Syllabus

IR 343 (PO 373): African Politics Today
Spring 2017 – Boston University
MWF 2:30 – 3:20
STH 113

Professor: Aberra Tesfay
Office: BSR 156, Rm 204
Office Hours: MW, 3:30-4:30 & by APP
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Course Description

This course is designed to provide an introduction to the study of contemporary African politics and government. It considers the various approaches used to examine the history of political development on the African continent and it explores the processes and institutions of the African states.

The course attempts to answer some important questions about African politics, such as: What are the legacies of colonial rule? Why are African states generally weaker than non-African states? Why do some African countries suffer political violence more frequently than other countries within Africa or elsewhere? Why has democracy been consolidated in certain African countries but regressed or collapsed in others? What accounts for the failures and successes of African countries to achieve adequate economic development? To what extent have international forces influenced the directions of African politics and society? We will also examine some of the dimensions of social change and political reform in post-independence Africa, including factors such as nationalism, ideology, identity politics, the features of African states, the issues of political order, democratization, development, international relations, and the roles of non-governmental institutions and civil society. As we explore these topics, we will strive for a critical and comparative perspective while avoiding extreme positions of Afro-pessimism and Afro-optimism.

The course is divided into four main parts. In the first part, we will review Africa’s pre-colonial political and economic systems, the colonial legacy and the post-independence political developments. We will then examine the socio-cultural and economic environments that characterize political life in contemporary Africa. In the third part, we will explore the foreign policies and relations of a number of selected African countries. Finally, we will discuss some recent initiatives and reforms by African states designed to address old and new challenges facing the continent.
Course Requirements

Students are expected to carefully and thoughtfully read all reading assignments before each class and participate actively in discussions. The class format will consist of a combination of lecture, discussion, and multimedia. Your final grade for the course will be determined as follows:

1. Class Attendance and Participation (15%): You are required to attend all classes unless there is a personal, medical or other emergency. To be excused for any absences, you need to show medical or other documentations. Your class participation will be an important component of your grade and learning experience.
   - Each student must come to class on time. Cell phones and all other electronic devices should be silenced and put away at the start of class. Laptop computers must be used only for note taking and wireless access should be disabled during class.
   - During the first week of class, each student is expected to choose one particular African country to follow throughout the course and contribute to class discussions by sharing how their country’s politics relates to the topic of each week.

2. Map Quiz (10%): Students are expected to know the name and capital city of each African country, as well as some of the major geographic features of the continent.

3. In-Class Mid-Term Exam (25%): The exam will cover all materials from the first section of the course, including all reading assignments, lecture and class discussion. The exam will be closed-books and closed-notes.

4. Final Take-Home Exam (25%): The exam will consist of short essay questions from the second section of the course, including all required readings, lecture and class discussion.

5. Research Paper (25%): Each student will write an analytical paper on one major theme covered in class about the particular African country they chose to follow at the beginning of the course. To ensure a diverse geographic pool, the country choices will be approved on a first come, first served basis. Also, prior to beginning your paper, please make sure to consult with me about the specific topic that you’d like to focus on in your paper. The paper should be 10 to 12 pages long (double-spaced, 12 pt.). No late paper is accepted without prior approval from me or without appropriate documentation.

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty

Students are expected to provide citations in papers for all quotations, paraphrases, and ideas taken from any sources other than their own original thoughts. You are responsible for knowing the policies contained in the Boston University’s Academic Conduct Code regarding cheating and plagiarism and the penalties for such behaviors.
Course Textbooks

You are required to buy the following two books:


Recommended Books:


Class Schedule and Readings

Week One: 01/20  Introduction and Overview

- Englebert & Dunn, Ch. 1, pp. 1-15.


Week Two: 01/23 – 01/27  Historical Context – Pre-Colonial Africa

- Englebert & Dunn, Ch. 2, pp. 18-22.

- Herbst, Ch. 2, pp. 35-57.


**Week Three: 01/30 – 02/03  Historical Context – The Colonial Legacy**

- Englebert & Dunn, Ch. 2, pp. 22-40.

- Herbst, Ch. 3, pp. 96.


**Week Four: 02/06 – 02/10  Nationalism and Independence**

- Herbst, Ch. 4, pp. 97-136.


**02/06  Map Quiz**

**Week Five: 02/13 – 02/17  The African State System**

- Englebert & Dunn, Ch. 4, pp. 129-79.

- Herbst, Ch. 5, pp. 139-72.


**Week Six: 02/21 – 02/24  Identity Politics: Ethnicity, Class and Religion**

- Englebert & Dunn, Ch. 3, pp. 63-114.


**Week Seven: 02/27 – 03/01  Conflict, Warfare and Conflict Resolution**

- Englebert & Dunn, Ch. 7, pp. 267-312.


**03/03  Mid-Term Exam**

**03/06 – 03/10  Spring Vacation**

**Week Eight: 03/13 – 03/17  Political Reform and Democratization**

- Englebert & Dunn, Ch. 5, pp. 181-211.


**Week Nine: 03/20 – 03/24  The Political Economy of African States**

- Englebert & Dunn, Ch. 6, pp. 213-65.


**Week Ten: 03/27 – 03/31  Pan Africanism and Regional Integration**


**Week Eleven: 04/03 – 04/07  The Politics of Foreign Aid**

*(04/07 Class will be at the African Studies Library)*


**Week Twelve: 04/10 – 04/14  African International Relations**

- Englebert & Dunn, Ch. 8, pp. 335-352.


Week Thirteen: 04/19 – 04/21  BRICS and Africa

- Englebert & Dunn, Ch. 8, pp. 352-363.

Week Fourteen: 04/24 – 04/28  Women in African Politics

- Englebert & Dunn, Ch. 3, pp. 114-119.

Week Fifteen: 05/01 – 05/03  Sustainable Development and the Environment


05/03  Term Paper Due

05/04 – 05/07  Study Days

05/12  Take-Home Final Exam Due