

THE POLITICS OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICA
Political Science 453

Wednesdays, 9am to 11:50am
~ Program of African Studies Seminar Room ~

William Reno, Winter 2015
Reno-at-northwestern-dot-edu
Offices: Scott 106 & African Studies (620 Library Place)

This syllabus is available at: www.willreno.org

Objectives: This advanced political science graduate seminar in contemporary African politics covers major debates concerning the political, economic, and security challenges that African societies have faced in the last two decades and are likely to face in coming years. This course assumes some familiarity with African politics and history. Those who are not political scientists are most welcome in this course as it is designed to accommodate students from across a range of disciplines. The class will provide information and approaches to help political science graduate students to prepare for the comparative politics comprehensive exam. Anthropologists and historians will find some readings written by scholars in their disciplines. These students also will see how political scientists approach some of the questions that are central concerns in their disciplines. This course has attracted students from Sociology, Journalism, the Business School and elsewhere. All are welcome and can profit from this course.

Reading assignments are chosen with a view to linking the study of Africa to broader currents of the study of comparative politics and international relations. This approach will equip graduate students with scholarship that they can use to reflect upon broad political behavior to generate important research questions. Developments in Africa also shed light on basic issues of wider interest such as how political leaders constitute legitimate authority amidst insecurity and disorder. What is the relationship between ethnicity and poverty? Why is corruption compatible with economic growth in some circumstances but not in others? Does democratization increase or decrease the risks of internal warfare, and if so, under what conditions? Why is African civil society so vigorous at a community level, yet less able to translate this behavior into coordinated action comparable to some post-Soviet varieties and in ‘Arab spring’ cases? Does the Arab Spring have a real impact south of the Sahara? What exactly *is* “civil society” in this context, and is it found where international donors and activists think it appears? Will states as currently constituted in Africa survive? Are Africans inventing new forms of political organizations—states and non-states—that are compatible with global society and are able to manage global economic pressures? What are the prospects for closer regional cooperation? Is the era of military rule finished or just in abeyance?

Course Requirements and Grading: Each student will be asked to complete readings, actively participate in seminar meetings, and write a term paper. (There will be modified requirements for undergraduates who take this course.) Students will also submit written commentaries on readings at the beginning of each class, starting with the second week class meeting. These commentaries are intended to provide students with easily accessible notes that will help serve as preparation for those who plan to take political science field exams.

Students will turn in summaries of weekly readings at the start of each class. These summaries may be a condensed version of your regular reading notes. Students will submit five of these commentaries for formal evaluation. These will take the form of one to two page double space essays that reflect basic issues and questions raised in each week's readings. These issues and questions may also reflect earlier reading especially where prior weeks' assignments address related topics. The five essays will receive evaluations of excellent, good, fair, or poor.

Students will pick one class in which to give a five minute oral presentation to initiate discussion. Presenters will refrain from summarizing readings. A good strategy is to explain how and why that week's readings contrast / reinforce approaches to other topics encountered in the term. Put readings into a broader context, either in reference to the study of Africa, or in the wider terms of political science.

Each student will compose a paper based on readings or topics addressed in the course. Political scientists searching for a second year paper topic may use this assignment to explore related ideas. This paper should be on the order of 15 pages long. An electronic copy of this paper will be due on Monday, March 10th (the last day before the WCAS reading period begins).

Classroom presentations, commentaries on readings, and general participation will count toward fifty percent of the evaluation for the course grade. The paper will constitute the remaining fifty percent of the course grade evaluation.

Required Textbooks: Two books are required for this class. All students should purchase these books. They are not available at local bookstores (that I know of) and should be ordered on line prior to the start of the term. The bulk of the reading for this course will be in the form of articles and book chapters, most all of which can be found at Blackboard and on the web.

All purchase Robert Bates. 2008. *When Things Fell Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa*, (NY: Cambridge).

Either purchase Jean-François Bayart, 2009. *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (Cambridge: Polity). [*L'État en Afrique: La politique du ventre* (Paris: Fayard, 1989)]

~ or ~

Christopher Clapham, 1996. *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival* (NY: Cambridge).

