

DR. RICHARD L. WHITEHEAD

Course Sample Proposed Course on Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa

Course Introduction

Politics in Africa south of the Saharan Desert challenge some of our most basic understandings of democratic governance, development, and human rights. Since the early 1990s, nearly every African country has traversed the path from military or single-party rule, to rule based upon multiparty elections. However, democratic governance still eludes most of the Continent. Since the days of African independence, starting with Sudan and Ghana in the late 1950s, African governments, and a plethora of international actors, articulated and implemented a variety of developmental frameworks guided by the hope of attaining economic prosperity and security. Yet, poverty and economic stagnation persist as much today as in the past. The aspirations of peace and tranquility have been widely proclaimed by state leaders. Still, some of the world's deadliest conflicts are found on the African Continent. In short, there is enough "doom and gloom" in Africa today to shock even our wildest imaginations and challenge some of our basic assumptions about humanity.

While doom and gloom is what we commonly see in the images filtered through the media, having traveled throughout the Continent on numerous occasions, I can say that Africa is one of the world's most inspiring and spectacular places to be. Why? While the conditions that prevail in Africa are enough to try the most resilient personalities, Africans are perhaps some of the world's most hope filled people. In few other places will you have the chance to meet folks more determined to make the most of a bad situation, folks determined to forgive others for some of the most heinous atrocities, and folks more willing to share what little wealth they have. It is the intensity of this contrast between doom and gloom on one hand, and hope and inspiration on the other hand, that makes Africa so intellectually interesting and emotionally challenging. The goal of this course is to give you a sample of this contrast by taking us on a brief tour of some of the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of politics in Africa south of the Sahara.

Part One. Pre-Colonial, Colonial, and Independence Politics

The first component of this course briefly explores Africa from pre-colonial times, through the tragedies of the colonial period, and up to the jubilant days leading to independence. Part one will introduce several essential themes, as they thread together the disparate course segments into an overarching theme of African empowerment. First, the seemingly arbitrary delineation of boundaries between African states, between identities, and between Africa and international power politics, constitutes a lasting challenge for achieving peace, economic security, and local empowerment. Secondly, today, as in the colonial past, the integration of Africa into the global economy is based largely on the supply of primary ordered commodities, such as coffee, copper, timber, and oil, with relatively high price volatility on global markets. Finally, while the nature of development assistance today (or lack thereof) has lost the racial overtones found in colonialism and modernization theory, race still plays a strong role in steering the

international neglect of Africa and the sometimes paternalistic character of international aid. In short, from a historical perspective, one the main challenges that has faced the African Continent in the past as well as today has been the empowerment of Africans to shape their own politics, engage in their own profitable business ventures, and to engage in international economics and politics from a position of equal footing with others.

Some of the issues more specific to part one will address the following questions. What were the structures and actions of politics prior to, and after the onset of colonial rule? Was pre-colonial society really composed of warring “tribal” factions and unchecked tribal leaders? By contrast, how much truth is found in the romanticized notion of pre-colonial society composed of tightly knit kinship networks living in mutual harmony? What were the multiple reasons for colonial conquest and how did colonialism alter Africa’s pre-colonial political affairs? Finally, what conditions provided African activists with the opportunities for challenging colonial rule? How did these emerging leaders and nascent movements use these opportunities to legitimate anti-colonial struggles?

Part Two. Post-Independence Politics: From Authoritarian Rule to Political Reform.

While part one deals with colonial rule and the African reaction to it, part two deals with the immediate post-colonial legacies of colonial rule, namely the fragmented but abrasive nature of societal conflict, and independence leaders aspiring to create modern nation-states with the ability to gain international recognition. The first topic to emerge in part two takes a broad swipe at the concept of “strong societies and weak states.” While the readings under this section are diverse, the one theme common to them deals with the challenges of establishing state authority and control in Africa, where peripheries are sparsely populated and peoples divided and united based upon ideational and territorial demarcations concocted by colonial rulers.

