

Introduction to African Politics

OFFICIAL COURSE DESCRIPTION

This introductory course focuses on political processes in Africa from a comparative political perspective, aiming at introducing students to the field of African politics. It will allow them to better understand the theoretical approaches used in the study of the political dynamics of this continent including but not limited to the construction of the state, political economy, political regimes, and identities. These different analytical approaches serve to apprehend concrete cases. Thus, the course will also have an important empirical component both in the readings and in the examples used during the classroom sessions. For instance, students will be able to familiarize themselves with African contexts such as DRC, Mali, Ethiopia, Ghana, Angola, Liberia, Kenya, Benin, etc.

- 1) **Analytical objective:** you will learn a variety of theoretical approaches and conceptual tools to analyze key political developments unfolding in Africa. Theories and approaches to study processes of state-building, political economy issues and politics of identities will be discussed.
- 2) **Empirical objective:** You will learn about the major socio-political developments in contemporary Africa, as well as their pre-colonial and colonial historical roots. Africa is made of 54 states and though it is obviously impossible to cover in detail the politics of each country, we will look at all the regions of Africa, using specific countries as case studies.

The focus of the course is on Africa, but the analytical approaches it uses should help the students to think more broadly and compare political phenomena *across* Africa and *outside* of Africa.

TEACHING METHOD:

Each course will be divided as follow: 1- Magistral lecture; 2- Discussion on the readings.

- **Compulsory Readings:** ALL compulsory readings are...compulsory!
- **Attendance is mandatory:** Class attendance is necessary to successfully complete this course. Absences of more than 1 course will result in a failing grade.
- **Missed deadlines:** No late assignments will be accepted without an authentic note. The professor can ask you to certify your note by the relevant authorities.

«Absence from any examination or test, or late submission of assignments due to illness, psychological problems or exceptional personal circumstances must be justified; otherwise, students will be penalized».

- **Electronic devices:** The use of electronic devices is forbidden in class (this includes laptops, smart phones, etc.). Our class time is short, and the temptations of the Internet are strong. To ensure that our meetings are focused and productive, I ask that you refrain from using a laptop, iPad, cell phone, or any other device with a screen during class. If it is absolutely necessary that you use an electronic device in class, please speak to me individually.

“These analyses indicated that participants who did not use any technologies in the lectures outperformed

students who used some form of technology...[A]ttempting to attend to lectures and engage digital technologies for off-task activities can have a detrimental impact on learning.”¹

“We found that participants who multitasked on a laptop during a lecture scored lower on a test compared to those who did not multitask, and participants who were in direct view of a multitasking peer scored lower on a test compared to those who were not...[M]ultitasking on a laptop poses a significant distraction to both users and fellow students and can be detrimental to comprehension of lecture content.”²

- **Be aware of fraud:** PLAGIARISM is taking another person’s words, ideas or statistics and passing them off as your own. The complete or partial translation of a text written by someone else also constitutes plagiarism if you do not acknowledge your source.

Principles and rules

- When borrowing another person’s words, use quotation marks and include complete reference (author’s name, date, pages).
- Internet sources must also be acknowledged.
- When borrowing another person’s ideas, acknowledge their origin.
- Do not paraphrase another writer’s words and pass them off as your own.

ASSIGNMENTS

Evaluation	Description	%	Date
Map Quiz	On a blank map of Africa, identify 20 countries that I will have randomly selected	Bonus 5%	Surprise! Could be during any class.
Participation	Attendance and participation in class (questions and comments)	10%	
Term Paper	You will have to answer one question (among the three proposed) for the essay. The answer should be between 1200 and 1500 words, typed in Time New Roman, double spaced, excluding bibliography. Should be submitted on Moodle, three weeks after the last course. No extension granted.	90%	Submitted on Moodle . Three weeks after the last class. Date to be confirmed.

¹Wood *et al.*, “Examining the impact of off-task multi-tasking with technology on real-time classroom learning », *Computers & Education*, no.58 (2012), pp. 365-374.

²Sana *et al.*, “Laptop multitasking hinders classroom learning for both users and nearby peers,” *Computers & Education* no. 62 (2013): pp. 24-31.

Course Outline and Compulsory Readings

Topic 1: Authority during the colonial period

*Jeffrey Herbst (2000), "Power and Space in Precolonial Africa" in *States and Power in Africa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press): pp. 35-57.

*Crawford Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven, YUP, 1994): pp. 141-182.

Benoit Henriët, 2015, "Elusive natives': Escaping colonial control in the Leverville oil palm concession, Belgian Congo, 1923–1941", *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 49, no. 2, pp. 339-361.

Topic 2

Post-colonial authority and legitimacy: what state, what regime, whose authority?

Nicolas Van de Walle, 2003, "Presidentialism and clientelism in Africa's emerging party systems", *The journal of modern African studies*, vol. 41, no. 2, pp. 297-321.

Hüsken, Thomas, and Georg Klute. "Political Orders in the Making: Emerging Forms of Political Organization from Libya to Northern Mali." *African Security* 8, no. 4 (2015): 320–37.

Lavers, Tom, and Festus Boamah. "The Impact of Agricultural Investments on State Capacity: A Comparative Analysis of Ethiopia and Ghana." *Geoforum* 72 (June 2016): 94–103.

Topic 3

The Political Economy of African States

Amundsen, Inge. "Drowning in Oil: Angola's Institutions and the 'Resource Curse.'" *Comparative Politics* 46, no. 2 (2014): 169–89.

Gilfoy, K. (2015). Land grabbing and NGO advocacy in Liberia: A deconstruction of the 'homogeneous community'. *African Affairs*, 114(455), 185-205

Jerven, M. (2016). Research note: Africa by numbers: Reviewing the database approach to studying African economies. *African Affairs*, 115(459), 342-358.

Topic 4
The Politics of Identities in Africa

Julie MacArthur, "When did the Luyia (or any other group) become a tribe [Kenya]?" *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 47.3 (2013): 351-363.

Jeffrey Kahn, "Policing 'Evil': State-sponsored Witch-hunting in the People's Republic of Bénin," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 41.1 (2011), 4-34

Geschiere, Peter, and Stephen Jackson. "Autochthony and the Crisis of Citizenship: Democratization, Decentralization, and the Politics of Belonging." *African Studies Review* 49, no. 2 (October 12, 2006): 1-7.