

Politics of Africa: Issues in Contemporary African Politics (POL 146A)
UC Davis
Department of Political Science
Fall 2021

M/W 8-9:20am
Olson Hall 146

Professor Lauren Young
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Office Hours: W 1-3pm in Kerr 665

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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 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 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 loosely guided by a textbook, *African Politics Since Independence: Order, Development, and Democracy* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2019), by Darin Christensen and David Laitin. 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. **Data assignments and in-class activities.** 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 replication data sets from the articles that we read.
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. Note: The excerpt of the second 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. You will also present your plan for this paper in class to a small group of peers.
4. **Responses to quantitative articles.** Some of the sessions will require you to read an academic article that includes statistical analysis. These articles are difficult for many people. To help you and your classmates master these articles, you will respond to at least two discussion prompts on Canvas asking you to summarize the article and post questions that it raised for you. Articles that are eligible for these discussion responses are starred (**) on the syllabus. **To get full credit, you must respond to at least two of these discussion prompts.**
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) 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. Data assignments (25% of grade). The two in-class assignments are each worth 2.5% of your total grade, and the take-home assignments are worth 10% each.
2. Film responses (10% of grade)
3. Article responses (15% of grade). Each article response is worth 5%, so to get full credit on this assignment you must respond to two (2) prompts. If you respond to more, I will take your two highest scores. Late submissions are not accepted.
4. Final paper (30% of grade, including 5% for in-class workshop peer assessment)
5. Final exam (20% 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. LEARNING DURING COVID

This class is taking place during extraordinary times, in which learning may not be your only or even top priority. You may be close with people who have been infected with COVID-19 or who have lost jobs or benefits that they relied on. You may have experienced a change in personal circumstances that directly impacts your ability to focus on your academic work. Many of us have increased work and care responsibilities and less-than-optimal work environments.

On top of this, we have responsibilities to keep ourselves and each other safe as we transition back into face-to-face interactions. Some of us live with people like small children or immunocompromised family members who are still highly vulnerable to COVID-19. All of us are part of chains of interactions that reach these vulnerable populations. None of us can be sure that we will not become seriously sick if we contract COVID ourselves. I am thrilled to be back in the classroom with you and I hope that we will get to take full advantage of being face-to-face again by doing our best to keep cases on campus low.

I hope to establish a learning community based on empathy and mutual respect for our varied circumstances during this time. If you tell me or your TA that you are having trouble, we will not think less of you and we will try to find a way to get you caught up. I hope you'll extend us the same courtesy.

Similarly, please be empathetic with your classmates. People have different comfort levels with COVID risk as we return to face-to-face interactions. When in doubt, ask your classmates and

instructors if they are comfortable. Everyone (teaching team and students) is expected to follow the university's COVID-19 policies, including indoor masking, filling out the symptoms tracker, and not coming to class when you have symptoms.

VI. BOOKS AND PROGRAMS

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

VII. LECTURES, READINGS, AND SECTIONS

1. Students are expected to attend 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** outside of group activities that require a computer.

2. 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 can get credit if you 1) notify your TA in advance (or explain why advance notice was impossible) and 2) do a make-up activity (either the activity that you missed, or a one-page single-spaced commentary on the readings for that lecture).

PART I: SETTING THE STAGE

Session 1: Course overview (Sep 22)

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 1 (Sep 27)

Reading:

- Christensen & Laitin. 2019. "Introduction" and "Chapter 1: The Charismatic Founders and Their Dreams", 1-30. [30pp]
- Ajayi, J.F. Ade. 1982. "Expectations of Independence." *Daedalus* 11(2): 1-9. [9pp]

PART II: The Lag in Democracy

Session 3: The Lag in Democracy (Sep 29)

IN-CLASS DATA ACTIVITY – BRING YOUR LAPTOP/TABLET

Reading:

- Christensen & Laitin. 2019. “Chapter 3: Lag in Democracy” Sections 1-5, pp 49-66. [18pp]
- Nyong'o, Peter Anyang'. 1992. “Africa: The Failure of One-Party Rule.” *Journal of Democracy* 3(1): 90-96. [7pp]

Session 4: Neopatrimonialism (Oct 4)

Reading:

- French, Howard. 8 Sep 1997. “Mobutu Sese Seko, Zairian Ruler, Is Dead in Exile in Morocco at 66.” *New York Times*. [9pp]
- Bratton, Michael and Nicholas van de Walle. 1997. “Neopatrimonial Rule in Africa,” Chapter 2, in *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp. 61-82. [22pp]

Session 5: Democratization and the “Third Wave” (Oct 6)

