

P08040

African Politics

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**\*\*\*\*Please note this syllabus is a draft. Details may be subject to change\*\*\*\***

## **Course description**

Fifty years after decolonization, Africa continues to be the poorest continent. This course will explore why this is the case. We will look at the most commonly cited explanations: the nature of pre-colonial polities; the legacy of colonialism; post-colonial experiences of authoritarian rule; recent moves towards democracy and the enduring influence of ethnicity; Africa's relationship with the rest of the world; and the high prevalence of conflict. Engaging with both established theories and emerging research, the course will challenge stereotypical views of African states and provide a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of African politics.

## **Learning outcomes**

On successful completion of this module students should be able to:

- Understand the fundamental dynamics of politics in African states
- Critically review competing explanations for why Africa continues to be the poorest continent
- Analyze the roles of different governance actors (International financial institutions, donors, elites, and civil society) in the political economy of African states
- Describe the trajectory of African states in the twentieth century

## **Course structure**

There will be 5 weekly seminars of 2 hours and is worth 5 ECTS credits. Attendance at these seminars is compulsory. Please contact me in advance by email if you cannot make a seminar.

## **Assessment**

1. Participation (20%): Each week you will sign up to play one of three roles in the class, which your participation grade for that class will be based on.

- Media briefing (5%): in one of the five classes you will give the class a short briefing (no more than 5 minutes) on how the topic and readings under discussion that week is playing out currently in the news in the global south. You should think about how the academic literature and debate helps us understand what is going on, or how it is not helpful. The briefing should include a very brief summary of the events you are analyzing.

- Peer-teaching and participation in discussion (15%): The class will involve both discussion in smaller groups, where you will explain the reading you have signed up for the week before to the group as well as general discussion addressed to the overarching topic that week. In thinking about how to explain your reading to the group you should reflect on the best teaching experiences you have had and the elements that you think are important to help others learn. You can use the board, multi-media or any other means of communication you think will be effective in helping others to learn. Don't be afraid to be creative!

## 2. Response papers (20%):

Students are expected to submit **four short response papers** (of 500-600 words). Each paper is worth 5% of the student's total mark. Papers should be submitted in weeks 2-5 of the module. Papers are **due at midnight on the day before the seminar**.

All response papers should be submitted via Turnitin.

A response paper should critically evaluate one or more of the readings. The best response papers usually make one strong point. Students can use their paper to identify a limitation in a reading, suggesting ways to address it. Alternatively, they can compare papers, suggest policy implications, or defend a paper.

## 3. Final Assignment (60%)

The final assignment has two parts.

In the first part (55%) you will write an academic paper answering the following question:

'Why is Africa the poorest continent?' Focusing on one or more of the four topics studied on the course make an argument for what factor(s) you think most persuasively explain why levels of development in African states lag behind other regions. You should critically engage with the scholarly debate on the factors you have identified as having the most explanatory power as well as those which you feel are less important. Where possible provide empirical examples to illustrate your argument.

The assignment should be approximately 2,500 words in length (+/- 10%) excluding notes/bibliography. Exceeding the limit will result in deduction of marks.

In the second part (5%) you will communicate your key arguments in a non-academic medium in a way that will be accessible to non-specialists. This could include a blog, vlog, documentary or podcast on the factor(s) you have identified as explaining why Africa is poor.

Essays must be submitted via Turnitin. In order to submit papers via Turnitin. You must first enrol in the class using the following information: Class id: 19733457. Enrollment key: africa

## **Academic Dishonesty and Citations**

The university takes plagiarism very seriously. There are severe penalties associated with passing someone else's work off as one's own. This includes plagiarizing the work of others, using an essay writing service, or any similar activity. All written assignments will pass through an electronic plagiarism checker. Remember that careless note-taking can lead to this happening: remember to enclose direct quotations in quotation marks, and even when paraphrasing, ensure that a reference is provided.

The university's policy regarding plagiarism can be found at:

<http://www.tcd.ie/undergraduate-studies/general-regulations/plagiarism.php>.

