

Political Systems of Africa
PSC 23800-L
Fall 2021
Mondays 11:00-12:15
Online via Blackboard Collaborate Ultra

Nicholas Rush Smith
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Office Hours
Mondays 12:30-1:30
Meetings Via Zoom

Sign-Up for a Time via <https://calendly.com/nrsmithccny/15min>

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. Students will be able to watch a weekly pre-recorded lecture on BlackBoard weekly to reserve our class time for discussion of weekly readings.

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 and on African history.

Course Assignments: The primary assignments for the course are two take home exams, weekly blog posts, and participation in class discussions.

Books: We will read the following books in total during the semester. They are available for purchase from the course page for the CCNY online bookstore: <https://ccny.textbookx.com/institutional/index.php>

- Yaa Gyasi. 2016. *Homegoing*. New York: Vintage.
- Jonny Steinberg. 2014. *A Man of Good Hope*. New York: Knopf.

Grading and Evaluation: The course will be graded on a 100-point scale with the following breakdown:

- Essay Exams: 50 points
 - 2 exams x 25 points per exam

- Exam 1: Due November 1
 - Exam 2: Due per CCNY Final Exam Schedule
- Weekly discussion board posts: 40 points
 - 10 discussion board posts x 4 points each
 - Based upon timely completion of discussion board posts
 - Posts should respond to the weekly prompt and should be a thoughtful paragraph or two of approximately 250 words
 - Due on Mondays by 11:00am
 - Late posts will receive a penalty of 1 point
- Participation: 10 points
 - See attendance policy for details

Attendance Policy: Participation in class discussions is crucial to the success of the course, so participation is an important component of students' final grades. Because weekly participation in the course material is so important for student's learning, **students will lose 2.5 points from the participation portion of their grade for each class missed (i.e. 2.5% off the final course grade for each discussion missed up to a maximum of 10% off the final grade)**. I will allow one unexcused absence without penalty. However, each subsequent unexcused absence will incur this penalty. Should a student run into a health, personal, or technical challenge which means they will have difficulty participating in a live discussion, I will excuse the absence. However, students should make their best effort to contact me *before* the discussion that will be missed explaining the absence or as soon as possible thereafter. **To encourage active participation in the live discussions, some weeks will have unannounced extra credit opportunities.**

With that said, I also understand that given the extraordinary circumstances under which class is taking place, technical or internet access challenges may present difficulties for some students to access the class discussions on a regular basis. If you anticipate such problems or encounter them unexpectedly due to a change in life circumstance, I encourage you to contact me as soon as possible to discuss your situation so that we can work together individually to develop a solution.

Weekly discussion sessions will take place via Blackboard Collaborate Ultra on Mondays from 11am-12:15pm (certain weeks excepted – see course schedule). Information on accessing Blackboard Collaborate Ultra can be found here: https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Participant/Get_Started.

Course Content and Compartment: 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 plan, if necessary, for alternative assignments if students would prefer to avoid reading certain works or themes. More generally, I expect a respectful tone during class discussions given the sensitive nature of some of the topics that we will discuss.

Accessibility & Campus Resources: At City College, we strive to make all our classes accessible to every student, regardless of any disability (visible or non-visible; physical, cognitive, emotional,

or learning) or any other special circumstances (such as a medical, personal, or housing emergency; family responsibilities; financial difficulties; legal difficulties; or immigration status) that may affect your ability to attend class and complete the coursework. Please speak to me (and your other professors) in office hours or via email early in the semester or as soon as you're aware that you may need accommodations, so that we can work together to make sure that you receive the support you need.

City College offers resources to students in a wide range of circumstances. Please share this information with your friends and classmates at CCNY! We want all students to succeed and to take advantage of all the support the college has to offer.

Please let your other professors know if you have registered with the AccessAbility Center/Student Disability Services (AAC/SDS) or have any **special needs, learning differences, or medical conditions** that may affect your coursework so that we can make the appropriate accommodations. If you believe you may need an accommodation, please do get in touch with the AAC/SDS. You can reach the AccessAbility office via email (disabilityservices@ccny.cuny.edu) or through their Zoom virtual front desk (<https://ccny.zoom.us/j/116151245>).

If you need a **computer, tablet, or wi-fi**, you can request them through an online form (https://portal.ccny.cuny.edu/depts/oit/cuny_loaner/login.php). You can also contact the iMedia Center via email (imedia@ccny.cuny.edu) or via their Zoom virtual front desk, Monday-Thursday, 11am-3pm (<https://ccny.zoom.us/j/2126505480>).

If you have any questions or concerns about your **immigration status** or that of your family members, please consult the CCNY Immigration Center for free and confidential advice via phone (212-650-6620) or email (meetu.dhar@cuny.edu).

