

POLITICS OF AFRICA: The more advanced version
Political Science 359 / African Studies 390
Monday / Wednesday, 2pm – 3:20pm, 107 Swift Hall
Will Reno (847-491-5794 and reno-at-northwestern-dot-edu)

Course Overview

This course surveys core issues in the evolution of African politics. North Africa will enter into discussions, though much of the course will concentrate on the politics of the vast region to the south of the Sahara Desert. Several related key questions will recur through the course: Why have parts of Africa remained poor and politically unstable? Why have some countries in Africa achieved rapid growth in incomes, political stability, and freedom? What are the principal political challenges that arise in this first quarter of the 21st century as these divergent transitions gather pace? We finish the course with consideration of some of the emerging political issues that attend this great divergence.

This course begins with explanations for what many perceive to be a crisis in African politics in the first half century after colonial rule. In an oft-cited comparison, when Ghana became independent in 1957 its' citizens enjoyed a higher income and standard of living than did South Koreans. A recent comparison paints a vastly different picture. The United Nations Development Programme's [*World Development Report 2013*](#) noted that South Korea has a per capita income (converted for purchasing parity) of \$28,231, compared to Ghana's \$1,684. South Koreans live an average of 80.7 years, which is 16.1 years longer than the average in Ghana. Of the 187 countries that this report rates across a range of social indicators, all but one (Afghanistan) of the bottom 25 states are located in Africa. This subordinate position in a global hierarchy of development would have surprised many observers in the 1950s and 1960s.

The bulk of this course will trace developments that have shaped the internal politics of Africa's states. The first part of the course focuses on this crisis of the state. It will entertain debates about the role that colonial legacies played in creating this crisis and the impact that Cold War era geo-political competition on state politics in Africa. This section also will touch on important issues such as the role of ethnicity in political life, military coups d'états, and the rise of "big man politics" and patronage-based political networks. The second part takes stock of dramatic developments since the 1980s. Focus will shift to economic reforms. Though some have been of indigenous origin, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank shaped and oversaw the implementation of most of these economic programs. The second concerns the replacement of authoritarian regimes with electoral multi-party civilian regimes through the combined pressures of indigenous and external forces. The last part of the course considers contemporary African political trajectories. These include the problem of "failed states" and internal conflict, a condition that has directly affected about a quarter of Africa's 52 states since 2000. While the focus of many media reports, this is not the continent's only trajectory. The course explores other politics, including political movements that look beyond states as primary legitimate units for politics. We finish the class with a view to detecting new trends in African politics.

Course Requirements:

Students must complete all required assignments to have the opportunity to receive a passing grade in this course. The relative weight of each assignment is as follows:

Participation / attendance	10%
A map quiz	5% Monday, 6 Oct
A midterm exam	25% Monday, 27 Oct [Graded by 29 Oct]
A final exam	30% Friday, 12 December, 09:00 to 11:00
A paper of no more than 10 pages	30% due in class on Wednesday, 26 November

Participation / attendance can be satisfied with regular attendance and observable evidence of having read assignments, etc. Failure to show up for class will have a negative impact on evaluation. The map quiz will require filling in the names of all African countries and capital cities on a blank map. You can practice at <http://www.lizardpoint.com/fun/geoquiz/afrquiz.html>. The midterm exam will be short answer and essay format administered in class. I will provide further details about the exam in due course. The final exam will be comprehensive, with a focus on material from the second half of the course. This will be administered during the regular two hour final exam period noted at the end of the class calendar below.

The paper is due at the end of the last class on the 3rd of March. This paper should be limited to ten pages. The topic of the paper should address the last heading of the class calendar: “Which Direction Now?” One could propose a pan-African solution to contemporary problems. Others may argue for further market reforms. Others find answers in electoral democracy. There is no single “correct answer” that is required for this paper. Evaluation will be based upon the coherence of argument and presentation of evidence against at least one other reasonable alternative. Readings from class may be used to provide data and other information for an argument. Students are free to consult work outside of the assigned readings. As length is limited, this writing assignment should not evolve into a major research project. Writers will, however, benefit from incorporating *African based debates and data* into their arguments. The Herskovits Library, located on floor five of the Main Library’s East Tower (and of which we will have a tour) houses the world’s largest collection of these materials.

