OVERVIEW

The purpose of this course is to explore the themes, issues, and trends that shape politics in Africa, across 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. You will also develop concrete skills in social science research that will serve you beyond this course.

REQUIREMENTS

The course is taught in two meetings per week, on Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:00 to 3:15 in Tydings 2106.

There are five requirements for this course. First, students are expected to come to every class and 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, you will take a midterm exam. Fourth, students will work on a group project to address a specific issue in African politics and will do a write-up and presentation of their findings. Finally, you will produce a research paper over the course of the semester; this paper will give you an opportunity to do rigorous analysis on a topic and country of your choosing. The relative weights accorded to each of these requirements are as follows:
• Map Quiz (Sept 19) 5 percent
• Midterm (Oct 5) 35 percent
• Project (Nov 7, 9) 15 percent
• Paper (Dec 19) 30 percent [parts on 9/25, 10/13, 11/6, 11/29, 12/12]
• 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. One book is required and is available at the campus bookstore:


All other readings (aside from the book) will be provided via the course website at [www.elms.umd.edu](http://www.elms.umd.edu). Select GVPT 484 and you’ll find the readings for each meeting under the Files tab.

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.

Use of computers is prohibited in class, except for group project and data analysis days. 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.

Exam grades cannot be changed except in the case of a tabulating mistake. To contest an exam grade, you must inform the professor in writing. The professor will re-grade the entire exam. Any evidence of academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Dean.

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

For more information on UMD course-related policies, please visit the following link: [http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html](http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html)
SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Aug 28: Introduction – The Diversity of Africa

- Read this syllabus.

Aug 30: Pre-Colonialism and the Scramble for Africa


Sept 4: No Class – Labor Day

Sept 6: Colonialism—Policies

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

Sept 11: Colonial and Historical Legacies


Sept 13: National Independence Movements and Pan-Africanism

- Martin Meredith, “L’Afrique Noir” in The Fate of Africa (2005), Ch. 4.

Sept 18: Personal Rule and Strong Leaders in Africa


** Map Quiz
Sept 20: Research Paper Development
- Read guidelines for Part 1.
- Read through the Afrobarometer codebook and do some Control-F keyword searches to get ideas for your research question. Available at: http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/data/round-6/merged_round_6_codebook_20161.pdf

Sept 25: Weak State Institutions in Africa
- “The Road to Hell is Unpaved,” The Economist, 21 December 2002.

** Paper Part 1 due **

Sept 27: Clientelism and Citizen Responses to the State

Oct 2: Traditional Power in Africa

Oct 4: Analyzing Data on African Political Perspectives
- Read the Afrobarometer Data Methodology and Codebook for your country.

Oct 9: Democracy and Political Change in Africa

Oct 11: Identity Politics—Ethnicity
- Blaine Harden, “Battle for the Body,” in Africa: Dispatches from a Fragile Continent (1990), Ch. 3.

** Paper Part 2 due on Friday, Oct 13 **
Oct 16: **Identity Politics—Religion**
- McCauley, Chapters 1, 2, 3.

Oct 18: **Consequences of Ethnic Politics**
- McCauley, Intro to Part II, Chapter 5, at least one of Chapters 6-8, and Conclusion.

Oct 23: **MIDTERM**

Oct 25: **Corruption in Africa**

Oct 30: **Conflict and War**
- The Economist. 2014. “Post-Conflict Societies: To Hell and Back.” Apr 5.

Nov 1: **Terrorism in Africa**

Nov 6: **Natural Resources, the Environment, and African Politics**

**Paper Part 3 due**
** Nov 8: Africa’s Health Crises **

** Nov 13: Group Projects **
** in-class presentations and materials due **

** Nov 15: Group Projects (cont.) **
** in-class presentations and materials due **

** Nov 20: Analyzing Data **

** Nov 22: No Class – Happy Thanksgiving **

** Nov 27: Africa’s Economic Challenges **

** Nov 29: Economic Reform and Foreign Aid **

** Paper Part 4 due **

** Dec 4: China and Africa **

** Dec 6: Interventions and Humanitarianism in Africa **
development-set/the-reductive-seduction-of-other-people-s-problems-3c07b307732d#.66i1rr41t.


Dec 11: Conclusion – the Future of Africa


**Dec 12: FINAL RESEARCH PAPER (Part 5) due**

Useful Sources for Information on Africa:

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

- Country Pages: http://country.cia.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