

CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN POLITICS (PSCI-210-001)

Prof. Guy Grossman

Fall 2020

Date updated: 09/18/2020

Class Hours: Monday and Wednesdays 3:30-4:50p

Class Room: Zoom and Canvas

Office Hours: Tuesdays 4-5 & by appt.

Office: Perelman Center for Political Science and Economics #428

Office Hours Sign-Up: calendly.com/ggros

E-mail: ggros@sas.upenn.edu

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

What this course is about

This class provides an introduction to contemporary African politics. Some of the core questions that motivate the course are: (a) to what extent are political and economic outcomes in contemporary Africa a consequence of its history 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 (sometimes 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 anthropologists, economists, historians and journalists.

The course is structured in five parts. In the first part we take a tour of Africa's political history, examining the impact of pre-colonial structures, missionary activities, the slave trade on the polities, societies and economies of today's states. In the second part of the course, we take a deep dive to explore the multi-faceted ways in which colonialism still affects present-day outcomes. In the third part, we examine the social and political forces that shape African countries' forms of government, exploring various issues pertaining to political liberalization processes that are unfolding since the 1990s. In the fourth part we briefly survey some of the determinants of Africa's economic development. The fifth part is devoted to examining the role ethnic identities play out in politics, including in civil wars.

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. 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, in-class discussions and a final written exam will all be used to evaluate student progress in developing these skills.

Covid-19 Adjustments

Given the current state of the pandemic, and following on the university's *Covid-19 Return to Campus Guide*, I will not be able, unfortunately, to teach this lecture course in-person. Instead, the course will adopt a synchronous model: I will be holding Zoom-based lectures on Monday and Wednesdays 3:30-4:50p; all lectures will be recorded and posted on Canvas for students who are spending the Fall term in time zones that preclude their attendance. These are truly taxing times, and I know you were hoping for a different college experience. I am so sorry that we are where we are. I will do my best to ensure high quality course, notwithstanding the challenges this virus is posing to multiple aspects of our lives.

Course Requirements

1. Class attendance: 10%
2. Class participation: 10%
3. Map quizz: 10%
4. Country expertise news posts: 20%
5. Country expertise responses: 20%
6. Final Paper: 30%

1. Class attendance (10%)

You are expected to attend class lectures (via Zoom) if the synchronous session takes place between 7am and 8pm in your time zone. Exceptions to these attendance policies are:

1. If you are in a time zone outside these parameters
2. If you are participating in a college-listed religious holiday.
3. If you are ill, or are taking care of a family member
4. If you have exceptionally poor internet

If any of these reasons applies to you, please contact me prior to class to let them know.

2. Class participation (10%)

This course involves a non-negligible amount of reading. I expect you to attend (zoom) lectures prepared to discuss the readings, and be an active contributor in class discussions. Obviously, I do not expect you to read and remember every word in every assigned reading. I have posted on Canvas several handouts that are 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.

3. Quizzes (10% total, 5% each)

You will take two “in class” quizzes. First, you will be asked to identify from memory several sub-Saharan African countries by filling in a blank map (September 9). Second, you will be asked to demonstrate that you know each African state’s population size and former colonizer (September 14). These exercises are designed to ensure that students have the most basic familiarity with the countries we will discuss in the course. **If you fail to attain a grade of at least 70% on a quiz, you must retake that quiz until you earn 70%.**

4. Country Expertise News Posts (20% total, 10% 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, economy and political institutions. Countries will be assigned on the second class meeting (September 9th). For each Country Expertise exercise, you are expected to upload your post to Canvas by midnight of the deadline date specified below.

By Sept 14th, you will need to identify 2-3 news sources that provide reliable reporting or information about politics and economics in your country. I expect you to email me by that date a **short** memo describing each of these news sources, and explaining who writes them (e.g., journalists, country-experts, academics), why they are valid sources of information for that country, what are the potential sources of biases, and how you could use these news sources for your research (there is no grade for this memo).

Over the course of the semester, you will report on two *current news items* from your country of expertise in **500 words or less per post**. In each post you are asked to briefly describe what happened (and link to the news source) and more importantly – what the event / news story means for politics and stability in your country (based on your own analysis and opinion). Choose only stories that are about political and economic news. It is not advisable to report crime stories, nor sports reports, unless you are able to directly connect these stories to politics.

Assignment deadlines:

1. 1st country expertise post: by Sept 25 (midnight)
2. 2nd country expertise post: by October 23 (midnight)

5. Country Expert Responses (20% total; 10% each)

Use the course readings and your own research to answer **two of the four** following questions about your country of expertise in **no more than 1,000 words** (fewer words are welcome). When using course readings, news sources or other research materials, make sure to cite your sources appropriately.

1. How would you rate your country's government response to Covid-19? Is the country doing better or worse than its neighbor (health indicators)? Why do you think your government is over- or under-performing? **Deadline: October 9.**
2. How would you define the state of your country's economy? What are the economy's main drivers / sectors? Is the economy growing or declining in the past decade? What are the main contributors to this trend (here too – the trend can be either growth, contraction, or stagnation)? **Deadline: October 9.**
3. Is your country a democracy today? Why do you think it is or is not a democracy? How has its level of democracy changed over the past two decades? What are the best explanations for that trend in level of democracy (the trend can be one of three: improvement, decline, or stagnation)? **Deadline: November 6.**
4. 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: November 6.**

Make sure to submit the both the country expertise posts and responses on time. Please note that every day of late submission will result in a penalty of 0.5 points. Since you know the deadlines ahead of time, please plan accordingly. In other words, I will likely not approve deadline extensions due to say family events or religious holidays that you have known about in advance.

6. Final Paper (30%)

In a paper of about 1500 words (at least 1300, no more than 1700), discuss (and justify) what you find as the main political challenges of your country of expertise. If the country is ridden by violence, you can discuss for example what are the main challenges of reaching a more peaceful equilibrium. If the country is not a consolidated democracy or ridden with corruption, discuss what are the main challenges of reaching a more democratic (or less corrupt) equilibrium. **Deadline: November 27.**

Logistics

Office Hours

Please sign up to office hours (also over Zoom). Outside of office hours, I will be busy doing other parts of my job (writing scientific papers, applying for grants, supervising graduate students, serving on faculty committees, writing tenure assessment letters etc.). Office hours are the time I have set aside to 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.

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 question about due dates, grades, or class assignments are already answered in the syllabus, or on the course Canvas website.

Grade policy

Your course grade is determined according to the following scale:

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	

- The grade you earn is the grade you will receive in this course. Grades are not negotiable and I do 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.
- 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 if and when I regrade, I examine the entire paper/post; not just the issue you raised in the request. 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

Please be considerate of your fellow students: log into Zoom on time, make sure to have your video on and your microphone muted, take notes of what has been discussed, and do not leave the session early unless absolutely necessary. Turn off cell phones during Zoom lectures.

Accommodation for students with disabilities

The University of Pennsylvania encourages the full participation of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are encouraged 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. Please 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. 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

Class 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. Note that some books (like Bates) can be found as an eBook on Penn's library website.

- Bates, Robert H. (2005). *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies*. University of California Press.
- Bleck, Jaimie & Nicolas Van de Walle (2018). *Electoral politics in Africa since 1990: Continuity in change*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cheeseman, Nic (2015). *Democracy in Africa: Successes, Failures, and the Struggle for Political Reform*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cheeseman, Nic & Jonathan Fisher (2020). *Authoritarian Africa: Repression, Resistance, and the Power of Ideas*. Oxford University Press.
- Christensen, Darin & David D. Laitin (2019). *African States Since Independence : Order, Development, and Democracy*. Yale University Press.
- Englebert, P. and K. Dunn (2014). *Inside African Politics*. Lynne Rienner Publishers
- Herbst, Jeffrey (2000). *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton University Press.
- Martin, Phyllis & Patrick O'Meara, eds. (1995). *Africa (3rd Edition)*. Indiana University Press.