Crawford Young. 2012. *The Post-colonial State in Africa: Fifty Years of Independence*, University of Wisconsin Press. ISBN: 978-0299291440.

Robert Bates. 2008. *When Things Fell Apart*, Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 978-0521715256.

Paul Williams. 2011. *War and Conflict in Africa*. Polity. ISBN: 978-0745645452.

John Harbeson & Donald Rothchild. 2013. *Africa in World Politics: Engaging a Changing Global Order* [5th edition], Westview Press. ISBN: 978-0813348452.

CLASS CALENDAR

I. The State of the State in Africa

Wednesday, 24 September: Phases of the evolution of states. Are states in Africa distinctly different from states in other regions? What is the significance of sovereignty for independent African states, and how does their exercise of sovereignty change over time? What is the relationship between official institutions and personal authority?

Young. 2012. "Setting the Frame," 3-83.

Monday, 29 September: The "code of decolonization" as reflected in changing global norms and the international attention to the dismantling of colonial empires. Decolonization through peaceful means vs decolonization through armed struggle: Is the difference significant? How decisive was the impact of the Cold War as decolonization proceeded? The legacies of single-party rule and military coups d'états

Young. 2012. "Decolonization..." & "The Road to Autocracy," 87-157.

Wednesday, 1 October: State crisis and the first wave of failing states. What role did "neo-patrimonialism" play in the process of state failure? What actually fails and what imperatives of the state continue to be carried out? A closer look at democratic transitions and possible explanations for varied performance

Young. 2012. "Anatomy of State Crisis" & "Democratization and Its Limits," 158-224.

Monday, 6 October: The role of large-scale violence in shaping some African states. Why did some liberation struggles produce decisive victories and others split apart? What accounts for the relative dearth of armed separatist movements? How has the character of violence changed in recent and contemporary civil wars?

Young. 2012. "Morphology of Violent Civil Conflict," 227-90.

Map quiz [in class]: You will need to be prepared to identify and label all African countries and their capital cities.

Wednesday, 8 October: Identities and political mobilization. Levels of identity: from Pan-Africanism to parochial localism. Given the range and intensities of alternative identities, why do contemporary states and nationalist ideas persist? Note the complexities and contingencies of identity, particularly ethnic identity.

Young. 2012. "Africanism, Nationalism, and Ethnicity," & "The African Postcolonial State," 291-374.

II. The State of Political Change: Greater Routes to Stability?

Monday, 13 October: Political legacies of instability, authoritarian reactions, and coups d'états: a return to the logic of regime survival. A consideration of the proposition that democracy is likely to be destabilizing in certain common contexts. What problems does authoritarian rule solve and what problems does it create?

Bates. 2008. *When Things Fell Apart*, 3-74.

Wednesday, 15 October: How is the politics of divide-and-rule used to maintain power, and what is the effect on institutions and civic associations in these societies? What is the cause of "ethnicity"? How can people in these political environments seek wealth and security?

Bates. 2008. *When Things Fell Apart*, 97-139.

Monday, 20 October: Contemporary and recent debates about liberal approaches, as conceptualized from outside and inside African societies. What are the conceptual and real political limits of "civil society" in the integral states and neo-patrimonial states seen earlier in Young's analysis?

John Harbeson. 2013. "Democracy, Autocracy, and the Sub-Saharan State," in Harbeson & Rothchild, eds., *Africa in World Politics*, 83-123.

Aili Mari Tripp. 2013. "In Pursuit of Authority: Civil Society and Right-based Discourses in Africa," in Harbeson & Rothchild, eds., *Africa in World Politics*, 124-149.

Wednesday, 22 October: Security for regimes and security for citizens: For whom does the development of the African Union and regional blocs as diplomatic instruments provide security? What is the impact of technological change, i.e., the Internet, on citizens' pursuits of security and rights? What causes the development of civil society outside the state?

Ulf Engel. 2013. "The Changing Role of the AU Commission in Inter-African Relations," in Harbeson & Rothchild, eds., *Africa in World Politics*, 186-206.

* Evan Mwangi. 2014. "Queer Agency in Kenya's Digital Media," *African Studies Review*, 57: 2 (Sept), 93-113.

