The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the major issues, themes and theories in the politics of contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa. The course begins by reviewing the nature and legacies of colonial rule and the politics of independence. From there, we move to the character of the contemporary African state, highlighting its personalism, clientelism and corruption, and the responses that these characteristics generate within African societies. Then, the course turns to the politics of ethnicity, addressing how communal ties serve as bases for political mobilization and social organization. From there, the course analyzes the causes and consequences of the wave of political and economic liberalization that began in the early 1990s. We explore the reasons for the region’s economic stagnation, its current resurgence, and the domestic and international politics of economic reform. The course concludes with a look at two of the continent’s most pressing current issues—China’s growing role in Africa and civil war—and then discusses what the future may hold for the region.

REQUIREMENTS

The course is taught in two lectures each week, on Monday and Wednesday from 11:00am to 12:30pm in E53-438. Attendance at lectures is mandatory.

Students are required to take a mid-term and a final exam. In addition to the regular course readings listed on the syllabus, students will read Chinua Achebe’s novel, *Anthills of the Savannah*, and write a short (10-12 page) paper relating the novel to the themes of the course. In addition, students will be required to take a map test during the semester’s second week. The relative weights accorded to these four requirements are as follows: midterm (30%), paper (25%), final (40%), map test (5%). [Note: to aid you in studying for the map test, I highly recommend any of the websites you will find if you Google “Africa map quiz.”]

The course involves a heavy reading load, the completion of which is essential to understanding the issues and controversies addressed in the lectures. Copies of all the readings except the three books that we read in their entirety are posted on Stellar and may be downloaded and printed for your own use. The three required books—Chinua Achebe’s novels *Anthills of the Savannah* and *No Longer at Ease* and Steven Radelet’s *Emerging Africa: How 17 Countries are Leading the Way*—have been ordered at the MIT COOP. Copies are also on reserve at the MIT library.
LECTURE AND READING SCHEDULE

WEEK 1
Sept 5: *Introduction*

WEEK 2
Sept 10: *The “Scramble for Africa” and the Nature of Colonial Rule*

Sept 12: *The Legacy of Colonialism*

WEEK 3
Sept 17: *National Independence Movements*
Martin Meredith, “L’Afrique Noir” and “Winds of Change” in *The Fate of Africa* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), chs. 4 and 5.

Sept 19: *The Centralization of Authority and the Rise of Personal Rule*
Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, “W(h)ither the State?” and “Recycled Elites,” in *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (Oxford: James Currey, 1999), chs. 1 and 3.

WEEK 4
Sept 24: *The Social Origins of Clientelism*
Sept 26: NO CLASS: YOM KIPPUR

WEEK 5
Oct 1: Movie: Mandabi

Oct 3: State Capacity and State Decay
Martin Meredith, “The Slippery Slope” in The Fate of Africa (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), ch. 16.
“The Road to Hell is Unpaved,” The Economist, 21 December 2002.

WEEK 6
Oct 8: NO CLASS: COLUMBUS DAY

Oct 10: The State in Africa: Agricultural Policy

WEEK 7
Oct 15: Disengagement from the State

Oct 17: Ethnicity in Africa

WEEK 8
Oct 22: Ethnic Voting
Oct 24: MIDTERM EXAM

WEEK 9

Oct 29: *Political Change in Africa in the 1990s*

Oct 31: “*Democracy* in Africa”

WEEK 10

Nov 5: *Elections in Contemporary Africa*

Nov 7: *Explaining Slow Economic Growth in Africa*
Martin Meredith, “The Lost Decade” in *The Fate of Africa* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), ch. 22.

WEEK 11

Nov 12: NO CLASS: VETERANS DAY

Nov 14: *Why Did (Do?) African Leaders Choose Growth Killing Policies?*

WEEK 12

Nov 19: *The Domestic Politics of Economic Reform in Africa*

Nov 21: Film: *Our Friends at the Bank*

**WEEK 13**

Nov 26: *The International Politics of Economic Reform in Africa: Aid*
William Easterly, “Can the West Save Africa?” *Journal of Economic Literature* 47 (June 2009), pp. 373-447.

Nov 28: *Development Interventions in Africa*

**WEEK 14**

Dec 3: *China’s Growing Role in Africa*

Dec 5: *Civil Wars in Africa*

**WEEK 15**

Dec 10: *What Does the Future Hold for Africa? I*

Dec 12: *What Does the Future Hold for Africa? II*