

UCLA
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

POLITICAL SCIENCE 151A: GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS OF AFRICA

Prof. Daniel Posner
3248 Bunche Hall
dposner@polisci.ucla.edu

Winter 2025
Tues/Thurs: 11am-12:15pm
Royce 190
Student Hours: Tues 1:30-3:30pm

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to some of the major issues, themes and theories in the politics of 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 African state, highlighting its personalism, its clientelism, and its simultaneous weakness and strength. Then, the course turns to the roles of gender and ethnicity in politics and society. From there, we explore the challenges of economic reform and the issue of foreign aid. We then address the state of democracy in the Africa and the problem of conflict and instability. We conclude with a discussion of recent developments in politics, economy, and society, and some observations about what the future may hold for the region.

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this course is for students to gain familiarity with and be able to apply theoretical concepts in the study of African politics and political, and economic development more generally. By the end of the course, students are expected to understand the prevailing answers to the course's central questions, and the prevailing methods used by social scientists to answer them. Students will also develop an appreciation for why these answers are sometimes unsatisfying. In addition, students will be exposed—through film, interviews, and descriptive written accounts—to life in Africa today.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

The course is taught in two lectures each week, on Tuesday and Thursday from 11am to 12:15pm in Royce 190. Lectures are a critical component of the course, and will contain material that goes beyond what is contained in the readings. Attendance is essential for succeeding in the course.

Students are required to take an in-class midterm and a final exam. They are also required to attend and participate in weekly discussion sections. In addition, students will read Chinua Achebe's novel *A Man of the People: A Novel of Political Unrest in a New Nation* and write a short (8-10 page) paper relating the novel to the themes of the course. Students will also be required to take a map test during the quarter's second week. [Note: to aid you in studying for the map test, I highly recommend the [Study Map of African States](#).] The relative weights accorded to these requirements are as follows: midterm (25%), paper (20%), final (35%), section participation (15%), and map test (5%).

- The map quiz will be administered at the beginning of class on Tuesday, January 14.

- The essay on the Achebe novel will be due on Friday, February 7 at 8pm.
- The midterm will be taken in class on Thursday, February 20.
- The final exam will be on Tuesday, March 18 from 8-11am. *If you know that you have a conflict with this date/time, then you should not enroll in the course.*

The course involves a heavy reading load, the completion of which (ideally before the lecture for which each set of readings is assigned) is essential to understanding the issues and controversies addressed in the lectures. The readings are a mix of scholarly works, journalistic accounts, and excerpts from African novels. In addition to the readings, the course also includes several online assignments (TED Talks, recorded interviews, and a film). With the exception of the Achebe novel, which is readily available—including in used form—at Amazon.com and other booksellers, all of the readings are posted on the course web page (UCLA login required) and are available to be downloaded for your own use.

I will hold student hours (what are usually referred to as “office hours”) on Tuesdays from 1:30-3:30pm in my office, 4238 Bunche Hall. This is an opportunity for you to stop by to chat about the course material, your career objectives, political science more generally, or anything else. It is *your* time.

OTHER NOTES AND RESOURCES

Academic integrity: As a student and member of the UCLA community, you are expected to demonstrate integrity in all of your academic endeavors. Accordingly, all work you do will be held to the highest ethical and professional standards. Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism (**including the use of AI platforms such as ChatGPT**), multiple submissions, or facilitating academic dishonesty. If you are unsure of what any of these entail, please consult the university guidelines below or ask me. *If you are even suspected of violating these standards, I am obliged to refer your case to the Dean of Students, who will carry out an investigation.* Guidelines regarding academic dishonesty at UCLA are available at: <https://deanofstudents.ucla.edu/academic-integrity>.

Students with disabilities: If you need an academic accommodation based on a disability, please contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) at cae.ucla.edu, *if possible within the first two weeks of the term, as reasonable notice is needed to coordinate accommodations.*

Illness: If you get sick or have to care for someone who is sick, let me know as soon as you are able to. I will work with you to make up the work.

Religious observances: In the event of a religious holiday or any other form of observance, please contact me regarding your absence as soon as possible so we can make accommodations for you.