The objective of the either / or choice is to set up a class debate about internal versus external mainsprings of contemporary African politics. Confused as to which to choose? Read Clapham's [review](#) of Bayart's book in *African Affairs* [if you have an NU password]. You can find Chris Brown's [review](#) of Clapham's book in *Canadian Journal of African Studies*. (The two readings for the 7 January class cover some of this conceptual terrain.) Other readings are contained in a hefty reading packet available via Blackboard, a password protected site accessible to those registered for this course.

CLASS CALENDAR

7 January: Introduction to the Course:

We will discuss the course and organize students for subsequent class meetings. Then we will discuss the two articles for this week's readings—one view that finds the mainsprings of Africa's state politics in the nature of the post-World War Two international system of states and the other that finds these mainsprings primarily in deep rooted cultural practices and beliefs.

Robert Jackson & Carl Rosberg. 1982. "Why Africa's Weak States Persist: The Empirical and Juridical in Statehood," *World Politics*, 35:1 (Oct), 1-24.

Patrick Chabal & Jean-Pascal Daloz. 1999. "The (Ab)use of Corruption," in their *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 95-109.

14 January: Patronage Politics ("Neo-Patrimonialism") and State Institutions

Why is patronage politics seemingly pervasive in Africa? Why is patronage politics in Africa so much more injurious to economic and political stability in Africa, compared to similar levels of what is variously called "corruption" and "crony politics" in East Asia and elsewhere? Several of these articles take an institutional perspective toward understanding the operation of patronage-based politics in Africa. Can this aspect of politics be understood within the general institutional paradigm, as it is applied to politics in other societies? This concerns comparability, as some of the other articles point to cultural features of African societies that those scholars believe imparts distinctive features to patronage politics in Africa.

Max Weber. 1957. "Traditional Authority," in his *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, (Glencoe, IL: Free Press), 341-58.

Peter Evans. 1995. "States," in his *Embedded Autonomy: States & Industrial Transformation*. (Princeton), 43-54.

J-P Olivier de Sardan. 1999. "A Moral Economy of Corruption in Africa?" *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37:1, 25-52.

Christian von Soest. 2007. "How Does Neopatrimonialism Affect the African State's Revenues? The Case of Tax Collection in Zambia," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 45:4, 621-45.

Leonardo Arriola. 2009. "Patronage and Political Stability in Africa," *Comparative Political Studies*, 42: 10, 1339-62.

Michael Schatzberg. 2001. "Matrix I—The Father-Chief," in his *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 145-73.

William Reno. 2002. "Mafiya Troubles, Warlord Crises," in Mark Beissinger & Crawford Young, *Beyond State Crisis? Postcolonial Africa and Post-Soviet Eurasia in Comparative Perspective*, (Baltimore & Washington, DC: JHU & Brookings), 105-27.

21 January: Making Sense of Patronage and Its Role in Shaping the Nature of Politics—Contrasting Views from Global and Local Practices of Politics.

Are African states distinctive in ways that are not shared by states elsewhere? Consider the nature of state formation in Africa. How did Cold War era competition affect the formation of African states? How do local cultural dynamics mark the development of a distinctive state / regime politics? The impact of the global political economy and the global system of states on the domestic politics of African states features differently in each book. Are these frameworks for understanding African politics mutually exclusive or do they share some underlying assumptions?

Jean-Francois Bayart, 2009. *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (Cambridge: Polity) **or** Christopher Clapham, 1996. *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival* (NY: Cambridge).

28 January: Regime Strategies—Responses to Instability and Political Threats

Does external assistance hinder or promote positive economic performance? What is the relation between domestic politics and poor economic performance? This week's reading considers the possibility of moral hazard; that economic assistance provides reluctant reformers with incentives to avoid making difficult decisions. The book also makes controversial claims about the ideologies of African technocratic elites and their views about the causes of economic failure.

Robert Bates. 2008. *When Things Fell Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa*, (NY: Cambridge). [Purchase this short book.]

See also Macartan Humphreys & Robert Bates. 2005. "Political Institutions and Economic Policies: Lessons from Africa," *British Journal of Political Science*, 35, 403-26.