If, for any reason, you are struggling with **personal issues, anxiety, depression, or stress**, there are a number of resources on campus.

The Student Counseling Center in the Health and Wellness Center provides remote counseling that is free and confidential to students. You can contact them via phone (212-650-8222), email (counseling@ccny.cuny.edu), or their Zoom virtual front desk, Monday-Thursday 10am-4pm (<http://ccny.zoom.us/j/2126508222>). They also have links to a number of resources on their website (<https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/counseling>).

The Colin Powell School offers free, confidential peer mentoring with trained graduate students on issues of stress management and self-care. To sign up, simply send an email (peernavigationccny@gmail.com) or sign up online (<https://calendly.com/peernavigation/calendar?month=2020-10>).

If you are dealing with **food insecurity**, please visit Benny's Food Pantry in the Hoffman Lounge on the first floor of the NAC. The pantry is open even during the pandemic. To gain access on weekdays, just make an appointment online

<https://calendly.com/bennysfoodpantry/benny-s-food-pantry-appointment-system?month=2021-08>).

If you are facing an **emergency shortage of funds**, please email Ms. Charlene Darbassie (cdarbassie@ccny.cuny.edu) or Dean Andy Rich (arich@ccny.cuny.edu) in the Colin Powell School Dean's Office. They will tell you how to apply for an emergency grant. Applying is quick and easy.

If you are experiencing or have experienced **domestic violence** or **violence that is sex-based, gender-based, or sexuality-based**; or if you are experiencing or have experienced **discrimination because of gender, sex, sexuality, race, ethnicity, language, religion, disability, or other reasons**, please report it to Diana Cuzzo in the Office of Affirmative Action, Compliance, and Diversity via email (dcuzzo@ccny.cuny.edu) or phone (212-650-7330). For a confidential discussion of these and related issues, please contact Sophie English via email (senglish@ccny.cuny.edu) or phone (212-650-8905).

If you are struggling in any of your classes, don't hesitate to get extra **academic support**. Just make an appointment with the Academic Resource Center (www.ccny.cuny.edu/sssp/tutoring-arc) or email Charlene Darbassie (cdarbassie@ccny.cuny.edu) in the Colin Powell School office of Academic Support Services.

The CCNY Writing Center (www.ccny.cuny.edu/writing) offers individualized **writing support** to all students.

To receive information and support about securing **internships** and planning for your **post-college career**, please contact Debbie Cheng (dcheng@ccny.cuny.edu) and Ashif Hassan (ahassan@ccny.cuny.edu) in the Colin Powell School Dean's Office. Also, take a look at the new Career Handbook that their office has created to help you start thinking about career and professional development (<https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/colinpowellschool/career-and-professional-development>).

For a continually updated list of **other pandemic-related resources throughout New York City**, please see this online document: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sg5wJgKU9dUqmt62IGqxtWVccHSRUCChUrBBm3upvH8/edit?ts=5e792358#>

For **advising**, contact the Colin Powell School Advising Office (<https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/colinpowellschool/office-academic-advisors>). At their website, you can make a virtual appointment with one of the advisors or you can find their email addresses so you can send them a message.

Course Schedule:

Week dates	Learning Outcomes	Read/Watch	In-Class Activity	Assignments	Due Dates
Section 1: State Making in Precolonial and Colonial Africa					
Module 1: Course Introduction August 25 (NOTE: Wednesday Class for Intro Discussion)	Course expectations and learning outcomes	Read: Review Syllabus	In-Class Discussion: Introduction to course expectations and learning outcomes	None	N/A
Module 2: The Gatekeeper State, Its Opponents, and Its Opposites August 30	An Overview on Politics in Africa An introduction to gatekeeping politics	Watch: Lecture – The Gatekeeper State, Its Opponents, and Its Opposites Read: Frederick Cooper. 2014. <i>Africa in the World</i> . Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: Chapter 1. Achille Mbembe. 2018. “The Idea of a Borderless World.” <i>AfricasACountry</i> . November 11, https://africasacountry.com/2018/11/the-idea-of-a-borderless-world .	In-Class Discussion: Gatekeeping politics and the closing of migration	(Note: No discussion board this week)	No assignment due
Module 3: An Introduction to Pre- colonial State Making September 13 (NOTE: No class September 6 per CUNY Cancellation)	An introductory understanding of the politics of precolonial state making	Watch: Lecture – An Introduction to Pre-Colonial State Making Read: Jeffrey Herbst. 2000. <i>States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control</i> . Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: Chapter 2. Linda M. Heywood. 2017. <i>Njinga of Angola: Africa’s Warrior Queen</i> . Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: Selections.	In-Class Discussion: Njinga, a Precolonial State Maker	Weekly Discussion Board Assignment 1	9/13 at 11am