The second section of part two looks more directly into the institutional consequences of societal challenges to nation-state creation, and the consequences of an international climate concerned first and foremost about resource extraction and Cold War political alignments. These institutions include various forms of authoritarian rule, the spread of patron-client ties as a mechanism for social control, and the expansion of criminal networks as resources for ensuring regime tenure, as well as resources for challenging that tenure. This section will also look at some of the more notable events taking place after independence, including the seemingly perpetual occurrence of coups and the emergence of states that failed to secure stable administrative and territorial control.

Section three deals with the economic and political fallout of authoritarian rule, including economic malaise, the lack of political accountability, and the spread of pervasive corruption. Each of these in turn provide the impetuses for domestic and international demands for economic liberalization and multiparty reform, demands that gained potency once the Cold War power rivalries subsided in the late 80s and early 90s.

Part Three. Contemporary Issues of African Politics.

Part three, which is by far the largest segment of this course, touches on some of the most important issues defining contemporary African politics. Topics covered in sections six through ten are ones that

provide some assessment of the successes and failures of economic and political reforms. These topics include democratic governance and semi-authoritarian rule, conflict and peace, corruption and accountability, repression and human rights, and economic growth and poverty.

By turning the attention to the relations between Africa and international politics, sections eleven and twelve resurrect some of the themes covered in the first part of the course. Section eleven broadly addresses topics like international aid and the rise of China and India as major foreign players in African affairs. Section twelve will integrate major topics covered in previous sections by asking about the degree to which Africa's current international standing is simply a new form of colonialism. Is politics in Africa today simply a reflection of a sort of continued political collusion between the economic needs of developed countries and the consumption demands of Africa's elites? How have recent political changes, namely the citizen expectations of some semblance of democracy, challenged that collusion? What does the future of African empowerment look like?

Class Structure

Classes will include lectures and discussions in line with the course progression listed below. As for the discussions specifically, the topics will generally revolve around a news event as it relates to a particular lecture topic. The goal is to provide you with practice in applying course topics to current events. Bringing a current and relevant topic up for class discussion is highly encouraged. So, please, stay on top of the news and be ready to participate, learn, and have a bit of intellectual fun in the process. Furthermore, disagreement during debates is encouraged and must be respected. Please remember, freedom of speech is to be honored, but so too is the responsibility of respecting others.

Assignments and Grading

The following is a breakdown of graded assignments. Please note, the readings are meant to supplement rather than duplicate discussion topics and lectures. Therefore, you will have difficulty performing well if you fail to attend class AND do the assigned readings.

- Mid-term: 25%
- Final: 25%

I also offer students the chance to demonstrate their writing and analytic abilities through two writing assignments. First, in order to encourage students to follow the news during the span of the course (and hopefully beyond), you will be asked to submit five small current event reports concerning the topic of the course. Each submission is worth five points and will be assessed based up your efforts at synthesizing course topics and current events. Secondly, you will be asked to submit a 15 to 20 page thesis. Although you have wide latitude of topic choice, it must again be within the scope of the course and be approved by me prior to submission.

- Reports: 25% (5 points each)
- Thesis: 25%

Required Reading

The following is a list of materials handed out at the start of this course. Readings here include materials from the three volumes available at the campus book store.

- PS 322 African Politics course reader with CDROM or USB jump drive.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. (1996). *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*.
- Chazan, Naomi et. Al. (1999). *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa*.

The remaining materials are internet articles and videos. Links are provided below.

Part 1: Pre-Colonial, Colonial, and Independence Politics.

Section 1. Pre-Colonial Politics, Colonialism and Colonial Rule

- Davison, Jean. (1997). *Gender, Lineage and Ethnicity in Southern Africa*. Chapter 1.
- Olaniyan, Tesjumola. (1995). *Scars of Conquest/Masks of Resistance*. pp. 1-38.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. (1996). *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Chapters 1-3.
- Grovogui, S.N. (1996). *Sovereigns, Quasi Sovereigns, and Africans*. pp. 1-41.
- YouTube Video. 'Introduction to Colonialism in Africa'.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CM2Xa12YsX0&NR=1>.

