

African Government & Politics
INTA 3240/8803 * Spring 2013
Georgia Institute of Technology

Class Meets: M/W/F 11:05 – 11:55, Cherry Emerson 204

Instructor: Becky LeFebvre

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a very exciting time to be studying African politics. Many changes are underway in Africa today regarding economic growth, political reform, and the larger role Africa is playing on the world stage. This course critically examines the consequences and nature of these transformations. It looks at these dynamics in their historical, social, economic, political, and cultural contexts. The course is particularly concerned with 1) who makes the rules of the political game in Africa; 2) what cultural and social influences shape these rules; and 3) which political institutions are at work, i.e., how they are created, maintained, contested and changed.

The course provides students with both concrete knowledge of African politics as well as tools for thinking about some of the broader analytic issues and themes. Country case studies are used in the readings and class discussions to help students apply the concepts learned to specific real-world situations. Each student will also explore a single country in more depth as part of class work.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Be familiar with the countries of Africa and their geographic location
- Understand essential features of African politics
- Identify recurrent themes between the African state, its civil society, and external interests
- Understand the theoretical and historical foundations of conflict and peacekeeping in Africa
- Apply concepts to case studies of various African countries
- Gain in-depth knowledge of the political systems, institutions, and challenges of a single country in Africa

TEXTS

- Alex Thomson, *An Introduction to African Politics, 3rd edition* (Taylor & Francis, 2010)
- Adu Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism* (John Hopkins, 1989)
- Paul D. Williams, *War and Conflict in Africa* (Polity Press, 2011)
- Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, *This Child Will Be Great: A Memoir of a Remarkable Life by Africa's First Woman President* (Harper Perennial, 2010)

EVALUATION AND GRADES

Map Quiz	5%
Regular Quizzes	20%
Homework	25%
Country Briefing	25%
Final Exam	25%

The Meaning of Grades:

Grades serve as numeric codes to evaluate your performance in this course. Grades will be assigned as follows: A (90 – 100); B (80 – 89); C (70-79); D (60 – 69); F (0 – 59). While grades characterize your immediate accomplishments, they say nothing about your general abilities, skills, or qualities. They also cannot predict your potential as an individual to grow and learn in the future.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation - Be a Country Expert

Students are expected to attend all classes. Some material covered in class is not readily apparent in the readings, and all class material may be included on quizzes and exams. Students should complete the assigned readings for each week prior to the start of class and contribute to class discussions. You will be expected to select one country (as defined in the “Homework” section below) and stay abreast on news pertaining to that country. You will need to do some background reading on that country and familiarize yourself with basic history, economics and politics of the country. This will make you our “class expert” on that country so we can draw on you as a resource in class.

Map Quiz (5%)

It is important to have an accurate sense of the map of Africa in this course, so there will be a map quiz. I will provide a blank map with national boundaries marked, and you will fill in countries.

Regular Quizzes (20%)

There will be 8 - 10 regular quizzes most of which will be given on an unannounced basis. The quizzes will be based on the assigned readings and/or previous class lectures from that week. To do well on the quizzes, it is important to stay on top of the reading and take notes. The quizzes will represent 20 percent of your final grade. Note: I will not provide makeup quizzes, but I will drop the lowest quiz grade for every student in the class.

Homework (25%)

Students will choose a unique African country to work with all semester, which will be the focus of each of the homework assignments. Countries will be selected by a lottery system during the first week of class. Homework will take the form of short essays and should be 2 – 3 double-spaced pages each, with at least one reference source (not Wikipedia). There will be 5 homework assignments given throughout the semester. These assignments are not lengthy, but are meant for you to apply that week's concepts to your country in a concise, thorough, and compelling way. Each assignment will require some research, so you might want to find one or two good overall sources for your country, and keep them on hand during the semester.

Country Briefing (25%)

All students will prepare a country briefing report that assimilates class concepts and knowledge of their selected country (from the homework assignments) into a 5-7 page double-spaced well-referenced paper discussing the key challenges facing their country and recommendations for creating future growth and stability in the country.

Graduate students will also be required to create a 15-minute presentation about their country with powerpoint slides to be presented during the last two weeks of class. The presentation should give an overview of the country and a comparison of the political institutions of that country with those of the U.S. What are the similarities and differences? Does this comparison reveal any new insights into politics in the U.S.?

