

Political Systems of Africa
PSC 23800-F
Spring 2019
Tuesday and Thursday 9:30-10:45
NAC 6/121

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Office Hours
Tuesday and Thursday 11:00-12:00
NAC 4/143B

This course provides a broad overview of African politics with a focus on state formation and resistance to state formation. The course focuses largely on states because patterns of state formation profoundly shape a country's politics and the life course of its citizens. To teach about the long history of state formation on the African continent, the course uses a mixture of academic, literary, and primary source readings.

Class Organization: The course is divided into two sections. The first half of the course will provide a broad overview of the history of state formation on the African continent through the end of colonialism. The second half of the course will introduce students to politics on the continent since the end of colonialism. The course will blend lecture and discussion. Generally, lectures will occur on Tuesdays and discussions will take place on Thursdays (a few weeks are excepted). Students are expected to read all work for the class regardless of whether it is a lecture or discussion day.

Course Assignments: The goal of the course is to improve students' abilities to think critically about the world around them and specifically about politics in Africa. Therefore, assignments are directed at improving such skills. Students will have

- Two in-class map quizzes (10% total, 5% each)
- An in-class midterm exam based on the weekly lectures and discussions (30% total)
- An in-class final exam based on the weekly lectures and discussions (30% total)
- Ten response paragraphs based on readings for discussion (20% total) (see separate instruction sheet)
- Attendance and participation (10% total)

Grading and Evaluation: The map quizzes will each constitute 5% of the final grade. The midterm and final exam will each constitute 30% of the final grade. Response paragraphs will constitute 20% of the final grade. Attendance and participation will constitute 10% of the final grade. Students are expected to arrive to class each session having read and thought about the assignments and should be prepared to discuss them. Be forewarned, I tend to call on students to ask for their thoughts.

Class Attendance: Participation in class discussions is crucial to the success of the course. **As such, students will be graded down on one full letter grade on the participation portion of the grade for each class missed (i.e. 2.5% off the final course grade for each class missed up to a maximum of ten percent of the final grade).** I will allow one unexcused absence without penalty. However, each subsequent unexcused absence will incur this penalty. I will take the class roll at the beginning of each class. If students are there on time, I will count them as present. If a student is late and I have already completed the roll, it is a student's responsibility to let me know that they are present after class, otherwise they will be counted as absent. I start class promptly and it is a student's responsibility to be there on time.

If students write me *before* class letting me know about an emergency that requires them missing class (e.g. sickness, death in the family), I will generally excuse the absence. I will not accept excuses after the fact, though. **If a student misses an exam, a note from a relevant authority attesting to the emergency (e.g. doctor) is required.** I will not allow students to take an exam if such a note is not provided and if the reason for missing the exam is not legitimate (e.g. illness; family emergency). Late work hours or a delayed train are not legitimate excuses for missing a class or exam. **To reward those who attend regularly, I will offer occasional unannounced extra credit opportunities in class.** Only students present in class will be eligible for points collected during these exercises.

Disability Statement: Appropriate academic accommodations will be made for students with disabilities. Students must register with the AccessAbility Center and bring documentation from the center acknowledging that you are eligible for academic accommodations. The center is located at NAC, Room 1/218 (Tel: 212-650-5913). If you are aware of a disability, I encourage you to register and attain documentation as soon as possible to ensure that we develop reasonable accommodations.

Learning Outcomes: The primary goal of this course is for students to be able to read and critically evaluate academic and journalistic work on contemporary African politics. Secondary goals include developing knowledge of African geography and history.

Books: We will read the following books in total during the semester. Students may choose to purchase them, if they desire. They are also available electronically through the CCNY library for students who do not want to purchase the books, making this a zero-cost course.