4 February: Regime Strategy Failure--Coups d'Etats and other Non-Constitutional Changes of Government

Is state politics and succession in Africa becoming more institutionalized along the lines of evolving global norms? Put in terms of a *longue durée*, can we look at the turmoil of the post-colonial African as a passing phase, somewhat like the tumultuous first fifty years of independence in Latin America? How does patronage politics shape military coups d'états? Are contemporary attempts to seize power by force more prone to failure, compared to the coups of the 1960s to 1980s? What causes this (apparent) shift: external sanctions or aspects of domestic politics? Is a new regional architecture of security developing in Africa's state system? For who is this security intended and who does it serve—regimes or citizens?

Patrick McGowan. 2003. "African Military Coups d'Etat, 1956-2001: Frequency, Trends and Distribution," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41:3 (Sept), 339-70. (Wikipedia keeps a reasonable updated [list](#) as well.)

Maj. Gen. Chris Alli. 2001. "Military Interventions and *coups d'états*," in his *Federal Republic of Nigeria Army*, (Lagos: Malthouse Press), 208-47.

Philip Roessler. 2011. "The Enemy Within: Personal Rule, Coups, and Civil War in Africa," *World Politics*, 63:2 (April), 300-46.

Adigun Agbaje. 2002. "Personal Rule and Regional Politics in Ibadan under Military Regimes, 1986-1996," in J Guyer, L Denzer, A Agbaje, eds. *Money Struggles and City Life*, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann), 3-26.

Herbert Howe. 2001. "Roots and Results of African Military Unprofessionalism," in his *Ambiguous Order: Military Forces in African States*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner), 27-71.

Paul Williams. 2007. "From Non-intervention to Non-indifference: The Origins and Development of the African Union's Security Culture," *African Affairs*, 106: 423 (April), 253-79.

Julian Ku & Jide Nzelibe. 2006. "Do International Criminal Tribunals Deter or Exacerbate Humanitarian Atrocities?" *Washington University Law Review*, 84:4, 777-834.

11 February: The Quest for Economic Growth

What role does Africa's position in the world's political economy play in explaining economic performance? Why does the exploitation of natural resources appear to be linked to political and economic turmoil in some countries in Africa but not in others? Is Africa experiencing a sea change in economic performance? These articles look at the relationship between Africa's position in global society and the organization of external economic links in ways that recall Clapham's & Bayart's work. That helps to frame the consideration of the articles further down on this week's list that analyze the seemingly tight links between the exploitation of natural resources and the development of a predatory style of politics.

Arthur Goldsmith. 2001. "Foreign Aid and Statehood in Africa," *International Organization*, 55:1 (Winter), 123-48.

Randall Stone. 2004. "The Political Economy of IMF Lending in Africa," *American Political Science Review*, 98:4 (Nov), 577-91.

Thomas Callaghy. 2001. "Networks and Governance in Africa: Innovation in the Debt Regime," and William Reno, "How Sovereignty Matters: International Markets and the Political Economy of Local Politics in Weak States," in T Callaghy, R Kassimir, R Latham, eds. *Intervention & Transnationalism in Africa*, (NY: Cambridge University Press), 115-48 & 197-215.

Nathan Jensen & Leonard Wantchekon. 2004. "Resource Wealth and Political Regimes in Africa," *Comparative Political Studies*, 37:7 (Sept), 816-40.

Sandra Joireman. 2011. "In Search of Order" [with Rachel Vanderpoel] and "Drawing Conclusions" in her *Where There Is No Government: Enforcing Property Rights in Common Law Africa*, (Ithaca; Cornell University Press), 129-64., Xavier Sala-i-Martin &

Maxim Pinkovskiy. 2010. "African Poverty is Falling... Much Faster than you Think!" National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 15775.

David Booth & Frederick Golooba-Mutebi. 2012. "Developmental Patrimonialism? The Case of Rwanda," *African Affairs*, 111:444 (July), 379-403

18 February: Approaches to the Study of Ethnic Politics.

Is Ethnic Identity Essential or Contingent? What Is the Impact of violence and uncertainty on ethnic politics? The first article examines the impact of rapid social change on group identities. The second illustrates an application of the security dilemma to the analysis of ethnic politics. The articles that follow consider the role of ethnic politics at mass and elite levels in political violence. The section concludes with considerations of the role of ethnicity in shaping electoral politics. Taken together, these articles show how ethnicity has been incorporated as an explanatory variable to the study of diverse kinds of political behavior in Africa.

