

**Politics of Africa: Issues in Contemporary African Politics (POL 146A)**  
UC Davis  
Department of Political Science  
Fall 2019

**Tu/Th 3:10-4:30pm**  
**Olson Hall 118**

**Professor Lauren Young**  
[leyou@ucdavis.edu](mailto:leyou@ucdavis.edu)  
**Office Hours: T 1-3pm in Kerr 665**

**Teaching Assistant:**  
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## I. COURSE SUMMARY

This course offers an introductory survey of Sub-Saharan African politics from the pre-colonial period to the contemporary era. We will examine the common themes and trends that shape politics and development across the continent. Some core questions that motivate this course are: Why did authoritarianism emerge in many African countries after independence? Why have authoritarian governments been able to persist in some countries but not others? Why do civil wars occur? How has the international context, particularly Western intervention in the form of missionaries, colonialism, and development assistance, affected African politics? What are the current prospects for democracy and growth in Africa?

In this course we will seek to understand the drivers of both the huge variation across within the 48 states of Sub-Saharan Africa, and of the divergences between Africa and other regions. Lectures and readings will mix case studies of events in specific cases with the analysis of quantitative data that allows us to test arguments about cause and effect relationships. You will become a specialist in a particular country case. The assignments that you do over the quarter will introduce you to some of the data that researchers use to study Africa. They will build into a final paper comparing events in your case to the overarching trends that we will learn in the course.

This course has two overarching goals. By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Describe theoretical explanations of African political outcomes and apply them to specific cases
2. Apply the logic and tools of comparative political analysis

Our overview will be guided by a textbook, *African Politics Since Independence: Order, Development, and Democracy* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2019), by Darin Christensen (UCLA) and David Laitin (Stanford). The textbook will be supplemented with academic articles, first-hand accounts, and contemporary commentary.

## II. REQUIREMENTS

There are five main assignment types in this course.

1. **Two data assignments.** These assignments will introduce you to different sources of data that researchers use to study African politics. You will analyze events or trends in your country case using publicly available sources such as the Varieties of Democracy dataset and Afrobarometer public opinion data.
2. **Two film responses.** We will watch two films in class, and you will write short responses to the films that draw on the relevant readings. NB: The except of the first film that we will watch, *Lumumba*, includes some violence. If you are uncomfortable watching depictions of violence, please email me and I will send you an alternative activity.
3. **One final paper.** Your final paper will be a 10-page (max) discussion of how your country case compares to the continent-wide trends in Africa.
4. **Responses to discussion prompts for assigned readings.** Before each session with assigned readings (17 out of 20) you will have the chance to respond to a graded discussion prompt on Canvas. **To get full credit, you must respond to at least 10 out of 17 of these discussion prompts.** This prompt will ask you to identify the major argument in one of the readings, assess it, and raise a question about it. Once you submit your response, you will also be able to see the responses of your classmates.
5. **Final exam.** There will be a final in-class exam during the assigned period during finals week. This exam will consist of a single long essay prompt that will ask you to explain and assess the evidence for different theoretical explanations of Africa's political development since independence. You will receive the essay prompt in advance of the exam.

I will randomly assign you a country case study after the first lecture. If you would like to work on a different case, please send me an email ([leyou@ucdavis.edu](mailto:leyou@ucdavis.edu)) with the subject line "POL 146A: Case study change request" explaining which case you prefer and why you would like to switch cases.

## III. GRADING

1. Short assignments (10% of grade each = 20% of grade)
2. Film responses (5% of grade each = 10% of grade)
3. Final paper (30% of grade)
4. Online discussion participation (15% of grade). Each discussion prompt is worth 1.5 points, so to get full credit on this assignment you must respond to 10 out of 17 prompts. If you respond to more, you will not get extra credit points, but I will take your 10 highest scores. Late submissions are not accepted.
5. Final exam (25% of grade)

Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of one partial letter grade (ex. B to B-) for every 24 hours.

We hope there will be no reason to contest a grade. If you strongly feel that your grade on an assignment does not reflect the quality of your work, you may appeal through the following procedure: Write a memo that explains, in as much detail as possible, why you think you should have received a different grade. Give the memo to your TA, along with your graded assignment and a letter in which you formally request a re-grade. If you and your TA cannot reach agreement on your grade, your TA will pass the materials to another member of the teaching staff who will reevaluate the work and assign a new grade, which may be higher, lower, or identical to the one you originally received. This new grade will be final.

