

Boston University
Dept. of International Relations

Government and Politics of Contemporary Africa

Course Meetings: 11-12:30pm, Tues and Thurs
Instructor: Prof. Michael Woldemariam
Office Hours: 2-3:30pm, Tues and Thurs
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Course Description

This course is designed as an upper-level seminar on post-colonial African politics. Background topics, which occupy the first three weeks of class, include Africa before and during the period of European rule. Core themes, covered in the remainder of the course, include colonial legacies, patterns of political and economic development, and violent conflict. The class concludes with a careful consideration of the African continent's political, economic, and social prospects.

A primary objective of the course is to interrogate popular perceptions about the uniformity of African politics, and identify the ways in which African polities have varied across space and time on several meaningful dimensions. At the same time, course material will speak to several important ways in which there is a single coherent "African" politics.

Beyond the course's *descriptive* goals, an important emphasis is placed on the problem *explanation*. Students should not only develop an understanding of what patterns of politics in post-colonial Africa look like, but engage the full-range of academic theories designed to explain these patterns. Thus, the course pays careful attention to competing theoretical claims designed to explain particular aspects of African politics, and encourages students to critically weigh available evidence in developing their own original understandings.

Books (available for purchase in BU bookstore)

Robert Bates. 2005. *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies*. Berkeley: University California Press

Paul Collier. 2007. *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

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

Goran Hyden. 2006. *African Politics in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Martin Meredith. 2006. *The Fate of Africa: A History of Fifty Years of Independence*. New York: Public Affairs

Course Assignments

It is **essential** that students complete the weekly readings **prior to the Tuesday class**. While the instructor may lecture from time to time, this course is a seminar, and depends on student's careful consideration of assigned reading material and class room contributions. Readings not contained in the five course texts for purchase (see above) will be posted to Blackboard.

Students will also be asked to become experts in the politics of one African country. Beyond offering insights in class about how the experiences of their country applies (or does not apply) to the themes and theories explored in the weekly readings, students must write three analytic papers in a similar vein (countries and paper topics will be assigned in class). These papers will be due on Oct 4th, Nov 1st, and Dec 6th.

There is no final exam for this class, but a final 15-page paper which will be due on the assigned exam day for this course.

Late papers will be accepted, but students will lose one letter grade for every day that a paper is late.

Grading

Participation: 20%

Country-Analytic Papers: 40%

Final Exam: 40%

Absences

Students are expected to attend **ALL** classes. Absences will be excused for official, medical, religious and personal reasons, as long as appropriate documentation is provided. Students who miss class are encouraged to visit the instructor's office hours in order to discuss course material.

Plagiarism

It goes without saying that instances of plagiarism will be taken very seriously by the instructor and Boston University. Many instances of plagiarism are inadvertent, so it is important that students be careful in their writing. It is best that students be fairly exhaustive in the use of citations, particularly when interacting with the writing and ideas of others. If any doubt arises, please contact the instructor.

Course Schedule (subject to change)

Week 1: Introduction and the Diversity of African Politics

Hyden, chapter 1

Collier, chapter 1

Naomi Chazan. 1988. "The Diversity of African Politics: Trends and Approaches," in Naomi Chazan (ed.), *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers. pp.4-31

Chris Allen, "Understanding African Politics." *Review of African Political Economy*, (Sept 1995)

"The Heart of the Matter," *The Economist*, May 11, 2000

Week 2: Pre-Colonial and Colonial Africa

Herbst, chapters 1 and 2

Robert Bates. 1983. "Preservation of Order in Stateless Societies," in *Essays on the Political Economy of Rural Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.7-20

Roland Oliver. 1991. "Pomp and Power," in *The African Experience*. New York: HarperCollins, pp.145-158

Weeks 3: Colonialism

Herbst, Chapter 3

Meredith, Chapters 1-7

Roland Oliver. 1991. "The Drawing of the Map" and "The New Task Masters," in *The African Experience*. New York: HarperCollins

Paul Lovejoy, "The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on Africa: A Review of the Literature." *Journal of African History* (Vol 30, No. 3, 1989)

Michael Crowder, "Indirect Rule—French and British Style." *Journal of the International African Institute*, (July 1964)

Week 4: Africa's Inheritance

Herbst, chapter 5

Hyden, chapter 2

Collier, chapters 3 and 4

Nathan Nunn and Leonard Wantchekon, "The Slave Trade and the Origins of Mistrust in Africa," forthcoming in the *American Economic Review*

Peter Ekeh, "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa," *Comparative Studies of Society and History* (Vol 17, No. 1, 1975)

Week 5: Post-Independence Leaders and Policy Choice

Meredith, chapters 8-10

Herbst, chapter 4

Crawford Young. 1982. Chapters 1 and 6 in *Ideology & Development*. New Haven: Yale University Press

Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the International System*, 77-133

Week 6: Political Breakdown and Authoritarianism

Hyden, chapter 5

Meredith, chapters 11-15, 17

Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, (pages TBA)

Carl Rosberg and Robert Jackson, *Personal Rule in Black Africa*, (pages TBA)

Week 7: State Pathologies and Economic Decline

Meredith, chapter 16

Bates, All chapters

Collier, chapters 5 and 6

Hyden, chapter 6

Week 8: Identity Politics and Civil Conflict

Hyden, chapters 8 and 9

Collier, chapter 2

Meredith, chapters 18-20

Week 9: The Politics of Economic Reform

Hyden, chapter 10

Meredith, chapter 2

“Why Africa Had to Adjust,” *Adjustment in Africa*. Washington: The World Bank, 1994, pp. 17-41.

Paul Collier, “The Failure of Conditionality,” Overseas Development Council Policy Essay No. 22. Washington, D.C.: Overseas Development Council.

Nicolas van de Walle. 2001. *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979-1999*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (pages TBA)

Dambisa Moyo. 2009. *Dead Aid*. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux (pages TBA)

Week 10: Democratic Transitions and Peace Building

Meredith, chapters 23 and 24

Robert Bates. 1994. “The Impulse to Reform,” in Jennifer A. Widner, *Economic Change and Political Liberalization in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 13-28

Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (pages TBA)

Week 11: Failed States and New Civil Wars

Meredith, chapters 25-32

Scott Strauss, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda* (pages TBA)

Robert Bates, *When Things Fell Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa* (pages TBA)

Robert Rotberg, *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences* (pages TBA)

Week 12: The Aids Crisis

Meredith, Chapter 21

Evan Lieberman, *Boundaries of Contagion: How Ethnic Politics Have Shaped Government Responses to AIDS* (pages TBA)

Week 13: Africa's "New" Arrivals: China, India, and the rise of the Global South

Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa* (pages TBA)

Dennis Tull, *China Engagement in Africa: Scope, Significance, and Consequences* (all)

Week 14: An African Renaissance?

Meredith, chapters 33-35

Hyden, chapters 11 and 12

Collier, chapters 7-11