Robert Melson & Howard Wolpe. 1970. "Modernization and the Politics of Communalism: A Theoretical Perspective," *American Political Science Review*, 64:4, 112-30.

Amanda Lea Robinson. 2014. "National Versus Ethnic Identification in Africa: Modernization, Colonial Legacy, and the Origins of Territorial Nationalism," *World Politics*, 66:4 (Oct), 709-46.

Donald Rothchild. 2001. "Ethnic Fears and Security Dilemmas: Managing Uncertainty in Africa," Miroslav Nincic, Joseph Lepgold, eds. *Being Useful: Policy Relevance and International Relations Theory*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan), 237-66.

Crawford Young. 2002. "Deciphering Disorder in Africa: Is Identity the Key?" *World Politics*, 54:4 (July), 532-57.

Daniel Posner. 2004. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi," *American Political Science Review*, 98:4 (Nov), 529-45.

Staffan Lindberg Minion K.C. Morrison. 2008. "Are African Voters Really Ethnic or Clientelistic? Survey Evidence from Ghana," *Political Science Quarterly*, 123:1, 95-122.

Peter Mwangi Kagwanja. 2003. "Facing Mount Kenya or Facing Mecca? The Mungiki, Ethnic Violence and the Politics of the Moi Succession in Kenya, 1987-2002," *African Affairs*, 102: 406, 25-49.

25 February: Africa's Experience with Democracy and Democratic Transitions.

What does democratic “transitology” look like in the African context? Under what conditions are elections stabilizing or destabilizing events? When and how is ‘civil society’ likely to coalesce around liberal ideas and when is it likely to espouse ill-liberal ideas? Is democratic reform a result of popular anger and mass mobilization or a program of reform-minded elite, or a response to international pressure? What happens when political reform is undertaken in the context of instability and uncertainty?

Richard Joseph. 1987. “The Problem of Democracy,” in his *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria*, (NY: Cambridge & Ibadan: Spectrum), 15-68.

Leonardo Arriola. 2013. “Opposition in Africa: Coalition Building in Multiethnic Societies,” *World Politics*, 65:2 (April), 233-72.

Paul Collier & Pedro Vicente. 2010. “Votes and Violence: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Nigeria,” [working paper]

Catherine Boone. 2009. “Electoral Populism Where Property Rights are Weak: Land Politics in Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa,” *Comparative Politics*, 41:2 (Jan), 183-201.

Nicolas van de Walle. 2003. “Presidentialism and Clientelism in Africa's Emerging Party Systems,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41:2 (June), 297-321.

Andreas Mehler. 2011. “Rebels and Parties: the Impact of Armed Insurgency on Representation in the Central African Republic,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 49:1 (March), 115-39.

Leonardo Villalón. 2010. “From Argument to Negotiation: Constituting Democracy in African Muslim Contexts,” *Comparative Politics*, 42:2 (July), contrast this with...

Jessica Gottlieb. 2015. “The Logic of Party Collusion in a Democracy: Evidence from Mali,” *World Politics*, 67:1 (Jan), 1-36.

4 March: Civil Society and Social Movements

Why are there no recent mass movements of the “Arab Spring” sort observed in sub-Saharan Africa? Why is it so difficult to form armed “social movements” based on a clear ideology and political program? Are women's movements really transforming Africa's political landscapes? To what extent are rights-based discourses rooted in local concerns, versus foreign transplants? Are there other, often overlooked venues where social movements are organizing?

Ibrahim Abdullah. 1998. “Bush Path to Destruction: The Origin and Character of the Revolutionary United Front / Sierra Leone,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 36:2, 203-35.

Thandika Mkandawire. 2002. "The Terrible Toll of Post-Colonial 'Rebel Movements' in Africa: Towards an Explanation of the Violence against the Peasantry," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 40:2, 181-215.

