

GOVT 1101.106: African Elections

Freshman Writing Seminar

Cornell University

Fall 2016

Instructor: Natalie Wenzell Letsa

Seminar: T Th 1:25-2:40 pm ; White Hall 104

Office: White Hall B03

Office Hours: By Appointment

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Course Description:

Elections have been held in Africa since colonial times, yet their forms and functions have varied considerably over the past century and across countries. What purposes do these elections hold and how are they similar or different from elections in Western countries? This course traces the evolution of elections in Africa since independence, focusing on current events, and explores the different roles they play in different contexts. The course discusses the evolving line between democracy and authoritarianism in Africa, and the role that elections play in demarcating that line. Through a series of related writing assignments culminating in an original research paper, students will learn to formulate and support arguments appropriate for the social sciences.

Learning Outcomes

There is one overarching writing goal for this course: to learn how to craft a convincing argument. Developing and supporting an argument lies at the very core of academic work, but effective argumentation is important for nearly every possible career (not to mention life in general!). While there are many important aspects of argumentation, this course will focus on two key facets. First, students will learn how to see the world in terms of inter-related variables instead of simply “random” events. By the end of the course, students will be able to make an argument in terms of the relationship between variables in the social world. Second, students will learn how every aspect of writing—from word choice to syntax to citation—is a tool to be used for the sole sake of effective argumentation. In addition to these analytical learning outcomes, students should also leave the class with a working knowledge of African geography and contemporary politics. Students will have a basic understanding of politics in every country in Africa, and in-depth knowledge of at least one country.

Assignments and Grading:

All assignments should be turned in BOTH as hardcopy on the day it is due and by email (njw57). Improvement over the course of the class is more important than raw talent. This is partially reflected in the weighting of assignments; the final paper is weighted much more heavily than earlier assignments. In addition, class participation is worth 20 percent of your grade, and *you are expected to contribute to class discussions every week*. Failure to do so will affect your final grade. The calendar of assignments is below:

Assignment 1: Introductory Assignment

Due: September 1

Assignment 2: Writing for Different Audiences

Part A (Think Tanks) Due: September 13

Part B (Op-Ed) Due: September 22 (10%)

Assignment 3: Crafting an Argument (10%)

Due: September 29

Assignment 4: Using Evidence to Support an Argument (15%)

Part A Due: October 18

Part B Due: November 3

Assignment 5: First Draft of Research Paper

Due: November 17

Peer Review of Draft Due: November 29 (5%)

Assignment 6: Final Research Paper (40%)

Due: Day of Final, TBA

Course Policies and Resources:

One-on-One Meetings

There will be two mandatory 15-minute one-on-one meetings scheduled during the semester. The first will be during Week 7 (October 3-7); the second will be during Week 12 (November 7-11). During these meetings we will discuss your overall progress in the course and strategies for improving your writing. You should come prepared to the meeting by reflecting on your own progress.

Computers in the Classroom

There will be no laptops or tablets permitted in seminar. The temptations of Facebook and Instagram are simply too strong, and I have found that the presence of laptops in small seminars detracts from the atmosphere of the classroom. Because of this policy, it is *required that you print all of the readings* and bring them with you to class. All readings are posted on Blackboard. You will note that there are no required books or textbooks for this course, which significantly cuts down on costs. Nonetheless, if printing the readings is prohibitively expensive for you, please meet with me and we will figure something out.

Cornell University Policies and Regulations:

Participation in this class commits students and instructors to abide by Cornell's expectations and policies regarding equal opportunity and academic integrity. Further, it implies permission from students to submit their written work to services that check for plagiarism (such as Turnitin.com). Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with university policies regarding plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity. In particular, please make yourself familiar with the definition of plagiarism, and be aware that you may not turn in the same piece of work (or part thereof) for credit in multiple classes, either in the same semester or while at Cornell in general. Violations of the University Code of Academic Integrity will be firmly dealt with in this class.

Course Schedule and Readings

Week 1: Introduction

Tuesday, August 23

Readings: None

Assignments: Assignment 1 Instructions, Map Activity instructions

Thursday, August 25

Readings: Young, Crawford, 2012. *The Postcolonial State in Africa*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press. Chapter 1: pp. 3-31.

Week 2: Functional Aspects of Elections

Tuesday, August 30

Readings: Orvis and Drogus, 2015. *Introducing Comparative Politics*. CQ Press (3rd edition), pp. 258-279, 324-347.

