

IAS Senior Capstone Seminar: Elections around the World

Department of International and Area Studies
University of Oklahoma
Spring 2023

Instructor: Professor Natalie Letsa

Class Schedule: T/Th 1:30 – 2:45pm; Farzaneh Hall 330

Office: Farzaneh Hall, Room 315

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

Email: nwletsa@ou.edu

Course Description

Nearly every country in the world today holds elections of some sort, yet no two elections are exactly alike. Depending on the rules of the game, the environment in which they are held, and the ways in which both candidates and voters choose to participate, the meaning and importance of elections varies drastically both within and across countries. By studying the differences between elections, the goal of the course is to: 1) better understand how elections have different meanings in different contexts, 2) articulate the relationship between democracy, governance, and elections, and 3) interrogate the question of why and if elections matter—and for whom.

Course Goals

First, students should leave the class with a working knowledge of basic facts about how elections vary and what impact this variation has for democratic governance. Second, students will spend the semester writing a capstone research paper, which will use their accumulated skills in research and writing.

Assignments and Grading

Class Participation: Students are expected to come to class having read the material and to participate thoughtfully in class discussion every week (15%)

Nigerian Election Update: TBD (15%)

Research Paper:

Paper Proposal: Thursday, February 2

Country Report: Thursday, March 9 (15%)

Country Presentation: March 21 – April 18 (10%)

Bibliography & Outline: Thursday, March 30 (10%)

Rough Draft: Thursday, April 20

Peer Review: Thursday, April 27 (5%)

Final Draft: Monday, May 8 (30%)

Week 1: The History of Elections

Tuesday, January 17

Readings: NONE

Thursday, January 19

Readings:

Stasavage, David. 2020. *The Decline and Rise of Democracy: A Global History from Antiquity to Today*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 1: p. 3-28.

“Countdown Begins to Nigeria’s Crucial 2023 Elections,” International Crisis Group, Q&A Africa. December 23, 2022.

Week 2: The History of Elections (cont’d)

Tuesday, January 24

Readings:

Stasavage, David. 2020. *The Decline and Rise of Democracy: A Global History from Antiquity to Today*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 9: p. 197-224.

Thursday, January 26

Readings:

Stasavage, David. 2020. *The Decline and Rise of Democracy: A Global History from Antiquity to Today*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 11: p.256-295.

Skim: Falola, Toyin and Matthew Heaton, 2008. *A History of Nigeria*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 9: 209-242.

Week 3: Electoral Systems & Rules

Tuesday, January 31

Readings:

Gallagher, Michael and Paul Mitchell. 2005. “Introduction to Electoral Systems,” in *The Politics of Electoral Systems*. Oxford University Press: p. 3-24.

Election Update: The Electoral System of Nigeria’s Fourth Republic

Thursday, February 2

Readings:

Ferree, Karen, G. Bingham Powell, and Ethan Scheiner. 2014. “Context, Electoral Rules, and Party Systems,” *Annual Review of Political Science*. Vol 17: 421-439.

Election Update: Nigeria’s Party System

Week 4: Research Topic Meeting

Tuesday, February 7

Readings:

NO CLASS: INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH INSTRUCTOR

Thursday, February 9

Readings:

NO CLASS: INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH INSTRUCTOR

Week 5: Candidates & Campaigns

Tuesday, February 14

Readings:

NONE: Research & Library Resources Session with Librarian Laurie Scrivener. Meet in Bizzell Library Classroom LL123.

Thursday, February 16

Readings:

Jacobson, Gary C. 2014. "How Do Campaigns Matter?" *Annual Review of Political Science*. Vol 18: 31-47.

Election Update: Bola Tinubu, Atiku Abubakar, & Peter Obi

Week 6: Campaign Issues & Media

Tuesday, February 21

Readings:

Van der Eijk, Cees and Mark N. Franklin. 2009. *Elections and Voters*. Palgrave Macmillan. Chapter 6: 146-178.

Election Update: Campaign Issues & Candidate Ownership

Thursday, February 23

Readings:

Owen, Diana, 2014. "New Media and Political Campaigns," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication Theory and Research*. Editors: Kate Kenski and Kathleen Hall Jamieson.

Election Update: Media & News in Nigeria

Week 7: Voters

Tuesday, February 28

Readings:

Van der Eijk, Cees and Mark N. Franklin. 2009. *Elections and Voters*. Palgrave Macmillan. Chapter 4: 87-117.