- Meredith, Martin (2005). "The state of Africa: a history of fifty years of independence."
- Moss, Todd (2018). "African Development: Making Sense of the Issues and Actors."
- Moyo, Dambisa (2010). *Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working and How there is a Better Way for Africa*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Nathan, Noa (2019). *Electoral Politics and Africa's Urban Transition: Class and Ethnicity in Ghana*. Cambridge University Press
- Roessler, Philip (2016). *Ethnic Politics and State Power in Africa: The Logic of the Coup-Civil War Trap*. Cambridge University Press.

*Readings that are marked with ** below are recommended, but optional.*

Class Schedule

1. Introduction

Lecture 1: Course Introduction (Sept 2, 2020)

Learning objectives:

- Set course expectations / go over the syllabus
- Why study African politics? How to write *and not to write* about Africa?

Readings (25 pages):

- Englebort & Dunn (2014): chapter 1 (pages 1–15).
- Binyavanga Wainaina (2005) [How to Write About Africa](#). *Granta* 92 (4 pages).
- Seay, Laura (2012) [How Not to Write About Africa](#), *Foreign Policy* (6 pages).

Lecture 2: From Great Expectations to Unfulfilled Dreams (Sept 9, 2020)

Learning objectives:

- What was the starting point of most African countries at independence?
- How do African countries fare today compared to other regions with respect to democratic governance, economic growth and conflict?

Readings (80 pages):

- Christensen & Laitin (2019): chapters 2–4 (pages 31–111).
- **Ajayi, J.F. Ade. 1982 "Expectations of Independence." *Daedalus* 11(2): 1–9.

2. Geographic & Historical Constraints

Lecture 3: Politics & Institutions in Pre-colonial Africa (Sept 14, 2020)

Learning objectives:

- How have different parts of Africa governed before the Europeans' arrival?
- How and why pre-colonial political structures still matter today?

Readings (45 pages):

- O'Toole, Thomas (2013). "The Historical Context" (chapter 3), in *Understanding Contemporary Africa* (only pages 25–46).
- Herbst (2000): chapter 2 (pages 35–57).
- **Michalopoulos, S., & E. Papaioannou (2013). "Pre-Colonial Ethnic Institutions and Contemporary African Development." *Econometrica* 81(1): 113–152 (read into just skim rest).

Lecture 4: Africa and Europe before 1900 (Sept 16, 2020)**Learning objectives:**

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

Readings (51 pages):

- Martin & O'Meara (1995): chapter 6 (pages 115–132).
- Nunn, Nathan (2008). "Shackled to the Past: The Causes and Consequences of Africa's Slave Trade," Diamond and Robinson, eds. *Natural Experiments of History* (33 pages).
- ** Cage, 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.

Lecture 5: Colonial rule (Sept 21, 2020)**Learning objectives:**

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

Readings (75 pages):

- Herbst (2000): chapter 3 (pages 58–96).
- Martin & O'Meara (1995): chapter 7 (pages 135–170).

Lecture 6: Colonial legacies I – Borders (Sept 23, 2020)**Learning objectives:**

- What explains the durability of Africa's colonial era (artificial) borders?
- What are the consequences of Africa's colonial era border durability?

Readings (64 pages):

- Jackson, Robert and Carl Rosberg (1982). "Why Africa's Weak States Persist: The Empirical and Juridical in Statehood." *World Politics* 35(1): 1–24.
- Herbst (2000): chapter 4 (pages 97-136).
- ** Michalopoulos, S. & E. Papaioannou. 2016. "The Long-Run Effects of the Scramble for Africa," *The American Economic Review* 106(7): 1802–1848.

Lecture 7: Colonial legacies II – Political Geography (Sept 30, 2020)

Learning objectives:

- How does the size and shape of African countries affect governance and economic outcomes, even years after the end of colonial rule?
- How colonial investments helped pick long-term winners and losers.

Readings (48 pages):

- Herbst (2000): chapter 5 (pages 139–172).
- Green, Elliot (2012). "On the size and shape of African states." *International Studies Quarterly* 56(2): 229–244.
- ** Roessler et al. (2020). "The Cash Crop Revolution, Colonialism and Legacies of Spatial Inequality: Evidence from Africa." *Centre for the Study of African Economies*.