Please use the Harvard style of citations with the authors name, year of publication and page reference in brackets in the text and the full quotation in the reference list at the end of the essay. Wikipedia, blogs, and other such online sources might be useful as a first step but they should not be relied upon when writing essays.

*These readings are subject to change. Additional material may be added.*

## **Week 1: Introduction to African Politics**

Miguel, Edward, et al. 2008. "Is it Africa's Turn: Progress in the World's Poorest Regions." *New Democracy Forum* (May/June): pp. 7-20.

<http://pscourses.ucsd.edu/poli120p/MiguelEtAl2008.pdf>

## **Week 2: The state in Africa**

Key questions: what is the nature of the state in Africa? How do pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial legacies matter?

### *Required readings*

Herbst, Jeffrey. *States and power in Africa*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014. Chpt 2 &3

Van de Walle, Nicolas. *African economies and the politics of permanent crisis, 1979-1999*. Cambridge University Press, 2001. Chpt 3

Chabal, Patrick, and Jean-Pascal Daloz. 1999. *Africa works: disorder as political instrument*. London: International African Institute, p. xv-16

## **Week 3: Internal and External Actors**

Key question: what is most responsible for economic crisis in Africa: the actions of African elites, the choices of international actors or the nature of contemporary capitalism?

*Required readings*

Clapham, Christopher. *Africa and the international system: The politics of state survival*. Vol. 50. Cambridge University Press, 1996. Pgs 1-27

Van de Walle, Nicolas. *African economies and the politics of permanent crisis, 1979-1999*. Cambridge University Press, 2001. Chpt 4 and pgs 273-9

Arrighi, Giovanni. The African Crisis. *New Left Review*. *New Left Review* 15, May-June 2002, <https://newleftreview.org/II/15/giovanni-arrighi-the-african-crisis>

Herbst, Jeffrey. "The structural adjustment of politics in Africa." *World Development* 18.7 (1990): 949-958.

#### **Week 4: Identity and Democracy in Africa**

Key questions: What is the state of democracy in Africa? Why has democracy failed to deliver prosperity? How does ethnicity and why does ethnicity matter?

*Required readings*

Cheeseman, Nic. *Democracy in Africa: Successes, failures, and the struggle for political reform*. Vol. 9. Cambridge University Press, 2015. Chpt 1

Lindberg, Staffan I. "'It's Our Time to' Chop": Do Elections in Africa Feed Neo-Patrimonialism rather than Counter-Act It?." *Democratization* 10, no. 2 (2003): 121-140.

Taylor, Charles Fernandes, Jon CW Pevehouse, and Scott Straus. "Perils of pluralism: Electoral violence and incumbency in sub-Saharan Africa." *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 3 (2017): 397-411.

Carlson, Elizabeth. "Ethnic voting and accountability in Africa: A choice experiment in Uganda." *World Politics* 67, no. 2 (2015): 353-385.

#### **Week 5: Conflict in Africa**

Key questions: why are African countries prone to conflict? Is ethnic diversity what ails African states?

*Required readings*

Keen, David. "Greedy elites, dwindling resources, alienated youths the anatomy of protracted violence in Sierra Leone." *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft* 2 (2003): 67-94.

Uvin, Peter. "Ethnicity and power in Burundi and Rwanda: Different paths to mass violence." *Comparative politics* (1999): 253-271.

Klaus, Kathleen, and Matthew I. Mitchell. "Land grievances and the mobilization of electoral violence: Evidence from Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya." *Journal of Peace Research* 52, no. 5 (2015): 622-635.

### **Media resources**

BBC Africa Today podcast:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02nrtyw/episodes/downloads>

NPR: <https://www.npr.org/sections/africa/?t=1543310804376>

All Africa: <https://allafrica.com>

Africa Confidential: <https://www.africa-confidential.com/news>

Democracy in Africa: <http://democracyinafrica.org>

National newspapers: eg The Standard Kenya:

<https://www.standardmedia.co.ke>; The Ghanaian Times:

<http://www.ghanaiantimes.com.gh>; The Guardian Nigeria: <https://guardian.ng>