

# CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN POLITICS (PSCI-210)

Guy Grossman

Spring 2018

Date updated: 12/23/2017

Class Hours: Tuesdays, Thursdays 3-4:30p

Class Room: Stiteler Hall #B21

Office Hours: Wednesdays 4-5:30 & by appt.

Office: Stiteler Hall #225

Office Hours Sign-Up: [calendly.com/ggros](https://calendly.com/ggros)

E-mail: [ggros@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:ggros@sas.upenn.edu)

url: <https://web.sas.upenn.edu/ggros/>

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## What this course is about

This class provides an introduction to contemporary African politics. The core questions that motivate the course are: (a) to what extent are political outcomes in contemporary Africa a consequence of its history, society, and geography? (b) Why are state structures and institutions relatively weaker in Africa than most other regions? and (c) What accounts for Africa's relatively slow economic growth? In the course of the semester, we will see that there is large variation within Africa in the strength of states, the levels of economic growth and respect for democratic institutions; we will aim to explain these variations. To do so, we will study events in particular African countries, but we will also examine broad patterns across countries and use social science concepts and methods to try to explain them. In our exploration, we will mostly build on the work of political scientists but also draw heavily on writing from journalists, anthropologists, psychologists, economists and historians.

The course is structured in four parts. In the first part we take a tour of Africa's recent political history, examining pre-colonial structures, the impact of the slave trade and colonialism on the polities, societies and economies of post-colonial states. We then examine the social and political forces that shape African countries' forms of government and the structure and capacity of their states. In the third part we briefly survey the determinants of Africa's economic development, focusing specifically on policy choices, legal systems, natural resources and the ambivalent role of foreign aid. The fourth part is devoted to the role (ethnic, religious and gender) identities play out in politics.

## Course Objectives

The primary objective of this course is for students to gain familiarity with and be able to apply theoretical concepts in the comparative study of African politics. Students will also leave this course able to name, describe, and compare major theories and approaches to the study of African politics, including historical-institutional perspectives, rational choice theories, and structural views. This course also aims to develop student skills of clear and cogent articulation and critical thinking with an emphasis on empirically-based argumentation and reasoning skills. An independent research project, quizzes, and in-class discussions will all be used to evaluate student progress in developing these skills.

## Course Requirements

1. Class participation: 10%
2. Map quizz: 10%
3. Country Expertise Exercises: 25%
4. Course Content Responses: 35%
5. Final paper: 10%
6. Group presentation: 10%

### 1. Class participation (10%)

You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings, and be an active contributor in class discussions. If you struggle with speaking up in class, please reach out to me within the first two weeks of the semester. You can miss two classes, no questions asked, with no penalty. **In the absence of exceptional circumstances, all subsequent missed classes will be reflected in your participation score.**

This course will involve a substantial amount of reading. I do not expect you to read and remember every word in every assigned reading. These handouts will be exceptionally helpful in teaching you how to (a) [get the main point of what you read](#), (b) [remember what you read](#), and (c) [engage with the material](#).

### 2. Map Quiz (10%)

On Monday, January 18, you will take a map quiz in class. You will be asked to identify from memory several African states south of the Sahara desert by filling in a blank map. You must also know each African state's population size and former colonizer. This exercise is designed to ensure that students are familiar with the countries we will discuss in the course. **If you fail to attain a grade of at least 70% on the quiz, you must retake the quiz until you earn 70%.**

### 3. Country Expertise Exercises (25% total, 5% each)

Over the course of the semester, you will become the class expert on one African country. You will follow the news in that country, complete assignments relating to issues in your country and course themes, and conduct research into your country's political history and institutions. Countries will be assigned by the professor on the second day of class; students who have a home or family connection to a particular country will be required to study a country other than their home country in order to ensure that everyone in the course learns something new over the course of the semester. For each Country Expertise Exercise, upload your answer to Canvas by the time specified with each due date.

1. Identify five news sources that provide reliable reporting or information about politics and economics in your country. Briefly describe each of these sources, and explain who writes them, why they are valid sources of information, and how you could use them as sources for your research this semester (**deadline: January 23**).
2. Report on four news items from your country in 300 words or less per post over the course of the semester. Explain what happened (link to the news source) and what it means for politics and stability in your country (based on your own analysis and opinion). Choose stories that are about political and economic news – not crime stories, nor sports reports. You must complete the first two assignments prior to spring break (**March 1**) and the other two before the last day of classes of the semester (**April 24**). You may only post one analysis of a news story per day, so be sure to start early on the assignment.

### 4. Course Content Responses (35% total; 7% each)

Use the course readings and your own research to answer the following questions in 500-700 words (no more, no less). When using course readings or research materials, make sure to cite all your sources.

1. Based on the course readings and your own research into your country's political history, how did colonization change politics in your country? Was your country governed by direct rule or indirect rule? What changes to political institutions arose as a result? **Deadline: February 1.**
2. What political system did your country adopt after decolonization? What were the main tensions and challenges that arose after independence? How did the country's post-independence leadership address these challenges? **Deadline: February 15.**
3. Is your country a democracy today? Why or why not? How has its democratic status changed over the past two decades? **Deadline: March 13.**
4. How would you define the state of your country's economy? How have its human development core indicators change over the past two decades? What are the main contributors to this positive / negative trend? **Deadline: March 27.**
5. What are the main identity cleavages in your country? What policies and institutions are in place in order to address ethnic tensions? Are these institutions and policies effective? **Deadline: April 19.**

## 5. Final Paper (10%)

In a paper of 1500 words (at least 1400, no more than 1600), discuss international media representations of your country, its politics, and its people. Compare and contrast these media representations to what you have learned from your other assignments, research, and course readings and lectures this semester. Do you think the international media is fair in its representation of your country? Is the picture it gives complete? What does it do well? What could it do better? Be sure to cite all sources used to make your claims (**deadline: April 24**).

## 6. Presentations (10% total; 5% each)

In week-2, you will be assigned to a group according to your regional expertise (western, central, eastern, southern and horn). The group will be responsible to prepare two group presentations on a stellar country in their region in terms of (a) democracy and (b) economic / human development. The group will explain why the country has been able to outperform (e.g., reforms it introduced; far-sighted leadership it is “lucky” to have, etc.)

1. Democracy presentation: **March 20**.
2. Development presentation **April 17**.

## Logistics

### Office Hours

Please come to office hours. Outside of office hours, I will be busy doing other parts of my job (writing scientific papers, supervising graduate student dissertations, serving on faculty committees, etc.). Office hours are the time I have set aside to specifically focus on you personally. Even if you don't have specific questions, the interactions generated during a good office hour discussion should help clear up any confusion you might have on a topic. To sign up for office hours, please use [calendly.com/ggros](https://calendly.com/ggros).

### Communication

I will communicate with you via email; almost always from within Canvas. Please be certain that your UPenn email address is an email address you check on a frequent basis. Please check your email at least once daily. Please consult your syllabus before emailing me; the odds are good that any questions about due dates, grades, or class assignments are already answered in the syllabus, or on the course Canvas website.

### Grade policy

The grade you earn is the grade you will receive in this course. Grades are not negotiable and I will not award points on the basis of your intention to do well. The only thing that matters in determining your grade is your performance in the course. Your course grade is determined according to the following scale:

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A+ (4.0): 96-100	C (2.0): 69-71
A (4.0): 91-95	C- (1.7): 66-68
A- (3.7): 86-90	D+ (1.3): 65-67
B+ (3.3): 81-85	D (1.0): 62-64
B (3.0): 78-80	D- (0.7): 60-61
B- (2.7): 75-77	F (0): below 60
C+ (2.3): 72-74	

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- Assignments will drop one point of a grade for each day they are late. For example, if a Course Content Responses is worth 7 points, your max grade will be 6 after one day of being late, 5 after two days of late submission, etc.
- Every effort will be made to grade fairly and impartially; however, mistakes sometimes occur. If you have a serious reservation about how you have been graded, write a description of the mistake as you see it, staple it to a printed copy of your paper, and deliver it to my mailbox in the political science department (followed by an email). Re-grade requests will only be accepted within a week after the return of the graded work. Note that all problems on a submitted paper may be regarded, not just the problem in question; it is therefore quite possible that your grade could go down. If you believe you were penalized differently from another student who committed the same error, then you must include your friend's paper in your grade appeal.

### **Etiquette**

You are not alone in the class, so please be considerate of your fellow students: arrive on time, take notes of what has been discussed, and do not leave early unless absolutely necessary. Turn off cell phones during lectures.

