



Poli 162: Comparative Politics of Africa

Time: MW 2:45-4:00PM

Location: Carnegie 11

Instructor: Brian Engelsma

Email: Brian.Engelsma@pomona.edu

Course Website: <https://pomona.instructure.com/>

Office Hours: Tues. 11:00AM-1:00PM, or by appointment.

This syllabus is subject to change. Students will be notified of any changes through email.

Course Description: Surveys the main political issues facing contemporary African states, including poverty, instability, ethnicity, class conflicts, integration in the world economy, corruption, authoritarianism, democratization and reversion to authoritarianism, state collapse, social disengagement, structural adjustment and relations with former colonial powers.

Class Texts: There are no required textbooks. All class readings will be made available through Canvas. Please complete all assigned readings before the class in which they are assigned. There will be regular reading quizzes throughout the semester, described in more detail below. You are not responsible for readings labeled optional, and they will not be included on any quizzes or exams.

Course Objectives: At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe how sub-Saharan Africa's precolonial history influences contemporary political events
2. Identify major colonial powers, how colonization disrupted the continent's political history, and the lasting effects of colonization
3. Describe Africa's relationship with global powers today
4. Explain post-colonial trends in democracy and development
5. Discuss political institutions and ideas not commonly found in other world regions
6. Understand how ethnic identities influence political outcomes such as voting and conflict
7. Identify major challenges to economic, social, and political development and how African societies address these challenges

Grading:

Final Grades will be calculated with the following weights:

Participation	5%
Reading Quizzes	10%
Map Quiz	5%
Country Report	20%
Midterm Exam	25%
Research Project	
Research Presentation	5%
Research Paper	30%

Note: No extra credit will be offered in this course.

Letter Grade Distribution:

≥ 94.00	A	73.00 - 76.99	C
90.00 - 93.99	A-	70.00 - 72.99	C-
87.00 - 89.99	B+	67.00 - 69.99	D+
83.00 - 86.99	B	60.00 - 66.99	D
80.00 - 82.99	B-	≤ 59.99	F
77.00 - 79.99	C+		

Course Policies:

• General

- Exams are closed book, closed notes.
- Late assignments will not be accepted without a legitimate, documented excuse. Please inform me as soon as possible if you anticipate needing any accommodations.
- **No makeup quizzes or exams will be given.**

• Assignments and Evaluations

- Participation: I expect students to regularly contribute to our in-class discussions with thoughtful questions and comments that engage with course materials. Participation grades will be based on both the quantity and quality of contributions. A high-volume of low-effort contributions will not guarantee a good participation score, nor will occasional high-quality contributions.
- Reading Quizzes: Regular reading quizzes will be given throughout the course. Quizzes will be a mixture of multiple choice and true false, and administered through Canvas. More details will be given during the first class meeting.
- Map Quiz: All students interested in learning about Africa and African politics must have a basic understanding of the geography and colonial history of the continent. As such, on **September 8th** there will be an in-class map quiz, for which students are responsible for knowing the location, capital, and former colonial power (if any) of every African country.

- Country Report: In addition to having some familiarity with the breadth of countries and cultures across Africa, I also expect students to gain a depth of understanding in at least one case. Students will prepare a 5-7 page report describing the political history, institutions, key political identities, and a few prominent contemporary political issues in a country of their choice. These reports are due on **September 29th**.
- Mid-term Exam: There will be a mid-term exam on **October 15th**. It will be a closed book exam administered on Canvas. The exam will consist of multiple choice questions, definitions, and short answers. Additional details will be provided in-class.
- Research Project: Students will prepare a research project during the course. You have two options for your project. Regardless of which option you select, I expect students to regularly communicate with me on your proposed projects. We will have one in-class workshop dedicated to final projects, which I will describe in greater detail during class.

The first option is to write a research paper on a topic of your choosing. You will select an appropriate research question, review relevant literature, formulate hypotheses, and evaluate your hypotheses using appropriate evidence. Your analysis could involve the structured comparison of qualitative cases, the use of appropriate summary statistics, or some other approach approved in discussion with me.

The second option is a project of your own creation approved by me. I recognize that many students taking this course may be coming from different academic backgrounds, and with a variety of personal and professional goals. I am open to any other reasonable structure for a final project so long as it includes original research and analysis. If you are considering this option I recommend discussing it with me sooner rather than later so we can form an appropriate plan of action.

Research Project Elements:

- * Annotated Bibliography and Prospectus: In preparation for the in-class workshop, students will prepare an annotated bibliography and prospectus. The annotated bibliography should identify at least 5 relevant academic sources that, ideally, will help shape and inform the project's literature review, and provide a brief summary of these sources' main points. The prospectus will include a brief statement of the research question or topic of the final paper, hypotheses or arguments to be made, and the evidence and analytic approach the author plans on pursuing.
- * Research Presentation: Students should prepare and present a short presentation based on their project, to be delivered during the last week of classes.
- * Final Paper: Students will write a 15-20 page paper based on their project to be turned in during finals week.

• Grades

- Grades in the **C** range represent performance that **meets expectations**; Grades

in the **B** range represent performance that is **substantially better** than the expectations; Grades in the **A** range represent work that is **excellent**.

- Grades will be maintained in Canvas. Students are responsible for tracking their progress by referring to the online gradebook.
- If you are dissatisfied with a grade, you may contest your grade by writing a one-page memo within one week of receiving your grade. This memo should describe both what you believe to be the grading error, as well as the grade you feel you deserve. Note that regrade requests should be to correct an error in grading, not to negotiate for a higher grade.

University Resources and Policies:

- **The Writing Center:** The Center for Speaking, Writing, and the Image (formerly The Writing Center) is one of the most widely-used academic resources on campus and is a fantastic, free resource for all students. They will be open at full capacity by the end of September, but will be holding limited appointments and drop-in hours as soon as classes begin. Writing, Speaking, and Image Partners meet one-on-one with students to talk about their work and provide feedback at any stage of their preparation process. Trained to think deeply about written, oral, and visual rhetoric and communication, these student peers facilitate conversations about everything from ID1 papers to senior theses, lab reports to creative writing, giving presentations to developing strategies for reading and engaging more deeply and confidently in class discussion. The CSWIM also offers specialized writing and speaking support for multilingual students navigating English as an additional language (email Jenny.Thomas@pomona.edu for more information.) To make an appointment with a Writing, Speaking, or Image Partner, please log onto the Portal and go to Academics Writing Center. They can also pair you with a regular Writing or Speaking Partner for weekly or bi-monthly appointments over the course of the semester. Contact them at writing.center@pomona.edu. They offer both in-person and virtual appointments, and have regular drop-in hours in Smith Campus Center 148.
- **Quantitative Skills Center:** Some students may choose to include the quantitative analysis of data in their research projects. The Quantitative Skills Center (QSC) provides academic support to Pomona College students in courses that feature a large degree of quantitative and/or scientific reasoning through our QSC Partners Program. QSC partners meet one-on-one with students to provide support for a variety of Pomona courses for course specific help. The QSC also offers non-course specific help in general quantitative skills and offers consultations for projects and theses involving quantitative methods. To make an appointment at the QSC, please visit pomona.mywconline.com, or contact us at qsc@pomona.edu. The QSC is located in SCC (Smith Campus Center) 228.
- **Academic Dishonesty:** I expect all students to uphold the principles of academic integrity throughout the course. Lying, cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated under any circumstances. You can read more about the college's academic dishonesty policies at <https://catalog.pomona.edu/content.php?catoid=44&navoid=8860>.

- **Accessibility & Accommodations:** Students requiring special accommodations may request them through Accessibility Resources and Services. Please inform me of any accommodations with the proper documentation as soon as possible. More information is available online at <https://www.pomona.edu/accessibility/student-accessibility>.

If at any point in the semester your personal circumstances make it difficult for you to keep up with the course, please let me know as soon as possible so I can make sure to provide you with whatever support and accommodations you may need.

- **Inclusion & Basic Needs:** I am committed to creating a learning environment that supports diversity of thought, perspective, experience, and identity. To that end, half of all course texts have at least one author from a group underrepresented in academia. Harassment of any form will not be tolerated. Any speech or act that is blatantly or implicitly discriminatory, intimidating, or predatory will be reported to **Student Affairs**.

Course Outline:

This schedule is subject to change. All changes will be announced on canvas.

Class	Content
Class 1: August 25	• Course Introduction: Africa is a Country? 1. Faloyin, Dipo. 2022. <i>Africa is Not a Country: Notes on a Bright Continent</i>. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company. Identities. 2. Green, Toby. 2019. <i>A Fistful of Shells: West Africa from the Rise of the Slave Trade to the Age of Revolution</i>. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Introduction.
	Unit 1: African Political History
Class 2: August 27	• Precolonial African Politics I 1. Bates, Robert H. 1983. <i>Essays on the Political Economy of Rural Africa</i>. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 2. 2. Reader, John. 1997. <i>Africa: A Biography of a Continent</i>. New York, NY: Vintage Press. Chapters 23, 26, and 30.
Class 3: September 3	• Precolonial African Politics II 1. Green, Toby. 2019. <i>A Fistful of Shells: West Africa from the Rise of the Slave Trade to the Age of Revolution</i>. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 7 and 10. 2. Herbst, Jeffrey. 2000. <i>States and Power in Africa</i>. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapter 2.
Class 4: September 8	• Colonization I: The Scramble 1. Michalopoulos, Stelios and Elias Papaioannou. 2016. "The Long-Run Effects of the Scramble for Africa." <i>American Economic Review</i>. 106(7):1802-1848. Link 2. Press, Steven. 2017. <i>Rogue Empires: Contracts and Conmen in Europe's Scramble for Africa</i>. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 5. 3. Optional: Reader, John. 1997. <i>Africa: A Biography of a Continent</i>. New York, NY: Vintage Press. Chapters 46 and 48. • MAP QUIZ

Class	Content
Class 5: September 10	- Colonization II: British Colonialism - Berger, Daniel. 2009. "Taxes, Institutions and Local Governance: Evidence from a Natural Experiment in Colonial Nigeria." <i>Unpublished Working Paper</i>. Link - Lange, Matthew K. 2004. "British Colonial Legacies and Political Development." <i>World Development</i>. 32(6):905-922. Link
Class 6: September 15	- Colonization III: French Colonialism - Firmin-Sellers, Kathryn. 2000. "Institutions, Context, and Outcomes: Explaining French and British Rule in West Africa." <i>Comparative Politics</i>. 32(3):253-272. Link - Huillery, Elise. 2009. "History Matters: The Long-Term Impact of Colonial Public Investments in French West Africa." <i>American Economic Journal: Applied Economics</i>. 1(2):176-215. Link
Class 7: September 17	- Decolonization and the Independence Era - Meredith, Martin. 2005. <i>The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair</i>. New York, NY: Public Affairs. Chapters 8 and 9. - Reader, John. 1997. <i>Africa: A Biography of a Continent</i>. New York, NY: Vintage Press. Chapter 53. - Optional: Reader, John. 1997. <i>Africa: A Biography of a Continent</i>. New York, NY: Vintage Press. Chapters 52. - Optional: Watch <i>The Past Present</i>. 2023. "Why African Flags Look the Same." Link. - Optional: Maseland, Robbert. 2018. "Is colonialism history? The declining impact of colonial legacies on African institutional and economic development." <i>Journal of Institutional Economics</i>. 14(2):259-287. Link
Class 8: September 22	- African Politics in the 1970's and 1980's - Bates, Robert H. 1981. <i>Markets and States in Tropical Africa: the Political Basis of Agricultural Policies</i>. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Chapters 1, 2, and 4. (Intro, Chapter 3 optional). - Meredith, Martin. 2005. <i>The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair</i>. New York, NY: Public Affairs. Chapters 16 and 22. - Optional: Reader, John. 1997. <i>Africa: A Biography of a Continent</i>. New York, NY: Vintage Press. Chapter 55.
Class 9: September 24	- Post-Apartheid and Africa's Democratic Moment? - Meredith, Martin. 2005. <i>The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair</i>. New York, NY: Public Affairs. Chapters 34 and 35. - Opalo, Ken. 2024. "The Truth About Africa's Coups." <i>Journal of Democracy</i>. 36(2):93-107. Link. - Optional: Lynch, Gabrielle, and Gordon Crawford. 2011. "Democratization in Africa 1990-2010: an assessment." <i>Democratization</i>. 18(2):275-310. Link - Optional: Westcott, Nicholas. 2023. "Why have coups returned to Africa, and what can be done about it?" Link.

Class	Content
	Unit 2: African Political Institutions
Class 10: September 29	• Harambee, Ujamaa, and Afrosocialism 1. Hyden, Goran. 1980. <i>Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania: Underdevelopment and an Uncaptured Peasantry</i>. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Chapter 4. 2. Meredith, Martin. 2005. <i>The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair</i>. New York, NY: Public Affairs. Chapters 6 and 14. 3. Optional: Barkan, Joel D. and Frank Holmquist. 1989. "Peasant-State Relations and the Social Base of Self-Help in Kenya." <i>World Politics</i> 41(3):459-480. Link 4. Optional: Reader, John. 1997. <i>Africa: A Biography of a Continent</i>. New York, NY: Vintage Press. Chapters 54. • COUNTRY REPORT DUE
Class 11: October 1	• (Neo)traditional Institutions I - Development Brokers? 1. Baldwin, Kate. 2016. <i>The Paradox of Traditional Chiefs in Democratic Africa</i>. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 2, 3 and 4. 2. Optional: Listen to The Documentary Podcast. 2025. "Pulpit to Palace." <i>BBC World Service</i>. Link
Class 12: October 6	• (Neo)traditional Institutions II - Decentralized Despots? 1. Mamdani, Mahmood. 1996. <i>Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism</i>. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapters 2 and 3.
Class 13: October 8	• Settler States and Apartheid 1. Ferree, Karen. 2010. <i>Framing the Race in South Africa: The Political Origins of Racial Census Elections</i>. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 6 and 7. 2. Meredith, Martin. 2005. <i>The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair</i>. New York, NY: Public Affairs. Chapters 7 and 18. 3. Optional: Reader, John. 1997. <i>Africa: A Biography of a Continent</i>. New York, NY: Vintage Press. Chapters 41, 42, 43, and 44.
Class 14: October 15	• MID-TERM EXAM
Class 15: October 20	• Africa's Borders 1. Alesina, Alberto and Enrico Spolaore. 2003. <i>The Size of Nations</i>. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. Chapter 2. 2. Englebert, Pierre. 2009. <i>Africa: Unity, Sovereignty & Sorrow</i>. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers. Chapters 2 and 3.
Class 16: October 22	• