OVERVIEW

The purpose of this course is to explore the themes, issues, and trends that shape politics in Africa, across approximately 54 countries and over one billion people. I hope the course will inspire in you an interest in African affairs. I also hope it will give you an opportunity to think critically about how context shapes political behavior and about how the sociopolitical world works.

The material we will cover is organized around five broad issues: 1) the foundations of contemporary African politics, 2) political leadership in Africa, 3) the politics of identity, 4) pressing current issues in African politics, and 5) economic and political change in Africa. The expectation is that, by the end of the course, you will have a better understanding of common trends in this part of the world, which should help you in evaluating political behavior more generally.

This course is not designed as a study of individual countries in Africa; it is a theme-based course. Nevertheless, in exploring the themes and trends that dominate politics in Africa, we will learn quite a bit about a variety of countries on the continent, and you will have additional opportunities to learn the details of specific countries.

REQUIREMENTS

The course is taught in two lectures per week, on Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:30 to 4:45 in Key 0123. Attendance is mandatory.

There are six requirements for this course. First, students are expected to participate regularly in class discussions and activities. Second, to help you get familiar with this vast, complex, and changing geographic region, there will be a map quiz. Third, students will work on a project to address a specific issue in African politics and will do a write-up and presentation of their findings. Fourth, there will be a research paper due at the end of the semester; this paper will give you an opportunity to do rigorous analysis on a topic and country of your choosing. Students will also take a midterm and a non-cumulative final exam. The relative weights accorded to each of these requirements are as follows:
- Map Quiz (Feb 13) 5 percent
- Midterm (Mar 13) 20 percent
- Project (Apr 17, 19) 15 percent
- Final Exam (May 10) 25 percent
- Paper (May 15) 20 percent (parts due on 2/20, 4/3, 5/1, 5/15)
- Participation 15 percent

READINGS

The readings for this course are essential for understanding the themes and controversies discussed in class; to do well and to get as much as possible out of the course, you will have to do all of them. All readings will be provided via the course website. If you’re interested in an additional overview, Martin Meredith’s book, *The Fate of Africa: A History of Fifty Years of Independence* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005) offers an excellent introduction to Africa and African Politics.

ABSENCE & OTHER POLICIES

If you would like your absence to be excused, you are required to email me regarding your absence in advance of the class if at all possible, and to bring documentation to support your excused absence on the day you return. Late papers will be penalized. Details of grading policies can be found on the last page of this syllabus.

Use of computers is prohibited in class, except for group project days and days when we do data work. Any student who wishes to receive special permission to use a computer (solely for the purpose of note-taking) must see the professor. Inappropriate or unauthorized use of computers will count as an absence.

Any evidence of academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Dean’s office.

If you require special assistance or face extenuating circumstances that could affect your performance in class, please come see me right away or as soon as the issue arises.

For more information on UMD course-related policies, please visit the following link: http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html

SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

*Jan 25: Introduction – The Diversity of Africa*
- Read this syllabus.
Jan 30: Pre-Colonialism and the Scramble for Africa

Feb 1: Colonialism—Policies
- Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (1998), Ch. 4.

Feb 6: Colonial and Historical Legacies

Feb 8: National Independence Movements
- Martin Meredith, “L’Afrique Noir” in *The Fate of Africa* (2005), Ch. 4.

Feb 13: Personal Rule and Strong Leaders in Africa

** Map Quiz

Feb 15: Weak State Institutions in Africa

Feb 20: Clientelism and Citizen Responses to the State

**Paper Part I due**

**Feb 22: Traditional Power in Africa**

**Feb 27: Democracy and Political Change in Africa**

**Mar 1: Corruption in Africa**

**Mar 6: Analyzing Data on African Political Perspectives**
• Read the Afrobarometer Data Methodology and Codebook for your country.

**Mar 8: Corruption in Africa Up-Close**
• No reading.

**Mar 13: MIDTERM**

**Mar 15: No Class – Prof in Senegal**
** SPRING BREAK **

**Mar 27: Identity Politics—Ethnicity**
- Blaine Harden, “Battle for the Body,” in *Africa: Dispatches from a Fragile Continent* (1990), Ch. 3.

**Mar 29: Identity Politics—Religion & Race**

**Apr 3: Conflict and War**

** Paper Part II due **

**Apr 5: Terrorism in Africa**

**Apr 10: Natural Resources and African Politics**

**Apr 12: Africa’s Health Crises**
Apr 17: Group Projects
  * in-class presentations and materials due

Apr 19: Group Projects (cont.)
  * in-class presentations and materials due

Apr 24: Africa’s Economic Challenges

Apr 26: Economic Reform and Foreign Aid

May 1: China and Africa

  * Paper Part III due

May 3: Interventions and Humanitarianism

May 8: Conclusion: the Future of Africa

May 10: EXAM

RESEARCH PAPER: Final version due MAY 15
Useful Sources for Information on Africa:

- http://allafrica.com/
- http://www.africanews.org/
- http://www.afrika.no/English/index.html
- http://www.thisisafricaonline.com/

- Country Pages: http://country.eiu.com/AllCountries.aspx
Grading Scale

93 – 100       A
90 – 93        A-
87 – 90        B+
83 – 87        B
80 – 83        B-
77 – 80        C+
73 – 77        C
70 – 73        C-
67 – 70        D+
63 – 67        D
60 – 63        D-
< 60           F

Calculation of Participation Grades

Your participation grade is worth 15 percentage points, determined as follows:

- 10 points for attendance
- 5 points for contribution

Example Participation Grades

A student comes to every meeting, listens, shares her/his views, responds to questions, and demonstrates familiarity with the readings. 10 + 4/5 = 14 or 15   A

A student comes to every meeting but never engages, responds to questions, shows attentiveness to others, or demonstrates familiarity with the readings. 10 + 0/1 = 10 or 11   C-

A student has two unexcused absences. He/she contributes occasionally but doesn’t show familiarity with readings are offer thoughtful insights. 8 + 2/3 = 10 or 11   C-

A student comes to every meeting and occasionally responds to questions, shows attentiveness, and once in a while comments on a reading. 10 + 3/4 = 12 or 13   B

A student has four unexcused absences but otherwise contributes well when present. 6 + 3/4 = 9 or 10   D