Final Exam (25%)

There will be a final exam which counts for 25% of your final grade. The exam will be in-class, closed-book. Unless you have a valid, verifiable excuse, and notify me within 24 hours of the missed exam, there will be no make-up exams.

LATE POLICY

Late assignments will receive a one-half letter grade deduction (5%) for each calendar day (this includes weekends) they are late.

CLASS ETIQUETTE

Comments, questions, and other forms of expression must be conducted in a manner that demonstrates civility and respect for all members of the class. Students are expected to bring pen/pencil and paper to class and be ready to write and reflect. Computers and cell phones should be off during the class unless specific permission is granted (i.e. during some group discussions the internet might be useful to research ideas).

DEADLINES

Map Quiz	January 18
Homework Due	January 28, February 4, February 18, March 1, March 15
Country Briefing Due	April 26
Final Exam	April 29 – May 3 (TBD)

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1: Introduction to African Politics

January 7: Read syllabus

January 9: Read Thomson, Chapter 1

January 11: Skim The World Bank, "Can Africa Claim the 21st Century?" Chapter 1. Available at <http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/canafriacaclaim.pdf>

Week 2: Africa's Colonial Inheritance

January 14: Read Boahen, Chapter 1 - 2

January 16: Read Boahen, Chapter 3 - 4

January 18: Read Thomson, Chapter 2

Map Quiz, January 18

Week 3: The Nature of African Nationalism

January 21 - HOLIDAY

January 23: Read Thomson, Chapter 3

January 25: Read The Economist article, "The Heart of the Matter" (Available on T-square)

Week 4: The Influence of Ethnicity, Religion, and Social Class

Homework #1 Due, January 28

January 28: Read Thomson, Chapter 4

January 30: Guest Speaker (No reading assignment)

February 1: Read Thomson, Chapter 5

Week 5: The Rise of Personalized Rule and Military Coups

Homework #2 Due, February 4

February 4: Read Thomson, Chapter 6

February 6: Read Thomson, Chapter 7

February 8: Read the New York Times article, "Leaders of Mali's Military Coup Seem to Have Uncertain Grasp on Power" (Available on T-square)

Week 6: External Influence on African Politics

February 11: Read Thomson, Chapter 8

February 13: Read Thomson, Chapter 9

February 15: Recommended reading: Clarke & Herbst, "Somalia and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention"

Week 7: Survival of the African State

Homework #3 Due, February 18

February 18: Read Thomson, Chapter 10

February 20: Read Foreign Policy article, "The Fault Lines of Failed States". (Available on T-square)

February 22: No reading assignment

Week 8: Democracy in Africa

February 25: Read Thomson, Chapter 11

February 27: Read Thomson, Chapter 12, and Williams, Chapter 8, p. 153 - 158

March 1: Read simulation instructions (available on T-square)

Homework #4 Due, March 1

Week 9: African Union Simulation

March 4: No reading assignment

March 6: No reading assignment

March 8: No reading assignment

Week 10: Foundations of Conflict

March 11: Read Williams, Chapter 1

March 13: Read Williams, Chapter 2

March 15: No reading assignment

Homework #5 Due, March 15

Week 11: SPRING BREAK

March 18 – 22

Week 12: Ethnic and Religious Conflict

March 25: Read Williams, Chapter 6

March 27: Read Williams, Chapter 7

March 28: No reading assignment

Week 13: The Resource Curse

April 1: Read Williams, Chapter 4

April 3: Read, Collier, P. and Hoeffler, A. (2005). Resource rents, governance, and conflict. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. (Available on T-square)

April 5: Read Johnson-Sirleaf, Prolog - Chapter 4

Week 14: Peacekeeping

April 8: Read Williams, Chapter 9

April 10: Read Williams, Chapter 10

April 12: Read Johnson-Sirleaf, Chapters 5 - 8

Week 15: Women and Politics

April 15/17/19: Read Johnson-Sirleaf, Chapters 9 - 20

Graduate Student Presentations this week

Week 16: Africa and the World

April 22: Read Van de Walle, Nicolas. (2010). US Policy towards Africa: The Bush legacy and the Obama administration. *African Affairs*. (Available on T-square)

April 24: No reading assignment

April 26: No reading assignment

Country Briefing Due, April 26

Graduate Student Presentations this week