- Yaa Gyasi. 2016. *Homegoing*. New York: Vintage.
Available here:
https://onesearch.cuny.edu/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=CUNY_ALEPH009251251&context=L&vid=cc&search_scope=everything&isFrbr=true&tab=default_tab&lang=en_US
- Phaswane Mpe. 2011. *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.
Available here:
<https://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=250c6734-cfd9-4c88-8c93->

A Note on Content: Many of the themes we will discuss in the course deal with sensitive or potentially controversial topics including discussions of colonialism, slavery, race, class, various forms of violence, and a variety of other topics. Similarly, the literature that we will read includes events or topics that may be difficult for some students to read about. If there are concerns, I would encourage students to come talk to me during my office hours so that we can discuss the content of the works and make a plan, if necessary, for alternative assignments if students would prefer to avoid reading certain works. More generally, I expect a respectful tone during class discussions given the sensitive nature of some of the topics that we will discuss.

Course Overview

Section 1: An Overview of Politics on the African Continent

Week 1 – Course Introduction

Class 1 Jan. 29 Course Introduction
No Reading

Class 2 Jan. 31 – Overview: The Gatekeeper State, Its Opponents, and Its Opposites

Frederick Cooper. 2014. *Africa in the World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: Chapter 1.

Achille Mbembe. 2018. “The Idea of a Borderless World.” *AfricasACountry*. November 11, <https://africasacountry.com/2018/11/the-idea-of-a-borderless-world>.

Week 2 – An Introduction to Pre-colonial Politics

Class 1 Feb. 5 – Precolonial State Power

Jeffrey Herbst. 2000. *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: Chapter 2.

Class 2 Feb. 7 – Slavery and Early Colonial State Making

Linda M. Heywood, *Njinga of Angola: Africa’s Warrior Queen*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: Selections.

MAP QUIZ – North and West African Countries

Week 3 – Slavery, State Making, and State Breaking

Class 1 Feb. 12

NO CLASS – Lincoln’s Birthday

Class 2 Feb. 14 – State Making and Slavery through Literature

Yaa Gyasi. 2016. *Homegoing*. New York: Vintage: Part 1.

BLOG 1 DUE

Week 4 – Constructing the Colonial State

Class 1 Feb. 19 – Creating Bula Matari

Crawford Young. 1994. *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press: Chapter 4.

Class 2 Feb. 21 – Slavery's Legacies in Literature

Yaa Gyasi. 2016. *Homegoing*. New York: Vintage: Part 2.

BLOG 2 DUE

Week 5 – Colonial State Power

Class 1 Feb. 26 – Extending Colonial State Power

Jeffrey Herbst. 2000. *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: Chapter 3.

MAP QUIZ – South and East African Countries

Class 2 Feb. 28 – A Memoir of Colonialism and Resistance

Oginga Odinga. 1967. *Not Yet Uhuru*. London: Heinemann: Chapters 3 and 6.

BLOG 3 DUE

Week 6 – Colonial Rule

Class 1 March 5 – Decentralized Despotism

Mahmood Mamdani. 1996. *Citizen and Subject, Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: Chapters 2 and 5.

Class 2 March 7 – Theorizing Colonial Rule

Frederick Lugard. 2013. *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*. Hard Press Publishing: Chapters 10 and 12.

BLOG 4 DUE

Week 7 – Imagining a Post-Colonial Future

Class 1 March 12 – Crises of Colonialism

Frederick Cooper. 2002. *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present*. New York: Cambridge University Press: Chapters 2-3.

Class 2 March 14 – Varied Visions of Liberation

Aimé Césaire. 2000. *Discourse on Colonialism*. New York: Monthly Review Press: Selections.

Kwame Nkrumah. 1953. "Motion of Destiny Speech." Jul 10.

Nelson Mandela. 2013 [1964]. "Speech from the Dock." In Clifton Crais and Thomas V. McClendon, eds. *The South Africa Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Steve Biko. "Black Souls in White Skins?" In *I Write What I Like*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

BLOG 5 DUE

Week 8 – Confronting Colonialism

Class 1 March 19 – Protesting Colonialism

Frederick Cooper. 1996. *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa*. New York: Cambridge University Press: Chapter 3.

Adam Branch and Zachariah Mampilly. 2015. *Africa Uprising: Popular Protest and Political Change*. London: Zed Books: Chapter 2.

