Overview

This course provides a broad introduction to the politics of contemporary Africa, emphasizing along the way the diversity of African politics. It seeks to challenge the widespread image of African politics as universally and inexplicably lawless, violent, and anarchic. This course begins by examining forms of colonial rule and nationalist movements and the legacies of colonialism. From there, we consider the African state, highlighting the factors that led to the centralization and personalization of power and eventual state collapse in some countries. The course then turns to the causes of civil war, ethnic conflict and warlord politics. Finally, the course analyzes the causes, consequences, and limitations of the recent waves of political and economic liberalization across Africa.

Organization

This course is taught in two lectures a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 09:55 am to 11:10 am in HOPKINS B03. Lecture attendance is mandatory.

Requirements

1. Class work/discussion (20%): The reading load for this course is not excessive. You are therefore required to complete all assigned readings before class. In addition, you will be expected to be able to discuss readings with authority.

A course packet containing all required readings is available for pick up between 9:00 am and 4:00 pm in Makepeace Room, Greylock Hall. I have also ordered three books:
• Chinua Achebe’s novel *A Man of the People* (New York: Anchor Books),
• Ishmael Beah’s memoir *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* (New York: Sarah Crichton Books) and
• Dambisa Moyo’s, *Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working and How There is Another Way for Africa*.

These books are available at Water Street Books. *Dead Aid* will arrive later in the semester.

2. Four short papers (10% each): You are required to write four (4) short papers of no more than 5 pages each on topics covered in the course. You will have the freedom to choose two topics to write on with the restriction that one of them is in no later than **Tuesday October 22**th. For the remaining two short papers, you will all be asked to read Chinua Achebe’s novel, *A Man of the People* and Ishmael Beah’s memoir, *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* and write a 5-page paper relating each book to the themes of the course. Due dates for these are as follows: *A Man of the People* (**Thursday October 15**th) and *A Long Way Gone* (**Tuesday November 10**th).

3. Final Exam (35%): There will be a self-scheduled final exam covering all the topics.

4. Map Quiz (5%): Finally, there will be a map quiz at the beginning of class on **Tuesday September 29**th.

Stay Informed:

To keep up with the day-to-day politics there are a host of on-line resources that you should consider. Regular news sources available online include:

• [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/default.stm)
• [http://allafrica.com/](http://allafrica.com/)
• [http://www.africanews.org](http://www.africanews.org)

In addition you can sign up for the United Nations IRIN (http://www.irinnews.org/) news bulletins for Africa here: [http://www.irinnews.org/subscriptions/subslogin.asp](http://www.irinnews.org/subscriptions/subslogin.asp). These will give you regular feeds of news on the continent as soon as it comes in.

Other rich portals for information on Africa include:

• [http://www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/AS.html](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/AS.html)
• [http://www.afrika.no/](http://www.afrika.no/)
• [http://www.africaonline.com/site/](http://www.africaonline.com/site/)
• [http://worldviews.igc.org/awpguide/](http://worldviews.igc.org/awpguide/)
Topics and Reading Assignments

Week 1

Sep 15. An Image of Africa: Afro-Pessimism


“The heart of the matter – Africa’s biggest problems stem from its present leaders. But they were created by African society and history,” The Economist, (May 13, 2000)


Sep 17. Responses: Afro-Optimism


Week 2

Sep 22. Pre-colonial Social and Political Formations


Sep 24. The Scramble for Africa


The General Act of the Berlin Conference, 26 February 1885

Week 3

Sep 29. How Europeans Ruled Africa


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Oct 1. The Wind of Change: Independence Movements


Week 4

Oct 6. Legacies of Colonialism


Oct 8. Nigeria

“Preface” and “The Effects of History” in Aborisade & Mundt, Politics in Nigeria


Oct 15. Zaire


“Introduction” and “The First Intervention” in Haskin, The Tragic State of the Congo: From Decolonization to Dictatorship


“Patrimonial State and Personal Rule” in Young and Turner, The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State. (12/21)


Week 6

**Oct 22. Somalia: The ‘Black Hawk Down’ Moment**

“Black Hawk Down” in Martin Meredith, _The Fate of Africa: From Hopes of Freedom to Heart of Despair_.

Anna Simmons, “Somalia: The Structure of Dissolution,”


**Oct 27. State Decay and Disengagement from the State**

Jennifer Widner, “States and Statelessness in Late Twentieth Century Africa,” _Daedalus_ (Summer 1995) (26/26)


“The Road to Hell is Unpaved” _The Economist_ (December 21, 2002) (5/5)

Week 7

**Oct 29. Sierra Leone**


**Nov 3. Civil Wars**

“What Fuels Civil War?” in Collier et al., _Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy_.

“Blood Diamonds” in Martin Meredith, _The Fate of Africa: From Hopes of Freedom to Heart of Despair_.

Week 8

**Nov 5. Ethnic Conflict and Genocide (Rwanda)**

“The Graves are Not Yet Full,” in Martin Meredith, _The Fate of Africa: From Hopes of Freedom to Heart of Despair_.


Short paper (5 pages max) on Ishmeal Beah’s _A Long Way Gone_ due at the beginning of class
Nov 10: Warlordism


Week 9

Nov 12. The Growth Problem

“Policy Choices” in Robert Bates, When Things Fall Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa


Nov 17. Botswana

“Preface” “Botswana in Perspective” and “Colonialism, Underdevelopment, and Nationalism in the Bechuanaland Protectorate” in Jack Parson, Botswana: Liberal Democracy and the Labor Reserve in Southern Africa

“Constructing State and Society” in Pierre du Toit, State Building and Democracy in Southern Africa

Week 10

Nov 19. Explaining Botswana’s Exceptionalism

Doran Acemoglu et al., “An African Success Story: Botswana”


“Why is Congo Poor and Botswana Rich” in Pierre Englebert, State Legitimacy and Development in Africa.

Nov 24. Political Change

Crawford Young, “The Third Wave of Democratization in Africa: Ambiguities and Contradictions”

“Booting Out the Big Men; Democracy in Africa” The Economist (Dec., 21, 2002)


Nov 26-29, Thanksgiving Break

Week 11

Dec 1. South Africa: The Consolidation or Erosion of Democracy?

“South Africa” by Michael Bratton in Kopstein & Lichbach ed., Comparative Politics.

Dec 3. Emerging Issues: Aid and Debt Debate

Dambisa Moyo, *Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working and How There is Another Way for Africa*. Chapters TBA

Dec 8. Emerging Issues: AIDS in Africa


Dec 10. Review Session