, April 30

Readings:

Branch, Adam and Zachariah Mampilly. 2015. *Africa Uprising*. Chapter 1: p. 1-13.

****Final draft of research paper due today*