Lecture 8: Colonial legacies III – Institutions and Traditional Leaders (Oct 5, 2020)

Learning objectives:

- What are the long-term consequences of direct vs. indirect rule?
- What are the long-term consequences of the colonial legal system?
- What are the long-term consequences of colonial powers' empowerment of traditional authorities?

Readings (42 pages):

- Cheeseman, Nic & Jonathan Fisher (2020): chapter 1 (pages 1–17).
- Herbst (2000): chapter 6 (pages 173–197).
- ** Nathan, Noah (2019). "Electoral Consequences of Colonial Invention: Brokers, Chiefs, and Distribution in Northern Ghana." *World Politics*, 71(3): 417–456.

3. Economic policy after Independence

Lecture 9: Post-independence Setting (October 7, 2020)

Learning objectives:

- Why did colonialism end, and why so abruptly?
- Were the newly independent states of Africa independent?
- What are the main challenges African states faced in the early years of independence?

- Why did democratic rule breakdown in virtually all post-colonial African states?
- What regime types and political systems did African states adopt following independence?

Readings (63 pages):

- Englebert & Dunn (2014): chapter 2 (only pages 41-62).
- Bates (2005): chapter 1 (pages 11–30).
- Ekeh, Peter P. (1975). "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17(1): 91–112.
- **Recommendation:** Film: *Lumumba*

Lecture 10: Economic Policy in 1960-1970s (October 12, 2020)

Learning objectives:

- Survey of alternative theories of economic stagnation and decline
- What were the economic conditions across Africa post-independence?
- How did post-colonial African states regulate the agriculture and industrial sectors?

Readings (70 pages):

- Collier, Paul, and Jan W. Gunning (1999). "Why has Africa Grown Slowly?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 13(3): 3–22.
- Bates (2005): chapters 2–4 (pages 30–79).

Lecture 11: Agricultural Policy in Africa (October 14, 2020)

Guest lecture:

- [Dr. Danielle Resnick](#) (IFPRI)

Learning objectives:

- Understanding the political economy of Agricultural Policy in Africa

Readings (57 pages):

- Kjaer, Anne Mette. (2015) "Political settlements and productive sector policies: Understanding sector differences in Uganda." *World Development* 68: 230-241.
- Resnick, Danielle, Steven Haggblade, Suresh Babu, Sheryl L. Hendriks, and David Mather. (2018). "The Kaleidoscope Model of policy change: Applications to food security policy in Zambia." *World Development* 109: 101-120.
- Resnick, Danielle (2020). The Political Economy of Agricultural Policy in Africa: Implications for Agrifood System Transformation.
- **Bates (2005): chapters 5–7 (pages 81-118).

Lecture 12: Windfalls (October 19, 2020)**Learning objectives:**

- How do natural resources such as oil and gas, as well as foreign aid, affect both governance and economic outcomes?

Readings (78 pages):

- Elbadawi, Ibrahim & Nadir Mohammed (2015). "Natural Resources in Africa." in *The Oxford Handbook of Africa and Economics* (20 pages).
- Moyo (2010): chapters 2–4 (pages 10–68).
- **Brautigam, Deborah A. & Stephen Knack. 2004. "Foreign Aid, Institutions, and Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 52(2): 255–285.

4. Political Liberalization / Democratization**Lecture 13: Opening of the Political Space in 1990s (October 21, 2020)****Learning objective:**

- How and why political liberalization occurred in the 1990s?
- Bottom-up or top-down Democratization?

Readings (56 pages):

- Dahl, Robert (1972). *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, chapter 1 (9 pages).
- Cheeseman (2015): chapters 3–4 (pages 86–142).
- **Meredith (2011): chapters 22–23 (pages 368–411).

Lecture 14: The Democratization Debate (October 26, 2020)**Learning objective:**

- Did Democratization process lead to Democratic Consolidation?
- How meaningful are elections across Africa?

Readings (70 pages):

- Bleck and van de Walle (2018): chapters 2–3 (pages 30–100).

Lecture 15: Parties, Candidates and Electoral Campaigns – (October 28, 2020)

Guest lecture:

- [Prof. Jaimie Bleck](#) (University of Notre Dame)

Learning objective:

- Who runs for office?
- How do parties differentiate themselves?