III. The State of Conflict in Africa

Monday, 27 October: Why is the midterm exam listed below the heading “the state of conflict?”

Midterm Exam [in class]

Wednesday, 29 October: The Extent of Conflict. Are wars really ending sooner and with less carnage than in the recent past? What global and local factors are responsible for changing characters of conflict in Africa?

Williams. 2011. “Counting Africa’s Conflicts.” And “The Terrain of Struggle,” 15-52.

Will Reno. 2013. “The International Factor in African Warfare,” in Harbeson & Rothchild, eds., *Africa in World Politics*, 150-72.

Monday, 3 November: The politics of resources and violence. Do particular kinds of resources increase probabilities of violence? How do the specific political contexts in some African states make some resources a more salient feature in the development of violent politics? Is Africa’s place in the global order of things a contributor to violent politics?

Williams. 2011. “Neopatrimonialism,” “Resources,” & “Sovereignty,” 55-93.

Wednesday, 5 November: The Role of identity in conflict. Is there a distinct role for state failure in shaping how the politics of identity emerges in recent and contemporary conflicts? What is the significance of international factors and global narratives in identity-based conflict?

Paul Williams. 2011. “Ethnicity” & “Religion,” 112-45.

Filip Reyntjens. 2013. “War in the Great Lakes Region,” in Harbeson & Rothchild, eds., *Africa in World Politics*, 255-84.

Monday, 10 November: Responses to conflict: regional associations, international peacekeeping and aid. How well does peace-making and peacekeeping work? What is the impact of counterterrorism and the role of aid in US strategies to address conflict in Africa?

Paul Williams. 2011. “Organization-building,” “Peace-making,” “Peacekeeping,” & “Aid,” 149-224.

* William F.S. Miles. 2012. "Deploying Development to Counter Terrorism: Post-9/11 Transformation of U.S. Foreign Aid to Africa," *African Studies Review*, 55: 3 (Dec), 27-60.

IV. The State of Economic Development in Africa: Crisis & Growth

Wednesday, 12 November: The acceleration of African economic development in the context of an increasingly global economy. Have some African economies shifted to a path of sustained development?

Punam Chuhan-Pole, et al. 2014. [*Africa's Pulse: Issues Shaping Africa's Future*](#), World Bank.

Monday, 17 November: Explanations for economic crisis that stress external factors: the historical legacy and Africa's peripheral status in the global economy.

* Leonce Ndikumana & James Boyce. 2011. *Africa's Odious Debts: How Foreign Loans and Capital Flight Bled a Continent*. Zed, 12-59.

Todd Moss. 2013. "Reflections on Africa's Love-Hate Relationship with International Capital," in Harbeson & Rothchild, eds., *Africa in World Politics*, 35-51.

Wednesday, 19 November: The irrelevancy of conventional economic doctrines? Think about innovation and regime survival. Can neo-patrimonial regimes evolve into something that is better at promoting economic accumulation?

* Thandika Mkandawire. 2014. "The spread of economic doctrines and policymaking in postcolonial Africa." *African Studies Review*, 57:1 (June), 171-198.

* Will Jones, Ricardo Soares de Oliveira & Harry Verhoeven. 2013. "[Africa's Illiberal State-builders](#)", Oxford University, Refugee Studies Centre.

Monday, 24 November: Is there room for the revival of the developmental state? How does the appearance of China on the African scene shape economic choices for African leaders?

Meles Zenawi. 2012. "States and Markets: Neoliberal Limitations and the Case for a Developmental State," in Akbar Norman, et al., *Good Growth and Governance in Africa*. Oxford,

Ian Taylor. 2013. "The Growth of China in Africa," in Harbeson & Rothchild, eds., *Africa in World Politics*, 285-309.

Wednesday, 26 November: Are you really going to be in class in the afternoon of the day before Thanksgiving? How realistic is it to expect attendance on this day? Nonetheless, somehow, the paper is due "in class". Details will follow.

~ Paper due in class ~

WCAS Reading Period begins on Monday, 1 December and ends on Sunday, 7 December

The final exam is on Friday, 12 December at 9am to 11am at 107 Swift Hall. [The overall WCAS exam schedule is [here](#).]