### **Accommodation for students with disabilities**

The University of Pennsylvania encourages the full participation of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are invited to meet with me to discuss special accommodations that may be needed for successful participation in this course. Specifically, the University accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with the [Office of Student Disabilities Service](#). Students must register with the Student Disabilities Services (SDS) to be granted special accommodations for any on-going conditions. For more information on the services that you are entitled to, please refer to the following [guide](#).

### **Religious Accommodation**

The University accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations. However, you must notify me in the first week of class if you will require any accommodation on these grounds. For more information, please refer to the Penn's Policy on Religious Holidays.

## Policy on Academic Misconduct

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. As outlined in the Student Handbook, "cheating" and "plagiarism" will result in severe disciplinary action on the part of the instructor. Either offense will be grounds for receiving a failing grade (zero points) on the assignment or examination and possibly an "F" for the course, depending on the severity of the offense.

## Course material

There is no course reader for this class. All readings are available electronically through the class website on Canvas. Significant portions of the following books are assigned, however, so you may wish to purchase them at Penn's Book Store, where they are on order.

- Martin, Phyllis & Patrick O'Meara, eds. 1995. *Africa (3rd Edition)*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Englebort, Pierre and Kevin C. Dunn. 2014. *Inside African Politics*. Lynne Rienner Publishers
- Wilson, Lindy, Bereket Habte Selassie, Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja & Ernest Harsch. 2015. *African Leaders of the 20th Century*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Herbst, Jeffrey. 2000. *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Cheeseman, Nic. 2015. *Democracy in Africa: Successes, failures, and the struggle for political reform*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bates, Robert H. 2005. *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies*. University of California Press.
- Burchard, Stephanie M. 2015. "Electoral violence in sub-Saharan Africa: causes and consequences." Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Note that Bates' book can be found as an EBook on Penn's library website. Note also that Christensen & Laitin's new book will be circulated as a PDF.

## Class Schedule

### 1. Introduction

#### Lecture 1: Course Introduction (1/11/2018)

Learning objectives:

- What are we talking about when we talk about “Africa?” Where our ideas about Africa come from?
- How accurate are the portrayals of African states and people that we see in Western media?

Readings:

- Englebert & Dunn: chapter 1.
- Seay, Laura. 2012. [How Not to Write About Africa](#), Foreign Policy.
- Binyavanga Wainaina. 2005. [How to Write About Africa](#). Granta 92.
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. 2009. [The danger of a single story](#), TED Talk.

#### Lecture 2: From Great Expectations to Unfulfilled Dreams (1/16/2018)

Learning objectives:

- What was the starting point of most African countries at independence (cross-continent comparison)?
- How do African countries fare compared to other regions with respect to human development, democracy and conflict levels?

Readings:

- Ajayi, J.F. Ade. 1982 “Expectations of Independence.” *Daedalus* 11(2): 1–9.
- Christensen & Laitin: chapters 1–4.

### 2. Geographic & Historical Constraints

#### Lecture 3: Politics & Institutions in Pre-colonial Africa (1/18/2018)

Learning objectives:

- How was Africa governed before the arrival of Europeans?
- How were pre-colonial African political structures similar to and/or different from pre-Westphalian state structures in other parts of the world?
- How does African history shape the way Africans think about individual rights, communal responsibility, & other foundations of government and societal organization?

**Readings:**

- O'Toole, Thomas. 2013. "The Historical Context" (chapter 3), in *Understanding Contemporary Africa* (only until page 46).
- Martin & O'Meara: chapters 4, 9 & 11.
- Herbst: chapter 2.

**Lecture 4: The implications of pre-colonial political structures (1/23/2018)**

Learning objectives:

- How do pre-colonial structures matter for contemporary politics?

**Readings:**

- Englebert, Pierre. 2000. "Pre-Colonial Institutions, Post-Colonial States, and Economic Development in Tropical Africa." *Political Research Quarterly* 53(1): 7–36.
- Osafo-Kwaako, Philip, & James A. Robinson. 2013. "Political Centralization in Pre-Colonial Africa." *Journal of Comparative Economics* 41(1): 534–564.
- Michalopoulos, S., & E. Papaioannou. 2013. "Pre-Colonial Ethnic Institutions and Contemporary African Development." *Econometrica* 81(1): 113–152.