		<p>Optional: “The Empire of Mali.” <i>In Our Time Podcast</i>. BBC.</p> <p>“The Songhai Empire – Africa’s Age of Gold.” <i>Fall of Civilizations Podcast</i>.</p>			
<p>Module 4: Slavery, State Making, and State Breaking September 20</p>	<p>The long-run consequences of slavery for state making in Africa</p>	<p>Watch: Lecture - Slavery, State Making, and State Breaking</p> <p>Read: Yaa Gyasi. 2016. <i>Homegoing</i>. New York: Vintage: Part 1.</p> <p>Optional: Nathan Nunn. 2008. “The Long-Term Effects of Africa’s Slave Trades.” <i>Quarterly Journal of Economics</i> 123 (1): 139-176.</p> <p>Nathan Nunn and Leonard Wantchekon. 2011. “The Slave Trade and the Origins of Mistrust in Africa.” <i>American Economic Review</i> 101 (7): 3221-3252.</p>	<p>In-class Discussion: Slavery and its legacies in West Africa and southern US</p>	<p>Weekly Discussion Board Assignment 2</p>	<p>9/20 at 11am</p>
<p>Module 5: Colonial State Making October 4</p> <p>(NOTE: No class September 27. Professor attending conferences)</p>	<p>The logics of colonial state making</p> <p>The experience of colonialism for colonial subjects</p>	<p>Watch: Lecture – Colonial State Making</p> <p>Read: Jeffrey Herbst. 2000. <i>States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control</i>. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: Chapter 3.</p> <p>Oginga Odinga. 1967. <i>Not Yet Uhuru</i>. London: Heinemann: Chapters 3 and 6.</p>	<p>In-Class Discussion: Not Yet Uhuru</p>	<p>Weekly Discussion Board Assignment 3</p>	<p>10/4 at 11am</p>
<p>Module 6: Colonial Rule October 13</p> <p>(NOTE: Class on Wednesday with No class October 11, per CUNY Cancellation)</p>	<p>How colonial states operated</p> <p>Logic of indirect rule</p>	<p>Watch: Lecture – Colonial Rule</p> <p>Read: Mahmood Mamdani. 1996. <i>Citizen and Subject, Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism</i>. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: Chapters 2 and 5.</p>	<p>In-Class Discussion: The logic of indirect rule</p>	<p>Weekly Discussion Board Assignment 4</p>	<p>10/13 at 11am</p>

		Frederick Lugard. 2013. <i>The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa</i> . Hard Press Publishing: Chapters 10 and 12.			
Module 7: Crises of Colonialism October 18	Contradictions of rule and how it fell apart Different visions for what a post-colonial future might look like	Watch: Lecture – Crises of Colonialism Read: Frederick Cooper. 2002. <i>Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present</i> . New York: Cambridge University Press: Chapters 2-3. Aimé Césaire. 2000. <i>Discourse on Colonialism</i> . 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. <i>The South Africa Reader: History, Culture, Politics</i> . Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Steve Biko. “Black Souls in White Skins?” In <i>I Write What I Like</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press.	In-Class Discussion: Varied visions of liberation	Weekly Discussion Board Assignment 5	10/18 at 11am
Module 8: Confronting Colonialism October 25	The logics of post-colonial state making	Watch: Lecture – Confronting Colonialism <i>Lumumba</i> [Film] Optional: Adam Branch and Zachariah Mampilly. 2015. <i>Africa Uprising: Popular Protest and Political Change</i> . London: Zed Books: Chapter 2.	In-Class Discussion: Crises confronting colonial states and their legacies	Weekly Discussion Board Assignment 6	10/25 at 11am
Section 2: State Making in Post-Colonial Africa					

