PSC/IR 260, 260W: Contemporary African Politics

University of Rochester
Fall 2014
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11:05am-12:20pm
Morey, 502

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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%
- Map quiz – 5%
- Midterm exam 1 – 25%
- Midterm exams 2 – 30%
- Midterm exams 3 – 30%
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. There will be a short in-class map quiz in session 5 (9/16), 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 3 in-class midterm exams in session 9 (9/30), session 18 (11/04), and session 28 (12/11), which will contribute 25%, 30% and 30% of your overall grade, respectively. The exams will contain short answer questions and essays. Plan you schedule carefully, as NO make-up exams will be given for the midterms. There is no cumulative final exam.

Students in the W sections: You are required to write a 3,500 word research 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. A 2-3 paragraph statement of your research topic will be due in Session 12 (10/09), in which you will identify the country that you will focus on, the key themes to be addressed in the paper, and 5-10 key sources. A draft of the paper is due in Session 20 (11/11). I shall correct and return it with comments in Session 22 (11/18), and a final revised version is due in Session 26 (12/04). Overall grades for students in the W sections will be based on: participation 10%, map quiz 5%, midterm exam 20%, essay 20%, final exam 20%, research paper 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 (emailed 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 a satisfactory grade for participation. 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://allafrica.com/)
- [http://www.democracyinafrica.co.uk/](http://www.democracyinafrica.co.uk/)

COURSE SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION

*Session 1 (9/02): Countries and Context*

*Recommended:*

SECTION 1 - HISTORICAL LEGACIES

Session 2 (9/04): Pre-colonial Africa


Session 3 (9/09): Legacies of pre-colonial rule


Session 4 (9/11): The slave trade


Session 5 (9/16): Colonial rule


Session 6 (9/18): Legacies of colonialism


Session 7 (9/23): Independence & Single party states


Session 8 (9/25): Democratization


Session 9 (9/30): Midterm 1
SECTION 2 - CORE CONCEPTS

Session 10 (10/02): The state of African politics


Session 11 (10/07): The State in African politics


Session 12 (10/09): Ethnicity


Session 13 (10/16): Clientelism


SECTION 3 - CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Session 14 (10/21): Economic development


Session 15 (20/23): Resource curse/Une earned income


Session 16 (10/28): Civil war


Session 17 (10/30): Ethnic politics

Session 18 (11/04): Midterm 2

Session 19 11/06): 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 20 (11/11): Vote-buying and clientelism


Session 21 (11/13): Voting behaviour


Session 22 (11/18): Political Parties


Session 23 (11/20): Elections and Accountability


Session 25 (12/02): Discussion of “An African Election”

Session 26 (12/04): Security (Terrorism & Piracy)


Session 27 (12/09): Conclusion


Session 28 (12/11): Midterm 3
APPENDIX: FURTHER READING

SECTION 1 - HISTORICAL LEGACIES

Session 2 (9/04): Pre-colonial Africa


Session 3 (9/09): Legacies of pre-colonial rule


Session 4 (9/11): The slave trade


Session 5 (9/16): Colonial rule


Session 6 (9/18): Legacies of colonialism

Session 7 (9/23): Independence & Single party states

- Lumumba (film)
- Mobutu, King of Zaire (film)

Session 8 (9/25): Democratization


SECTION 2 - CORE CONCEPTS

Session 10 (10/02): The state of African politics


Session 11 (10/07): The State in African politics


Session 12 (10/09): Ethnicity


Session 13 (10/16): Clientelism

SECTION 3 - CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Session 14 (10/21): Economic development


Session 15 (10/23): Resource curse/Unearned income


Session 16 (10/28): Civil war


Session 17 (10/30): Ethnic politics


Session 19 (11/06): Electoral fraud and violence

- Beber, Bernd and Alexandra Scacco. 2012. ”What the Numbers Say: A Digit-Based Test for Election Fraud.” Political Analysis (advance access).

**Session 20 (11/11): Vote-buying and clientelism**


**Session 21 (11/13): Voting behaviour**


**Session 22 (11/18): Political Parties**


**Session 23 (11/20): Elections and Accountability**


**Session 26 (12/04): Security (Terrorism & Piracy)**