**Lecture 5: Africa and Europe before 1900 (1/25/2018)**

Learning objectives:

- What was the nature of European encounter with Africa before the (formal) colonial era?
- How do the slave trade and missionary activity matter for contemporary politics?

**Readings:**

- Martin & O'Meara: chapter 6.
- Nunn, Nathan. 2008. "Shackled to the Past: The Causes and Consequences of Africa's Slave Trade," Jared Diamond and James A. Robinson, eds. *Natural Experiments of History*.
- Cagé, Julia & Valeria Rueda. 2016. "The long-term effects of the printing press in Sub-Saharan Africa." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 8(3): 69–99
- **Strong recommendation:** *Things Fall Apart*, by Chinua Achebe, a classic rendering of Nigerian tribal life before and after the coming of European missionaries.



**Lecture 6: Colonial rule (1/30/2018)**

Learning objectives:

- How did European colonizers establish dominance over most of sub-Saharan Africa?
- How effective were the different types of colonial governance structures across Africa?
- What new institutions did the colonizers introduce, and what did they maintain?

Readings:

- Herbst (2000): chapter 3.
- Martin & O'Meara: chapter 7.
- Whittlesey, Derwent. 1937. "British and French Colonial Techniques in West Africa." *Foreign Affairs* 15(2):362–373.
- Kiwanuka, Semakula. 1970. "Colonial Policies and Administrations in Africa: The Myths of the Contrasts," *African Historical Studies* 3(2): 295-315.

**Lecture 7: Colonial legacies I – colonial institutions (2/1/2018)**

Learning objectives:

- How does the mode of colonial rule impact present-day political institutions and societies?
- What is the empirical evidence regarding the long term effect of direct vs. indirect rule?

Readings:

- Lange, Matthew K. 2004. "British Colonial Legacies and Political Development." *World Development* 32(6): 905–922.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. 2001. "Beyond settler and native as political identities: overcoming the political legacy of colonialism." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43(4): 651–664.
- Ekeh, Peter P. 1975. "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17(1): 91–112.

**Lecture 8: Colonial legacies II – borders and people (2/6/2018)**

Readings:

- Jackson, Robert and Carl Rosberg. 1982. "Why Africa's Weak States Persist: The Empirical and Juridical in Statehood." *World Politics* 35(1): 1–24.
- Michalopoulos, S. & E. Papaioannou. 2016. "The Long-Run Effects of the Scramble for Africa," *The American Economic Review* 106(7): 1802–1848.
- Montalvo, Jose G., & Marta Reynal-Querol. 2005. "Ethnic diversity and economic development." *Journal of Development economics* 76(2): 293–323 (focus on measurement until page 309; briefly skim regressions specification and tables).

**Lecture 9: Land, chiefs and projection of power (2/8/2018)**

**Readings:**

- Herbst (2000): chapters 4–6.
- Boone, Catherine. 2003. *Political Topographies of the African state*: chapter 2.

**Lecture 10: Taking stock (2/13/2018)**

**Readings:**

- Christensen & Laitin: chapters 5-9.

**3. Governing after Independence**

Learning objectives:

- Were the newly independent states of Africa truly independent?
- What are the main challenges these states faced in the early years of independence?
- What regime types and political systems did African states adopt following independence?

**Lecture 11: Decolonization, independence and political failures (2/15/2018)**

**Readings:**

- Martin & O'Meara: chapters 8 and 18.
- Englebert & Dunn: chapter 2 (only pages 40-62).
- Gordon, Donald: chapter 4 (only until page 83).

**Lecture 12: Film (in-class): *Lumumba* (2/20/2018)**

**Readings:**

- *African Leaders of the 20th Century*: Patrice Lumumba, by Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja.
- *African Leaders of the 20th Century*: Thomas Sankara, by Ernest Harsch.

**Lecture 13: Personal rule & Neo-patrimonialism (2/22/2018)**

**Readings:**

- Martin & O'Meara: chapter 9.
- Englebert & Dunn: chapter 4.
- Jackson, Robert H., and Carl G. Rosberg. 1984. "Personal Rule: Theory and Practice in Africa." *Comparative Politics* 16(4): 421-442.

**Lecture 14: Patronage, Corruption and Clientelistic Politics (2/27/2018)**

Learning objectives:

- How and why did corruption become a prominent feature of modern African politics?
- What role does patronage play in democracy, conflict, and governance?