Section 2. The Politics of Independence:

- The New Internationalist. (1999). 'The Heart of Africa. Interview with Julius Nyerere on Anti-Colonialism'. <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/30/049.html>.
- Kenyatta, Mzee Jomo. (1965). 'Mzee Jomo Kenyatta Speech Madaraka Day'. Audio clip in course multimedia packet.
- Nkrumah, Kwame. (1960). 'Address to the United Nations General Assembly'.
<http://www.nkrumah.net/un-1960/kn-at-un-1960-01.htm>.
- YouTube Video. 'Decolonization in Africa (Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Toure)'.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6w8m0DK3hc&feature=related>
- Tangri, Roger K. (1968). 'The Rise of Nationalism in Colonial Africa: The Case of Colonial Malawi'. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 10, no. 2.
- Grovogui, S.N. (1996). *Sovereigns, Quasi Sovereigns, and Africans*. chapter 5.

Part 2: Post Independence Politics from Authoritarian Rule to Political Reform

Section 3. Strong Societies, Weak States. Readings:

- Zolberg, Aristide. (1966). *Creating Political Order: The Party-States of West Africa*. Chapters 1 and 5.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. (1996). *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Chapters 6 and 8.
- Herbst, Jeffrey. (2000). *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Chapter 1.

Section 4. Authoritarian regimes-Military, Single-Party, and Other. Readings

- Chehabi, H.E. and Juan Linz. (1998). *Sultanistic Regimes*. Chapter 1.
- J-F Bayart. 1999. *The Criminalization of the State in Africa*. Chapters 1, 3, 4
- Decalo, Samuel. (1990). *Coups & Army Rule in Africa: Motivations & Constraints (2nd ed)*. pp. 1-32.
- Bratton, Michael & Nicholas Van de Walle. (1997). *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transformation in Comparative Perspective*. Chapter 2.
- Chazan, Naomi et. Al. *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa*. Chapter 5.

Section 5. The Road to Reform.

- Bienen, Henry & Jeffrey Herbst (1996). 'The Relationship between Political and Economic Reform in Africa.' *Comparative Politics*, 29, no. 1.
- Olukoshi, Adebayo. (1998). *The Politics of Opposition in Contemporary Africa*. Chapters 1, 2, and 8.
- Bratton, Michael & Nicholas Van de Walle. (1997). *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transformation in Comparative Perspective*. Chapter 2.

Part 3: Contemporary Politics Issues

Section 6: Conflict and Peace

- Bratton, Michael. & E. Masunungure. (2006). 'Popular reactions to state repression: Operation Murambatsvina in Zimbabwe'. *African Affairs*, 106, no. 422.
- Elbadawi, I. & N. Sambanis. (2000). 'Why are there so many civil wars in Africa? Understanding and preventing violent conflict'. *Journal of African Economics*, 9, no. 3.
- Chazan, Naomi et. Al. (1999). *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa*. Chapter 4, 7.
- Ali, Taisier M. & Robert O. Matthews. (1999). *Civil Wars in Africa: Roots and Resolutions*. Chapter 9.
- Kiai, Maina. (2008). 'Crisis in Kenya'. *Journal of Democracy*, 19, no. 3.
- AllAfrica. (2008). 'Uganda: Schools to Add Conflict Resolution to Syllabus'. Available in multimedia course packet.
- PBS NewsHour. (1996). 'Charlayne Hunter-Gault Interviews former Tanzanian President Julius K. Nyerere about seeking an end to ethnic conflict in the Great Lakes Region of Africa'. http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/africa/december96/nyerere_12-27.html.

- YouTube Video. 'Excerpt from the film Uganda Rising'.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pw12KGSj53k&NR=1>

Section 7: Democratic Governance and Semi-Authoritarian Rule

- Chazan, Naomi et. Al. (1999). *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa*. Chapter 8.
- van de Walle, Nicolas. (2003). *Presidentialism and Clientelism in Africa's Emerging Party Systems*. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41, 2, pp. 297-321.
- Diamond, Larry. 'The Rule of Law versus the Big Man'. *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 2 (2008):138-149.
- Lemarchand, René. (2006). 'Consociationalism and Power-Sharing in Africa: Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.' *African Affairs*, 106, 422, pp. 1-20.
- Bratton, Michael and Eric Chang. (2006). 'State Building and Democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa: Forwards, Backwards, or Together?'. *Comparative Political Studies*, 39. No. 1059.
- Barkan, Joel D. (2008). 'Legislatures on the Rise'. *Journal of Democracy*, 19, no. 2.