Thursday, March 2

Readings:

Letsa, Natalie. "Social Networks and Partisanship in Electoral Autocracies." *Working Paper*.

Election Update: The Results of the 2023 Nigerian Election

Week 8: Electoral Violence

Tuesday, March 7

Readings:

Birch, Sarah, Ursula Daxecker and Kristine Högland. 2020. "Electoral Violence: An Introduction," *The Journal of Peace Research*. Vol. 57(1): 3-14.

Thursday, March 9

Readings:

Dunning, Thad, 2011. "Fighting and Voting: Violent Conflict and Electoral Politics," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*. Vol. 55(3): 327-339.

***Country report due today

SPRING BREAK

Week 9: Election Monitoring

Tuesday, March 21

Readings:

Hyde, Susan D. and Judith G. Kelley. June 28, 2011. "The Limits of Election Monitoring: What Independent Observation Can (and Can't) Do," *Foreign Affairs*.

Hyde, Susan D. 2012. "Why Believe International Election Monitors?" in *The Credibility of Transnational NGOs*. Cambridge University Press.

Thursday, March 23

Readings:

TBD (Election report on the Nigerian election)

Week 10: Post-Election Disputes and Challenges

Tuesday, March 28

Readings:

Chernykh, Svitlana. 2014. "When do Political Parties Protest Election Results?"
Comparative Political Studies. Vol. 47(1): 1359-1383.

Thursday, March 30

Readings:

Omotola, J. Shola. 2010. "Mechanisms of Post-Election Conflict Resolution in Africa's
'new' Democracies," *African Security Review*. Vol. 19(2): 2-13.

*** *Bibliography & Outline due today*

Week 11: Research Meetings

Tuesday, April 4

Readings:

NO CLASS: INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH INSTRUCTOR

Thursday, April 6

Readings:

NO CLASS: INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH INSTRUCTOR

Week 12: Elections & Accountability

Tuesday, April 11

Readings:

Dunning, Thad, et al. *Information, Accountability, and Cumulative Learning*. Cambridge
University Press. Chapter 3: p. 50-63.

Thursday, April 13

Readings:

Choose ONE of the "Metaketa" studies to read (Benin, Mexico, Uganda, Burkina Faso,
or Brazil). Be prepared to summarize the study in class.

Week 13: Elections & Regime Type

Tuesday, April 18

Readings:

Gandhi, Jennifer and Ellen Lust-Okar. "Elections Under Authoritarianism," *Annual
Review of Political Science*. Vol. 12(1): 403-422.

Thursday, April 20

Readings:

Brownlee, Jason. "Executive Elections in the Arab World: When and How Do They
Matter?" *Comparative Political Studies*. 44(7): 807-828.

****Rough draft of research paper due today*

Week 14: Do Elections Matter?

Tuesday, April 25

Readings:

Edgell, Amanda, et al. "When and where do elections matter? A global test of the democratization by elections hypothesis, 1900–2010," *Democratization*, p. 422-444.

Thursday, April 27

Readings:

NO READINGS

****Peer Review due today*

Week 15: READING WEEK

Tuesday, May 3 & Thursday, May 5

NO CLASS THIS WEEK! WORK ON YOUR RESEARCH PAPERS!

****Final draft of research paper due Monday, May 8 at 1:30pm in my mailbox (Farzaneh 314)*

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.

Covid-19 Policies: I *emphatically, passionately, and enthusiastically* encourage students to wear face masks at all times—especially in class—and to maintain social distancing. [Current CDC guidance](#) advises all individuals, *even those who are fully vaccinated*, to wear a mask indoors in public if in an area of substantial transmission. Even though masking isn't required by law, we will hold it as a community expectation of one another to keep us safe and together. Students who are feeling ill or who have been exposed to an individual who tested positive for Covid-19 are asked to isolate and to notify the University through the [Healthy Together app](#). Accommodations will be provided for those who need to quarantine. *Revisions in the course content and design may be needed in case the instructor needs to be away from classes due to Covid-19.*

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:(405)325-4173)/TDD or [\(405\) 325-3852](tel:(405)325-3852) 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:405-325-2215) (8-5) or the Sexual Assault Response Team [405-615-0013](tel:405-615-0013) (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>.