

POU44040 — African Politics

Module Information	
Module Code	POU44040
Module Title	African Politics
Department	Political Science
Year Group	Senior Sophister
Module Personnel	Michelle D’Arcy
Academic Year	2026–27
Credit Weighting	10 credits
Semester	Both
Contact Hours	One 2-hour seminar per week

Module Content	
Module Description	<i>Engaging with both established theories and emerging research, the course will challenge some stereotypical views of African states and provide a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of politics in African countries. During the course we will look at the legacies of pre-colonial period, slavery, colonialism, post-colonial experiences of authoritarian rule, recent moves towards democracy, the causes and consequences of economic crisis, and issues such as gender, environmental crisis and migration. Please note this module is taught entirely through seminars where you will be expected to have done the readings and contribute actively to the debate. The teaching approach emphasizes active learning and rewards consistent engagement. The assignments will ask for original research and creative engagement.</i>
Module Learning Aims	<i>To develop an understanding of the major issues, actors and trends shaping politics in African states today and the key theories that help to explain these dynamics.</i>
Learning Outcomes	<i>On successful completion of this module students should be able to:</i>

Module Content

	<i>Discuss the roles of different governance actors (elites, civil society, International financial institutions, donors) in the political economy of African states</i> <i>Appreciate the complexity of pre-colonial African polities and the impact of slavery on African states and on the global economy.</i> <i>Understand authoritarian post-colonial African regimes and the reasons why democratization began in the early 1990s.</i> <i>Assess the nature and impact of democracy in African states.</i> <i>Analyze the nature and impact of economic crisis and reform.</i> <i>Debate whether or not external aid has helped or hindered African states.</i> <i>Analyze the debates on gender, environmental crisis, migration and pandemics and what they tell us about future development trajectories.</i> <i>Be able to critique readings, analyze evidence and construct arguments.</i>
Indicative Reading / Resources	<i>Nicolas van de Walle. 2001. African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979-1999. Cambridge University Press.</i> <i>Jeffrey Herbst. 2000. States and Power in Africa. Princeton University Press.</i>

Assessment

Assessment Components	<i>Participation - 10%</i> <i>Michaelmas Term Essay - 30%</i> <i>Hilary Term Essay - 10%</i> <i>Final Essay - 50%</i>
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