<p>Module 9: Building Postcolonial States November 1</p>	<p>The challenges confronting post-colonial states despite independence</p>	<p>Watch: Lecture – Building Postcolonial States</p> <p>Read: Yaa Gyasi. 2016. <i>Homegoing</i>. New York: Vintage: Part 2.</p> <p>Optional: Jeffrey Herbst. 2000. <i>States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control</i>. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: Chapter 4.</p>	<p>In-Class Discussion: Post-colonial state-making in literature</p>	<p>Exam 1 Due (Note no discussion board because of exam)</p>	<p>11/1 at 11am Exam 1 Due (see exam prompt for submission instructions)</p>
<p>Module 10: Challenges of the Post-Colonial Economy November 8</p>	<p>Visions for economic sovereignty</p> <p>Complications of postcolonial economic reform</p>	<p>Watch: Lecture – Challenges of the Post-Colonial Economy</p> <p>Read: Adom Getachew. 2019. <i>Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination</i>. Princeton: Princeton University Press: Chapter 5.</p> <p>Thandika Mkandawire. 2001. “Thinking about Developmental States in Africa.” <i>Cambridge Journal of Economics</i> 25: 289-213.</p> <p>Julius Nyerere. 1968. “The Arusha Declaration.” In <i>Freedom and Socialism (Uhuru na Ujama): A Selection from Writings & Speeches, 1965–1967</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968.</p> <p>Julius Nyerere. 1968. “The Varied Paths to Socialism.” In <i>Freedom and Socialism (Uhuru na Ujama): A Selection from Writings & Speeches, 1965–1967</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968.</p> <p>Thomas Sankara. 1988. “What is the Nonaligned Movement Doing?” In <i>Thomas Sankara Speaks</i>. Cape Town: Pathfinder Press.</p>	<p>In-Class Discussion: African socialism and its challenges.</p>	<p>Weekly Discussion Board Assignment 7</p>	<p>11/8 at 11am</p>
<p>Module 11: Crises of Post-Colonial Statehood November 15</p>	<p>The difficulties confronting post-colonial states</p>	<p>Watch: Lecture – Crises of Post-Colonial Statehood</p> <p>Read:</p>	<p>In-Class Discussion: How things fell apart</p>	<p>Weekly Discussion Board Assignment 8</p>	<p>11/15 at 11am</p>

		<p>Adam Branch and Zachariah Mampilly. 2015. <i>Africa Uprising: Popular Protest and Political Change</i>. London: Zed Books: Chapter 3.</p> <p>Jonny Steinberg, <i>A Man of Good Hope</i>. New York: Vintage: Part 1.</p>			
<p>Module 12: Navigating Crisis November 22</p>	<p>Strategies average people have adopted to navigate post-colonial political and economic crises</p>	<p>Watch: Lecture – Navigating Crisis</p> <p>Read: Jonny Steinberg. 2016. “The Vertiginous Power of Decisions: Working Through a Paradox About Forced Migration.” <i>Public Culture</i> 28 (1): 139-160.</p> <p>Jonny Steinberg, <i>A Man of Good Hope</i>. New York: Vintage: Part 2.</p>	<p>In-Class Discussion: Strategies for survival</p>	<p>Weekly Discussion Board Assignment 9</p>	<p>11/22 at 11am</p>
<p>Module 13: A Peaceful, Democratic Future? November 29</p>	<p>Reasons for the reduction of civil war violence over time</p>	<p>Watch: Lecture - A Peaceful Democratic Future</p> <p>Read: Scott Straus. 2012. “Wars Do End! Changing Patterns of Political Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa.” <i>African Affairs</i> 111 (443): 179-201.</p> <p>Jonny Steinberg, <i>A Man of Good Hope</i>. New York: Vintage: Part 3.</p>	<p>In-Class Discussion: Does democracy mean peace?</p>	<p>Weekly Discussion Board Assignment 10</p>	<p>11/29 at 11am</p>
<p>Module 14: Complications of Democracy December 6</p>	<p>How democratic politics is practiced in daily life</p>	<p>Watch: Lecture – Complications of Democracy</p> <p>Read: Akin Iwilade. 2014. “Networks of Violence and Becoming: Youth and the Politics of Patronage in Nigeria’s Oil-Rich Delta.” <i>The Journal of Modern African Studies</i> 52 (4): 571-595.</p> <p>Jonny Steinberg, <i>A Man of Good Hope</i>. New York: Vintage: Part 4.</p>	<p>In-Class Discussion: The complicated, daily life of democratic states</p>	<p>None (NOTE: No discussion board this week)</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Module 15: The Politics of the Pandemic on the Continent</p>	<p>-An optional discussion of how countries on the African continent have</p>	<p>Read: Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. 2020. “Finding a Vaccine Is Only the First Step. No One Will Be Safe Until the</p>	<p>The potential political consequences of the pandemic</p>	<p>Exam 3 Due per CCNY Final Exam Schedule</p>	<p>Final exam due per CCNY Schedule</p>

<p>December 13</p> <p>(NOTE: Optional Class)</p>	<p>addressed the pandemic from a comparative perspective</p>	<p>Whole World Is Safe.” <i>Foreign Affairs</i>. April 30.</p> <p>Jeffrey Smith and Nic Cheeseman. 2020. “Authoritarians are Exploiting the Coronavirus. Democracies Must Not Follow Suit.” <i>The Atlantic</i>. April 28.</p> <p>“Covid-19 Is Undoing Years of Progress in Curbing Global Poverty.” 2020. <i>The Economist</i>. 23 May.</p>			
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