Your wellbeing: We want you to succeed here at UCLA. The university has many resources available to help you, should you need them.

- UCLA Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) provides confidential counseling to support your mental health needs as you pursue your academic goals. Counselors available 24 hours a day by phone at (310) 825-0768. Further information is available at www.counseling.ucla.edu.

- UCLA CalFresh Initiative helps provide food security for students in need. Visit basicneeds.ucla.edu/services/calfresh for more information.
- The Economic Crisis Response Team provides support to UCLA students facing financial hardship. Visit basicneeds.ucla.edu/services/economic-crisis-response-team.
- UCLA Student Legal Services provides confidential legal counseling and assistance regarding a wide range of legal issues. Visit studentlegal.ucla.edu for more information.
- UCLA Care Advocate provides confidential services for survivors of sexual or gender-based violence. Visit careprogram.ucla.edu for more information.
- UCLA Title IX Office: For reporting gender-based discrimination, including sexual harassment or sexual violence. Visit sexualharassment.ucla.edu for more information.

LECTURE AND READING SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

Jan 7: *Introduction*

- Binyavanga Wainaina. 2005. "How to Write About Africa." *Granta*.
Laura Seay. 2012. "How Not to Write About Africa." *Foreign Policy*.
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. 2009. "The Danger of a Single Story." [TED Talk](#).
Leslie Dodson. 2011. "Don't Misrepresent Africa." [TED Talk](#).

Jan 9: *The "Scramble for Africa" and the Nature of Colonial Rule*

- Thomas Pakenham. 1991. "Introduction." In *The Scramble for Africa, 1876-1912*. Random House: xxi-xxiii.
Jeffrey Herbst. 2000. "The Europeans and the African Problem." In *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton University Press: ch. 3.

WEEK 2

Jan 14: *The Legacy of Colonialism*

- Peter Ekeh. 1975. "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17(1): 91-112.
Wangari Maathai. 2009. "A Legacy of Woes." In *The Challenge for Africa*. Anchor Books: ch. 2.
MAP QUIZ

Jan 16: *National Independence Movements*

- Darin Christensen and David D. Laitin. 2019. "The Charismatic Founders and Their Dreams." In *African States Since Independence*. Yale University Press: ch. 1.
Martin Meredith. 2005. "*L'Afrique Noir*" and "Winds of Change." In *The Fate of Africa*. Public Affairs: chs. 4-5.

WEEK 3

Jan 21: *The Centralization of Authority and the Rise of Personal Rule*

- Todd Moss. 2007. "Big Men, Personal Rule and Patronage Politics." In *African Development: Making Sense of the Issues and Actors*. Lynne Rienner: ch. 3.
Crawford Young and Thomas Turner. 1985. "The Patrimonial State and Personal Rule." In *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*. University of Wisconsin Press: ch. 6.

Jan 23: *State Decay*

Martin Meredith. 2005. "The Slippery Slope." In *The Fate of Africa*. Public Affairs: ch. 16.

Teju Cole. 2015. *Every Day is for the Thief*. Random House: chs. 1-3, 18, 23.

Dayo Olopade. 2014. *The Bright Continent: Breaking Rules and Making Change in Modern Africa*. Mariner Books: 38-41.

WEEK 4

Jan 28 and 30: *Ethnicity*

Robert Bates. 1983. "Modernization, Ethnic Competition and the Rationality of Politics in Contemporary Africa." In Donald S. Rothchild and Victor A. Olorunsola, eds. *State versus Ethnic Claims: African Policy Dilemmas*. Westview Press: 152-171.

Daniel Posner. 2004. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* 98(4): 529-545.

Daniel Posner. 2005. "Ethnicity and Ethnic Politics in Zambia." In *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa*. Cambridge University Press: ch. 4.

WEEK 5

Feb 4: Film: *An African Election: Ghana's Democracy in Action*

Feb 6: *Special Lecture on the Situation in Mali*

"Reversing Central Mali's Descent into Communal Violence." 2020. International Crisis Group, Africa Report No. 293.

"Mali: Collapse in Support for Democracy Amid Long-Standing Insecurity." 2024. Afrobarometer.

"A Course Correction for Mali's Sovereign Turn." 2024. International Crisis Group. [Youtube video](#).

Feb 7: *A Man of the People* paper due at 8pm

WEEK 6

Feb 11: *Gender*

Kevin C. Dunn and Pierre Englebert. 2019. "Gender Inequality and Women's Participation." In *Inside African Politics*. Lynne Rienner: 124-131.

Gretchen Bauer. 2013. "Gender Quotas and Women's Representation in African Parliaments." *democracyinafrica.org*, December 13.

Tiffany D. Barnes and Stephanie M. Burchard. 2012. "'Engendering' Politics: The Impact of Descriptive Representation on Women's Political Engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa." *Comparative Political Studies* 46(7): 767-790.

Feb 13: *Economic Reform*

Martin Meredith. 2005. "The Lost Decade." In *The Fate of Africa*. Public Affairs: ch. 22.

Belinda Archibong, Brahim Coulibaly and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. 2021. "Washington Consensus Reforms and Lessons for Economic Performance in Sub-Saharan Africa." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 35(3): 133-156.

WEEK 7

Feb 18: *Foreign Aid*

Dayo Olopade. 2014. "Stuff We Don't Want: Doing Bad in Africa." In *The Bright Continent: Breaking Rules and Making Change in Modern Africa*. Mariner Books: ch 4.

Dambisa Moyo. 2009. "Why Foreign Aid is Hurting Africa." *The Wall Street Journal*, March 21.

Andrew Mwenda. 2007. "Aid for Africa? No Thanks." [TED Talk](#).

Feb 20: In-class Midterm

WEEK 8

Feb 25: *Political Change in the 1990s*

Martin Meredith. 2005. "The Struggle for Democracy." In *The Fate of Africa*. Public Affairs: ch. 23.

Feb 27: "*Democracy*" in *Africa Today*

Staffan Lindberg. 2010. "What Accountability Pressures do MPs in Africa Face and How Do They Respond? Evidence from Ghana." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 48(1): 117-142.

Boniface Dulani and John Tengatenga. 2019. "Big Man Rule in Africa: Are Africans Getting the Leadership They Want?" *The African Review* 46: 275-291.

WEEK 9

Mar 4 and 6: *Conflict and Instability*

Martin Meredith. 2005. "Blood Diamonds." In *The Fate of Africa*. Public Affairs: ch. 29.

Jon Lee Anderson. 2000. "Letter from Angola: Oil and Blood." *The New Yorker*, 14 August.

BBC Africa. 2024. "Where Climate Change Meets Conflict." [YouTube video](#).

Olusola Isola. 2018. "Election Violence and the Future of Democracy in Africa." *Africa Up Close*, 30 May.

Mark Green. 2023. "The Sahel Now Accounts for 43% of Global Terrorism Deaths." *Stubborn Things*, 16 May.

Alex Vines. 2024. "Understanding Africa's Coups." *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 13 April.

WEEK 10

Mar 11-13: *Africa Today and What the Future Holds*

Steven Radelet. 2010. "Success Stories from 'Emerging Africa.'" *Journal of Democracy* 21(4): 87-101.

E. Gyimah-Boadi. 2015. "Africa's Waning Democratic Commitment." *Journal of Democracy* 26(1): 101-113.

Ken Ochieng' Opalo. 2024. "The Truth About Africa's Coups." *Journal of Democracy* 53(3): 93-107.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. 2016. "Nigeria's Failed Promises." *New York Times*, 18 October.

Thandika Mkandawire interview. 2014. [YouTube](#).

George Ayittey. 2007. "Africa's Cheetahs vs. Hippos." [TED Talk](#).
Brook Larmer. 2017. "Is China the World's New Colonial Power?" *New York Times Magazine*, May 2.
Dayo Olopade. 2014. "The Technology Map" and "The Youth Map." In *The Bright Continent: Breaking Rules and Making Change in Modern Africa*. Mariner Books: chs. 6 and 9.