Assignments: Map Activity Due

Thursday September 1

Readings: NO CLASS TODAY

Assignments: Assignment 1 DUE

Week 3: Democracy and Authoritarianism

Tuesday, September 6

Readings: Schmitter, Philippe, and Terry Lynn Karl. 1991. "What democracy is... and is not." *Journal of Democracy*, pp. 75-88.

Assignments: Assignment 2 Part A instructions

Thursday, September 8

Readings: Schedler, Andreas. 2002. "The Menu of Manipulation." *Journal of Democracy* 12:2, pp.36-50.

Albaugh, Ericka A. 2011. "An Autocrat's Toolkit: Adaptation and Manipulation in 'Democratic' Cameroon." *Democratization*. 18(2) pp. 388-414.

Week 4: Case Study: Zambia

Tuesday, September 13

Readings: None

Assignments: Assignment 2 Part A DUE

Assignment 2 Part B instructions

Thursday, September 15

Readings: Readings on Zambia's 2016 elections: TBA

Week 5: The Third Wave

Tuesday, September 20

Readings: Bratton, Michael and Nicolas van de Walle, 1997. *Democratic Experiments in Africa*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Introduction and Chapter 3 (pp. 1-18; 97-127).

Assignments: Country Ballots Due

Thursday, September 22

Readings: None

Assignments: Assignment 2 Part B DUE

Assignment 3 Instructions

Week 6: Current Trajectories

Tuesday, September 27

Readings: Nic Cheeseman, 2015. *Democracy in Africa*, Chapter 3: pp. 86-113.

Lindberg, Staffan, 2006. *Democracy and Elections in Africa*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Chapter 3: pp. 52-70.

Thursday, September 29

Readings: None

Assignments: Assignment 3: DUE

Week 7: Ethnicity, Voting, and Patronage

Note: One-on-One Meetings this Week

Tuesday, October 4

Readings: Baldwin, Kate, 2013. "Why Vote with the Chief? Political Connections and Public Goods Provision in Zambia." *American Journal of Political Science*. 57(4) pp 794-809.

Posner, Daniel, 2005. *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 4: pp. 89-129

Assignments: Assignment 4, Part A Instructions

Thursday, October 6

Readings: None

Week 8: Partisanship and Voting

Tuesday, October 11

Readings: NO CLASS: Fall Break

Thursday, October 13

Readings: Bleck, Jaimie and Nicolas van de Walle. 2013. "Valence Issues in African Elections: Navigating Uncertainty and the Weight of the Past." *Comparative Political Studies*. 46(11): pp. 1394-1421.

Letsa, Natalie Wenzell. 2016. "The Autocratic Voter: A Theory of Non-Economic Participation with Evidence from Cameroon." *Working paper*.

Week 9: Country Presentations

Tuesday, October 18

Readings: None

Assignments: Country Presentations

Thursday, October 20

Readings: None

Assignments: Country Presentations
Assignment 4, Part B: Instructions

Week 10: Voting and Public Opinion

Tuesday, October 25

Readings: Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi, 2005. *Public Opinion, Democracy, and Market Reform in Africa*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 3 (pp. 65-96).

Thursday, October 27

Readings: Kuenzi, Michelle and Gina Lambright, 2011. "Who Votes in Africa? An examination of electoral participation in 10 African Countries." *Party Politics* (17): 6, 767-99.

Week 11: Protest

Tuesday, November 1

Readings: Branch and Mampilly, 2015. *Africa Uprising*. Chapter 4 (pp. 67-85).

Thursday, November 3

Readings: None

Assignments: Assignment 4, Part B: Due
Assignment 5 Instructions

Week 12: Electoral Violence

Note: One-on-One Meetings this Week

Tuesday, November 8

Readings: Burchard, Stephanie M., 2015. *Electoral Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner Press. Chapter 2 (pp. 23-54).

Thursday, November 10

Readings: None

Week 13: Democratization through Elections

Tuesday, November 15

Readings: Lindberg, Staffan, 2006. *Democracy and Elections in Africa*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Chapter 4: pp.71-98.

Thursday, November 17

Readings: None

Assignments: Assignment 5: DUE

Instructions for peer review

Week 14: Foreign Aid and Influence

Tuesday, November 22

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

Thursday, November 24

Readings: NO CLASS: Thanksgiving

Week 15: The Future of Democracy in Africa

Tuesday, November 29

Readings: Diamond, Jared, 2012. "What Makes Countries Rich or Poor?" *The New York Review of Books*. 7 June.

Assignments: Peer Review Due

Thursday, December 1

Readings: None