**Readings:**

- Martin & O'Meara: chapter 11.
- Olivier de Sardan, JP. 1999. "A moral economy of corruption in Africa?" *Journal of Modern African Studies* 37(1): 25–52.
- Szeftel, Morris. 1998. "Misunderstanding African Politics: Corruption and the Governance Agenda." *Review of African Political Economy* 25(76): 221–240.
- Arriola, Leonardo. 2009. "Patronage and Political Stability in Africa," *Comparative Political Studies* 42(10): 1339-1362.

**Lecture 15: Democracy I? (3/1/2018)**

Learning objectives:

- How did the end of the Cold War affect African political development?
- Did states that claimed to democratize really do so?
- Does the term "democracy" mean the same thing in Africa as we use it in the West?

**Readings:**

- Cheesman: chapters 1–3.

**Lecture 16: Democracy II? (3/13/2018)**

**Readings:**

- Cheesman: chapters 4–6.

**Lecture 17: Film (in-class): An African Election (3/15/2018)**

**Readings:**

- Burchard, Stephanie M. 2015. *Electoral violence in sub-Saharan Africa: causes and consequences*: chapters 1-5.

**Lecture 18: students group democratization presentations (3/20/2018)**

**Readings:**

- Burchard: chapters 7-8.
- Cheesman: conclusion.

**4. Patterns of Economic Performance**

Learning objectives:

- How does poor governance affect African economic development?
- Why did African states did not take advantage of their comparative advantage in agriculture production?

**Lecture 19: Economic Stagnation and Decline (3/22/2018)**

**Readings:**

- Martin & O'Meara: chapter 19.
- Delancey, Virginia. 2013. "The Economies of Africa" (chapter 5), in *Understanding Contemporary Africa*.

**Lecture 20: the political basis of agricultural policies (3/27/2018)**

**Readings:**

- Bates, Robert H. 1981 *Markets and States in Tropical Africa*: chapters 1-6.

**Guest Lecture 21 (Meghan Garrity & Chris Blair): immigration (3/29/2018)**

- TBD.

**Guest Lecture 22 (Danny Choi): political parties (4/3/2018)**

**Readings:**

- TBD.

**Guest Lecture 23 (Jeremy Springman): NGO service provision (4/5/2018)**

**Readings:**

- TBD.

**Lecture 24: Windfalls I: Natural resources (4/10/2018)****Readings:**

- Frankel, Jeffrey. 2012. "The Natural Resource Curse: A Survey of Diagnoses and Some Prescriptions," CID Working Paper No. 233
- Collier, Paul. 2007. *The Bottom Billion*: chapter 3.
- Ross, Michael L. 2015. "What have we learned about the resource curse?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 18: 239–259.

**Lecture 25: Windfalls II: Foreign Aid (4/12/2018)****Readings:**

- Moyo, Dambisa. 2009. *Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working and How there is a Better Way for Africa*,: until page 68.
- Bräutigam, Deborah A. & Stephen Knack. 2004. "Foreign Aid, Institutions, and Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 52(2): 255–285.

**Lecture 26: Economic stabilization? students group presentations (4/17/2018)****Readings:**

- Christensen & Laitin: chapter 14.

**5. Identity Politics****Lecture 27: Origins of Ethnic Identities (4/19/2018)****Readings:**

- Englebert & Dunn: chapter 3 "Ethnicity" (only pages 63-91).
- Bates, Robert H. 1974. "Ethnic Competition and Modernization in Contemporary Africa." *Comparative Political Studies* 6(4): 457–484.
- Ndegwa, S. N. 1997. "Citizenship and ethnicity: an examination of two transition moments in Kenyan politics." *American Political Science Review*, 91(3): 599–616.

**Lecture 28: Implications of Ethnic Cleavages (4/24/2018)**

**Readings:**

- Easterly, William, & Ross Levine. 1997. "Africa's growth tragedy: policies and ethnic divisions." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 112(4): 1203–1250 (just briefly skim).
- Bangura, Yusuf. 2006. "Ethnic inequalities in the public sector: A comparative analysis." *Development and Change* 37(2): 299–328.
- Robinson, Amanda Lea. 2016. "Internal Borders: Ethnic-Based Market Segmentation in Malawi." *World Development* 87:371–384.
- Christensen & Laitin: chapter 10.