Class 2 March 21 – Midterm

MIDTERM

Week 9 – Building Postcolonial States

Class 1 March 26 – Consolidating Territorial Power

Christopher Clapham. 1998. "Degrees of Statehood." *Review of International Studies* 24 (2): 143-157.

Class 2 March 28 – Early Challenges of Postcolonial State Building

Watch in Class: *Lumumba*.

Week 10 – Challenges of Post-Colonial Economic Development

Class 1 April 2 – Theories of African Socialism

Julius Nyerere. 1968. "The Arusha Declaration." In *Freedom and Socialism (Uhuru na Ujama): A Selection from Writings & Speeches, 1965–1967*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968.

Julius Nyerere. 1968. "The Varied Paths to Socialism." In *Freedom and Socialism (Uhuru na Ujama): A Selection from Writings & Speeches, 1965–1967*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968.

Thomas Sankara. 1988. "What is the Nonaligned Movement Doing?" In *Thomas Sankara Speaks*. Cape Town: Pathfinder Press.

BLOG 6 DUE

Class 2 April 4 – State Socialism, Its Crises, and Its Legacies

James Scott. 1998. *Seeing Like a State*. New Haven: Yale University Press: Chapter 7.

Leo Zellig. 2016. “Burkina Faso: From Thomas Sankara to Popular Resistance.” *Review of African Political Economy* 44 (151): 155-164.

Week 11 – Crises of Post-Colonial Statehood

Class 1 April 9 – Protesting Post-Colonial States

Adam Branch and Zachariah Mampilly. 2015. *Africa Uprising: Popular Protest and Political Change*. London: Zed Books: Chapter 3.

Class 2 April 11 – Writing Against State Abuse

Wole Soyinka. 1994. *The Man Died: Prison Notes of Wole Soyinka*. Random House: Selections.

BLOG 7 DUE

Week 12 – Things Fall Apart

Class 1 April 16 - Economic and Political Crises

Carolyn Nordstrom. 2001. “Out of the Shadows.” In *Intervention and Transnational in Africa: Global-Local Networks of Power*. Thomas M. Callaghy, Ronald Kassimir, and Robert Latham, eds. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Class 2 April 18 - Economic and Political Crises

Jonny Steinberg, *A Man of Good Hope*. New York: Vintage: Selections.

Jonny Steinberg. 2016. “The Vertiginous Power of Decisions: Working Through a Paradox About Forced Migration.” *Public Culture* 28 (1): 139-160.

BLOG 8 DUE

Week 13 – Spring Break

Class 1 April 23

NO CLASS – Spring Break

Class 2 April 25

NO CLASS – Spring Break

Week 14 – A Peaceful, Democratic Future?

Class 1 April 30 – War and its Institutional Legacies

Scott Straus. 2012. "Wars Do End! Changing Patterns of Political Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa." *African Affairs* 111 (443): 179-201.

Nic Cheeseman et al. 2018. "War and Democracy: The Legacy of Conflict in East Africa." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 56 (1): 31-61.

Class 2 May 2 – Tensions of Democracy 1

Phaswane Mpe. 2011. *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press: Chapters 1-2.

BLOG 9 DUE

Week 15 – Complications of Democracy

Class 1 May 7 – Ways of Being Democratic

Jeffrey W. Paller. 2014. "Informal Institutions and Personal Rule in Urban Ghana." *African Studies Review* 57 (3): 123-142.

Akin Iwilade. 2014. "Networks of Violence and Becoming: Youth and the Politics of Patronage in Nigeria's Oil-Rich Delta." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 52 (4): 571-595.

Class 2 May 9 – Tensions of Democracy 2

Phaswane Mpe. 2011. *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press: Chapters 3-5.

BLOG 10 DUE

Week 16 – Seeing Democracy

Class 1 May 14 – Seeing Democracy

WATCH In-Class: *An African Election*.

FINAL EXAM – Per CCNY Exam Schedule