Readings (83 pages):

- Bleck and van de Walle (2018): chapters 4–5 (pages 101–184).

Lecture 16: The African Voter (November 2, 2020)

Learning objectives:

- What criteria voters use to inform their vote?
- What are the politically salient issues for voters?
- Are elections merely ethnic census?

Readings (52 pages):

- Bleck and van de Walle (2018): chapter 7 (pages 218–260).
- Dunning, Thad et al. (2019). "Voter information campaigns and political accountability: Cumulative findings from a preregistered meta-analysis of coordinated trials." *Science Advances*, 5(7): eaaw2612 (10 pages).

Lecture 17: Urban Politics – (November 4, 2020)

Guest lecturer:

- [Prof. Noah Nathan](#) (University of Michigan)

Learning objective:

- How is urbanization changing (and not changing) electoral politics?

Readings (83 pages):

- Nathan (2019): chapters 1–2 (pages 3–85).

Lecture 18: Politics of Forced Displacement – guest lecture (November 9, 2020)**Guest lecturer:**

- [Chris Blair](#) (UPenn)

Learning objective:

- Why do some African countries have generous refugee policies and others don't?

Readings (58 pages):

- Blair, Chris, Guy Grossman & Jeremy Weinstein (2020). "Forced Displacement and Asylum Policy in the Developing World" (50 pages).
- Neocosmos, Michael (2008). "The politics of fear and the fear of politics: Reflections on xenophobic violence in South Africa." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 43(6): 586-594.
- **Zickgraf, Caroline (2019). "Climate Change and Migration Crisis in Africa," in *The Oxford Handbook of Migration Crises* (12 pages).

5. Identity Politics**Lecture 19: Origins of Ethnic Identities (November 11, 2020)****Learning objective:**

- Why are ethnic identities so salient in many African countries?

Readings (54 pages):

- Englebert & Dunn (2014): chapter 3 "Ethnicity" (**only pages 63-91**).
- Lynch, Gabrielle (2013) "The Politics of Ethnicity" in *Routledge Handbook of African Politics* (9 pages).
- Bates, Robert H. (1983). "Modernization, Ethnic Competition and the Rationality of Politics," in *State versus Ethnic Claims: African Policy Dilemmas* (152–166).

Lecture 20: Implications of Ethnic Cleavages (November 16, 2020)**Readings (51 pages):**

- Kimenyi, Mwangi (2006). "Ethnicity, Governance and the Provision of Public Goods." *Journal of African Economies* 15: 62–99.
- Robinson, Amanda Lea. 2016. "Internal Borders: Ethnic-Based Market Segmentation in Malawi." *World Development* 87: 371–384.
- ** Easterly, William, & Ross Levine. 1997. "Africa's Growth Tragedy: Policies and Ethnic Divisions." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 112(4): 1203–1250.

Lecture 21: (Ethnic) Civil Wars (November 18, 2020)

Guest lecturer:

- [Prof. Phillip Roessler](#) (William & Mary)

Learning objectives:

- Why are (many) African countries vulnerable to civil wars outbreaks?
- What's the relationship between coups and civil wars?

Readings (80 pages):

- Roessler (2016): chapters 1–3 (pages 1–80).

Lecture 22: Gender Politics (November 23, 2020)

Guest lecturer:

- [Prof. Amanda Clayton](#) (Vanderbilt University)

Learning objectives:

- Are there gender gaps in political participation? Do men and women have distinct policy preferences?
- What are some promising ways to reduce gender gaps in representation?

Readings (60 pages):

- Clayton, Amanda, Cecilia Josefsson, and Vibeke Wang. (2017). "Quotas and women's substantive representation: Evidence from a content analysis of Ugandan plenary debates." *Politics & Gender*. 13(2): 1–29.
- Clayton, Amanda, Cecilia Josefsson, Robert Mattes and Shaheen Mozaffar. 2019. "In Whose Interest? Gender and Mass-Elite Priority Congruence in Sub-Saharan Africa." *Comparative Political Studies*. 52(1), 69-101.