#### IV. RESOURCES

Writing assistance: <https://tutoring.ucdavis.edu/writing>

Student health and counseling services: <https://shcs.ucdavis.edu/>

Student disability center: <https://sdc.ucdavis.edu/students>

Code of academic conduct: <https://ossja.ucdavis.edu/code-academic-conduct>

#### V. BOOKS AND PROGRAMS FOR PURCHASE

Christensen, Darin, and David Laitin. 2019. *African Politics Since Independence: Order, Development, and Democracy*. New Haven: Yale UP.

Other readings and materials will be posted to the course page on Canvas.

#### VI. LECTURES, READINGS, AND SECTIONS

1. Students are required to attend all lectures. Lectures will include material *in addition* to what is covered in the readings. Please note that **computer use will not be permitted during lectures**.

2. Although the class will be larger than a seminar, participation in class is *encouraged*. There will be regular opportunities for students to ask questions, answer questions, and make arguments drawing on the material you have read. Please be prepared to participate.

If you miss an in-class graded assignment, you will receive credit if and only if: (1) you missed the section for reasons beyond your control, i.e. illness, scheduled athletic event, or family emergency; (2) you notify your TA prior to the scheduled section or demonstrate why advance notification was impossible; and (3) you write a one-page single-spaced commentary on the readings for that section

and submit it electronically to your TA by the start of class on Tuesday following the section you missed. This commentary should not just summarize but put forward an argument about the theory or empirical evidence in one or more of the readings.

## **PART I: SETTING THE STAGE**

### **Session 1: Course overview (Sep 26)**

Reading:

- Wainaina, Binyavanga. 2005. "How to Write About Africa," *Granta*, 92. <https://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/>
- Seay, Laura. 2012. "How Not to Write About Africa." *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/04/25/how-not-to-write-about-africa/#>

### **Session 2: Great Expectations (Oct 1)**

#### **READING COMMENTS DUE BY START OF CLASS OCT 1**

Reading:

- Christensen & Laitin. 2019. "Introduction" and "Chapter 1: The Charismatic Founders and Their Dreams", 1-30. [30pp]
- Schmidt, Elizabeth. 2005. "Top Down or Bottom Up? Nationalist Mobilization Reconsidered, with Special Reference to Guinea." *American Historical Review* 110(4): 975-1014. [40pp]
- Ajayi, J.F. Ade. 1982. "Expectations of Independence." *Daedalus* 11(2): 1-9. [9pp]

### **Session 3: The Lag in Democracy (Oct 3)**

#### **READING COMMENTS DUE BY START OF CLASS OCT 3**

Reading:

- Christensen & Laitin. 2019. "Chapter 2: Lag in Human Development" and "Chapter 3: Lag in Democracy", 31-81. [51pp]
- Mahama, John Dramani. 2013. *My First Coup d'Etat: And Other True Stories from the Lost Decades of Africa*. "Introduction: The 'Lost Decades'" and "My First Coup d'Etat," 1-16. [16pp]

### **Session 4: The Lag in Social Order (Oct 8)**

## **READING COMMENTS DUE BY START OF CLASS OCT 8**

Reading:

- Christensen & Laitin. 2019. "Chapter 4: Lag in Social Order," 83-111. [29pp]
- Roessler, Philip. 2011. "The enemy within: Personal rule, coups, and civil war in Africa." *World Politics* 63(2): 300-346. [47pp]
- Clark, Golder & Golder. 2017. "Appendix: An Intuitive Take on Statistical Analysis." *Principles of Comparative Politics* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press, pp. 212-218. [7pp]

## **SHORT ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE ON CANVAS BY BEGINNING OF CLASS ON OCT 10 (15 points)**

### **Session 5: Great Expectations (Oct 10)**

In-Class Film: *Lumumba*

Reading:

- Meredith, Martin. 2014. *The Fate of Africa: A history of the continent*. "Chapter 6: Heart of Darkness," pp. 93-115. [23pp]

## **FILM RESPONSE #1 DUE ON CANVAS BY BEGINNING OF CLASS ON OCT 15 (5 points)**

## **PART II: STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS**

### **Session 6: Geography (Oct 15)**

## **READING COMMENTS DUE BY START OF CLASS OCT 15**

Reading:

- Christensen & Laitin. 2019. "Chapter 5: Geography and Demography," 112-131. [20pp]
- Herbst, Jeffrey. 2000. "Chapter 1: The challenge of state-building in Africa" and "Chapter 2: Power and space in precolonial Africa." In *States and Power in Africa*, pp 1-57. [57pp]

### **Session 7: The slave trade (Oct 17)**

## READING COMMENTS DUE BY START OF CLASS OCT 17

Reading:

- Christensen & Laitin. 2019. "Chapter 6: Extractive Institutions," 134-154. [21pp]
- Nunn, Nathan. 2008. "Shackled to the Past: The Causes and Consequences of Africa's Slave Trade." In Jared Diamond and James A. Robinson, eds. *Natural Experiments of History*. [41pp]
- Dunning, Thad. 2012. "Introduction: Why natural experiments?" In *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences: A Design-Based Approach*. New York: Cambridge UP, pp. 1-18. [18pp]

## Session 8: The missionaries (Oct 22)

### READING COMMENTS DUE BY START OF CLASS OCT 22

Reading:

- Christensen & Laitin. 2019. "Chapter 7: The Missionaries," 155-166. [12pp]
- Cagé, Julia & Valeria Rueda. 2016. "The long-term effects of the printing press in Sub-Saharan Africa." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 8(3): 69–99. [31pp]

## Session 9: Africa's partition (Oct 24)

### READING COMMENTS DUE BY START OF CLASS OCT 22

Reading:

- Christensen & Laitin. 2019. "Chapter 8: The Partition of Africa," 167-188. [21pp]
- Michalopoulos, Stelios, and Elias Papaioannou. 2016. "The Long-Run Effects of the Scramble for Africa." *American Economic Review* 106(7): 1802-1848. [47pp]

## Session 10: The colonial state (Oct 29)

### READING COMMENTS DUE BY START OF CLASS OCT 29

Reading:

- Herbst, Jeffrey. 2000. "Chapter 3: The Europeans and the African problem." In *States and Power in Africa*, pp 58-96. [39pp]
- Lee, Alexander and Kenneth Schultz. 2010. "Comparing British and French Colonial Legacies: A Discontinuity Analysis of Cameroon." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 7: 1-46. [46pp]

## **PART III: POLICY CHOICES**

### **Session 11: Language policies (Oct 31)**

#### **READING COMMENTS DUE BY START OF CLASS OCT 31**

Reading:

- Christensen & Laitin. 2019. "Chapter 10: Cultural Policy," 205-226. [22pp]
- Miguel, Edward. 2003. "Tribe or Nation? Nation Building and Public Goods in Kenya versus Tanzania." *World Politics* 56(3): 328-362. [35pp]

### **Session 12: Economic policies (Nov 5)**

#### **READING COMMENTS DUE BY START OF CLASS NOV 5**

Reading:

- Christensen & Laitin. 2019. "Chapter 12: Economic Policy," 243-267. [24pp]
- Bates, Robert H. 1981. "Introduction," "Chapter 1: Policies toward cash crops for export," "Chapter 5: The market as political arena," "Chapter 6: Rental havens and protective shelters," and "Chapter 7: The origins of political marginalism." In *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The political basis of agricultural policies*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp 1-29, 81-118. [67pp]

### **Session 13: Foreign policies (Nov 7)**

#### **READING COMMENTS DUE BY START OF CLASS NOV 7**

Reading:

- Christensen & Laitin. 2019. "Chapter 11: Foreign Policy," 227-241. [15pp]
- Arthur, Peter. 2015. "'New' Regionalisms in Africa: Approaches, Challenges, Opportunities and Implications." In Kobena T. Hanson (ed.), *Contemporary Regional Development in Africa*, Ch. 3, pp. 47- 69. [23pp]
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabelo. 2013. "Politics behind Politics: African Union, SADC and the GPA in Zimbabwe." In *The Hard Road to Reform*, ed. Brian Raftopoulos. Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press. [27pp]

## **PART IV: CONTEMPORARY DEBATES**

## Session 14: Foreign aid (Nov 12)

### READING COMMENTS DUE BY START OF CLASS NOV 12

Reading:

- Moss, Todd J. and Danielle Resnick. 2018. "Chapter 8: The International Aid System." In *African Development: Making Sense of the Issues and Actors*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp. 131-167. [37pp]
- Humphreys, Macartan, and Jeremy Weinstein. 2009. "Field Experiments and the Political Economy of Development." *Annual Review of Political Science* 12: pp. 67-78. [12pp]
- Ferguson, James, and Larry Lohmann. 1994. "The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development' and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho." *The Ecologist* 24(5): 176-81. [6pp]
- Brautigam, Deborah A. 2010. "Africa's Eastern Promise: What the West can learn from Chinese investment in Africa." *Foreign Affairs*. [3pp]

## Session 15: Democratization and the "Third Wave" (Nov 14)

### READING COMMENTS DUE BY START OF CLASS NOV 14

Reading:

- Christensen & Laitin. 2019. "Chapter 13: Democratization and the 'Third Wave'," pp 269-297. [29pp]
- Opalo, Kennedy Ochieng'. 2012. "African Elections: Two Diverging Trends." *Journal of Democracy* 23(3): 80-93. [13pp]
- Ichino, Nahomi, and Noah L. Nathan. 2013. "Do Primaries Improve Electoral Performance: Evidence from Ghana." *American Journal of Political Science* 57(2): 428-441. [14pp]

### SHORT ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE BY THE BEGINNING OF CLASS NOV 19.

## Session 16: Elections and voting (Nov 19)

In-Class Film: An African Election

## Session 17: Elections and voting (Nov 21)

### READING COMMENTS DUE BY START OF CLASS NOV 21

Reading:



- Wantchekon, Leonard. 2003. "Clientelism and Voting Behavior: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Benin." *World Politics* 55(3): 399-422. [24pp]
- Adida, Claire, Jessica Gottlieb, Eric Kramon, and Gwyneth McClendon. 2017. "Reducing or reinforcing in-group preferences? An experiment on information and ethnic voting." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 12(4): 437-477. [41pp]

## **FILM RESPONSE #2 DUE BY THE BEGINNING OF CLASS NOV 26**

### **Session 18: Recovering from conflict (Nov 26)**

#### **READING COMMENTS DUE BY START OF CLASS NOV 26**

Reading:

- Christensen & Laitin. 2019. "Chapter 15: Rebuilding War-Torn States," 319-346. [27pp]
- Gilligan, Michael J, Eric N. Mvukiyeye, and Cyrus Samii. 2013. "Reintegrating Rebels into Civilian Life: Quasi-Experimental Evidence from Burundi." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 57(4): 598-626. [29pp]
- Sirleaf, Ellen Johnson. 2009. "Chapter 18: The first hundred days." In *This Child Will Be Great*. New York: HarperCollins, pp. 275-289. [15pp]

## **Nov 28 – THANKSGIVING BREAK (NO CLASS)**

### **Session 19: Lingering authoritarianism (Dec 3)**

#### **READING COMMENTS DUE BY START OF CLASS DEC 3**

Readings:

- Ross, Michael L. 2015. "What have we learned about the resource curse?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 18: 239–259. [20pp]
- Carter, Brett L, and Erin Baggott Carter. 2019. "Propaganda and Protest: Evidence from Post-Cold War Africa." *Working Paper, USC*. [34pp]
- Masunungure, Eldred. 22 Sep 2006. "Why Zimbabweans Won't Rebel: Part 1." *Kubatana.net*. [3pp]
- Masunungure, Eldred. 26 Sep 2006. "Why Zimbabweans Won't Rebel: Part 2." *Kubatana.net*. [3pp]

**Session 20: A new era? (Dec 5)**

**READING COMMENTS DUE BY START OF CLASS DEC 5**

Reading:

- Christensen & Laitin. 2019. "Chapter 14: Economic Stabilization," 299-317. [19pp]
- Christensen & Laitin. 2019. "Chapter 16: Conclusion," 347-350. [4pp]
- Olopade, Dayo. 2014. *The Bright Continent*. "Chapter 6: The technology map: Lessons in leapfrogging." New York: First Mariner Books, pp. 91-120. [30pp]

**FINAL PAPER DUE ON CANVAS BY MIDNIGHT ON DEC 6**

**FINAL EXAM IN OLSON 118 ON DEC 11 AT 3:30PM**