Reading:

- Opalo, Kennedy Ochieng'. 2012. “African Elections: Two Diverging Trends.” *Journal of Democracy* 23(3): 80-93. [13pp]
- Gadjanova, Elena. 11 June 2020. “The COVID-19 Pandemic and Democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa.” *PandemiPolitics*. <https://pandemipolitics.net/the-covid-19-pandemic-and-democracy-in-sub-saharan-africa/>. [4pp]

DATA ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE BY MIDNIGHT OCT 11 (10 points)

Session 6: Elections and voting (Oct 11)

In-Class Film: An African Election

PART III: The Lag in Social Order

Session 7: The Lag in Social Order (Oct 13)

IN-CLASS DATA ACTIVITY – BRING YOUR LAPTOP/TABLET

Reading:

- Christensen & Laitin. 2019. "Chapter 4: Lag in Social Order," 83-111. [29pp]
- Clark, Golder & Golder. 2017. "Appendix: An Intuitive Take on Statistical Analysis." *Principles of Comparative Politics* 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press, pp. 212-218. [7pp]

FILM RESPONSE #1 DUE BY MIDNIGHT OCT 18 (5 points)

Session 8: The enemy within (Oct 18)

Reading:

- **Roessler, Philip. 2011. "The enemy within: Personal rule, coups, and civil war in Africa." *World Politics* 63(2): 300-346. [47pp]

PART IV: STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS

Session 9: Geography and demography (Oct 20)

Reading:

- Herbst, Jeffrey. 2000. "Chapter 2: Power and space in precolonial Africa." In *States and Power in Africa*, pp 35-57. [23pp]

EXTRA CREDIT ASSIGNMENT DUE BY MIDNIGHT OCT 20

Session 10: Natural resources (Oct 25)

Readings:

- **Jensen, Nathan, and Leonard Wantchekon. 2004. "Resource wealth and political regimes in Africa." *Comparative Political Studies* 37(7): 816-841. [26pp]
- Okiror, Samuel. 14 Apr 2021. "We cannot drink oil': campaigners condemn east African pipeline project." *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/apr/14/environmental-campaigners-condemn-uganda-total-cnooc-eacop-east-african-oil-pipeline>. [5pp]

Session 11: The slave trade (Oct 27)

Reading:

- **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]

Session 12: The missionaries (Nov 1)

Reading:

- **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 13: Africa’s partition (Nov 3)

Reading:

- Young, Crawford. 1994. *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*. “Chapter 4: Constructing Bula Matari”, 77-95. (Stop at “Constructing the Colonial State: Basic Premises”.) [19pp]
- **Michalopoulos, Stelios, and Elias Papaioannou. 2016. “The scramble for Africa and its legacy.” *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics*. [12pp]

Session 14: The colonial state (Nov 8)

Reading:

- Young, Crawford. 1994. *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*. “Chapter 4: Constructing Bula Matari”, 95-140. (Start at “Constructing the Colonial State: Basic Premises”.) [46pp]

DATA ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE ON CANVAS BY BEGINNING OF CLASS ON NOV 10 (10 points)

Session 15: Lumumba (Nov 10)

In-Class Film: *Lumumba*

PART V: POLICY CHOICES

Session 16: Language policies (Nov 15)

Reading:

- **Miguel, Edward. 2003. “Tribe or Nation? Nation Building and Public Goods in Kenya versus Tanzania.” *World Politics* 56(3): 328-362. [35pp]

FILM RESPONSE #2 DUE BY MIDNIGHT NOV 17 (5 points)

Session 17: Economic policies (Nov 17)

Reading:

- Christensen & Laitin. 2019. "Chapter 12: Economic Policy," 243-267. [25pp]

Session 18: Elections and voting (Nov 22)

Reading:

- **Wantchekon, Leonard. 2003. "Clientelism and Voting Behavior: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Benin." *World Politics* 55(3): 399-422. [24pp]
- Grossman, Guy, Kristin Michelitch, and Carlo Prato. 18 Dec 2020. "Brief 71: Regular and sustained information on incumbent performance improves electoral accountability." <https://egap.org/resource/brief-71-regular-and-sustained-information-on-incumbent-performance-improves-electoral-accountability/>. [6pp]

NO CLASS NOV 24 – DAY BEFORE THANKSGIVING

Session 19: Recovering from conflict (Nov 29)

Reading:

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

Session 20: Final paper outline workshop & final review (Dec 1)

FINAL PAPER DUE ON CANVAS BY MIDNIGHT ON DEC 3

FINAL EXAM DEC 8 AT 6PM