Section 8: Corruption and Accountability

- Bayart, J-F. (2009). *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly (2nd ed)*. chapter 1 and conclusion.
- Erdmann, Gero. (2007). *Neopatrimonialism Reconsidered: A Critical Review and Elaboration of an Elusive Concept*. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 45, 1, pp. 95-119.
- Bryan, Shari & Barrie Hofman. (2007). 'Transparency and Accountability in Africa's Extractive Industries'. pp. 14-35. In multimedia packet.
- Chêne, Marie. (2008). 'Organized Crime and Corruption'. *U4 Helpdesk*.
<http://www.u4.no/helpdesk/helpdesk/query.cfm?id=171>.
- 'Corruption in South Africa: Stop that Virus'. (2010, 4 Feb). *The Economist*.
http://www.economist.com/world/middle-east/displaystory.cfm?story_id=15464513.

Section 8: Repression and Human Rights

- Tripp, Aili Mari. (2000). *Political Reform in Tanzania: The Struggle for Associational Autonomy*. *Comparative Politics*, 32, 2, pp. 191-214
- 'Children Under Arms'. (1999, 10 July) *The Economist*.
- Goheen, Miriam. (1996). *Men Own the Fields, Women Own the Crops: Gender and Power in the Cameroon Grasslands*. pp. 3-46.
- Amnesty International. (2010). 'Guinea: You Did Not Want the Military, so Now We are going to Teach You A Lesson'. <http://bit.ly/aNe6TL>
- Dunton, Chris and Mail Palmburg. (1996). *Human Rights and Homosexuality in Southern Africa*. pp. 8-28.
- BBC. (2010, 23 Feb). 'Religion, politics and Africa's homophobia'.

Section 10: Economic Growth and Poverty

- Bates, Robert. (2005). *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policy (2nd Ed)*. chapters 1 and 2.

- Collier, Paul. (2007). *The Bottom Billion*. chapters 1 and 2.
- UNESCO. (2002). Social Capital and Poverty Reduction: Which Role for the Civil Society Organizations and the State?. pp. 20-44. In multimedia packet.
- Harsch, Ernest. (2001). 'Child Labor Rooted in Africa's Poverty'. *Africa Recovery*, 15, no. 3.
- BBC. (2009, 1 Oct.). 'Malawi Windmill Boy with Big Fans'. In multimedia packet.
- The Huffington Post. (2010, 25 Feb.). 'Africa's Urban Transformation: Signs of Opportunity and Hope'. In multimedia packet.

Section 11: Regional and International Affairs

- Goran Hyden, *African Politics in Comparative Perspective*. chapter 10
- Chappell, Peter. (1997). 'Our Friends at the Bank'. Film to be view in class
- Mkandawire, P.T. and C. Soludo. (1999). *Our Continent, Our Future*. chapter 3.
- Cheru, Fantu. (2010). *The Rise of China and India in Africa: Challenges, Opportunities and Critical Interventions*. chapter 15 and 19.

Section 12: Neo-Colonialism

- Grovogui, S.N. (1996). *Sovereigns, Quasi Sovereigns, and Africans*. pp. 179-208.
- Cheru, Fantu. (2010). *The Rise of China and India in Africa: Challenges, Opportunities and Critical Interventions*. chapter 12.
- Anderson, Jon Lee. (2000, 14 August). 'Letter from Angola: Oil and Blood'. *The New Yorker*. pp. 46-59.
- Oxfam. (2002). *Mugged: Poverty in Your Coffee Cup*. pp. 1-37
- DailyMotion. 'Black Gold'. Film to be watched at home (watch all 8 segments).
http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x8rd0p_black-gold-part-1-of-8_news.