Aili Tripp, Isabel Casimiro, Joy Kwesiga, and Alice Mungwa (co-authors). 2009. *African Women's Movements: Transforming Political Landscapes*, (New York: Cambridge), 62-107

Aili Tripp. 2009. "In Pursuit of Authority: Civil Society and Rights-Based Discourses in Africa," In John Harbeson and Donald Rothchild. Eds., *Africa in World Politics*, 4th Ed. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press), 140-63.

Richard Fanthorpe & Roy Maconachie. 2010. "Beyond the 'Crisis of Youth'? Mining, Farming and Civil Society in Post-war Sierra Leone," *African Affairs*, 109:435 (April), 251-72.

Timeless: Challenges of Constituting and Maintaining Political Order. [Winter quarter allows only nine weeks. Here is what we would have included if we had ten weeks.]

Can Africa's weak(er) states survive? Why have they proven to be so durable, even after almost half a century of independence? These readings consider the dilemmas confronting proposals for redesigning Africa's political frameworks. Kamanu observes the surprising emergence of collective understandings among African leaders in their pursuits of personal security. Mazrui, Anonymous, and Anderson find surprising instances of international and internal self-regulation to preserve order. These developments should be interesting to anyone who studies cooperation in the absence of strong formal institutions.

Jeffrey Herbst. 1996/97. "Responding to State Failure in Africa," *International Security*, 21:3 (Winter), 120-44, and Richard Joseph & Jeffrey Herbst. 1997. "Correspondence," *International Security*, 22:2 (Fall), 175-84.

This reading examines state formation in Africa as a phenomenon that stands in contrast to historical patterns of state formation in early modern Europe. See also Herbst's classic book, *States and Power in Africa*, Princeton, 2000.

Steve Brayton. 2002. "Outsourcing War: Mercenaries and the Privatization of Peacekeeping," *Journal of International Affairs*, 55:2 (Spring), 303-29.

This article examines the impact of neo-liberal economic ideas on what had customarily been considered core state tasks, such as the provision of security. See also Rita Abrahamsen's and Mike Williams' book, *Security Beyond the State: Private Security in International Politics*, Cambridge, 2011.

Ali Mazrui. 1993. "Thoughts on Assassination in Africa," Martha Crenshaw, ed., *Terrorism in Africa*, (Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing Co.), 5-40.

Onyeonoro Kamanu. 1974. "Secession and the Right of Self-Determination: An OAU Dilemma," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 12:3, 355-76.

These two articles take up the issue of evolving norms of statecraft and international relations on the continent. They can be followed up with numerous more recent works that investigate the relationship between regional cooperation and domestic politics.

Kenneth Menkhaus. 2007. "Governance without Government in Somalia: Spoilers, State-Building, and the Politics of Coping," *International Security*, 31:3 (Winter), 74-106.

This is a classic article that contributes to growing scholarship on the nature of local governance in the context of weakened central state institutions. This idea of "alternative governance" features in Mats Utas, ed., *African Conflicts and Informal Power: Big men and Networks*, Zed, 2012.

Deborah Brautigam. 2009. *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa*, Oxford University Press.

What is the impact on African politics of the changing configuration of power in the international system?

More Topics that We Did Not Have Time to Consider in Depth

If we had more time at our disposal, this course would have focused more intensely on the politics of Africa's economic development. Of particular interest would have been some of the different paths of development found in some of Africa's fast-growing economies such as in Ethiopia and Angola. Is there a "Chinese model" of development that attracts some of Africa's more authoritarian regimes and which some have begun to master?

It would have been interesting to investigate in more depth the nature of multiparty electoral regime politics in Africa. The problems of violence that attend elections in many countries remind one of debates among political scientists in the 1960s and after concerning the sustainability of democratic regimes in poor countries (i.e. Samuel Huntington's 1968 classic, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (Yale) and in some of the works of Adam Przeworski). Do recent trends in some African countries debunk the democratization literature intended to explain the "Third Wave" of transitions?

Since I teach a graduate seminar on the politics of violence, we did not devote a great deal of attention in this course to the evolution of armed conflict in the domestic and inter-state realms. If we had done so, we would have spent more time considering basic questions concerning the nature of political order and its relation to violence in the African context and compared these considerations to the study of violence and order in other contexts.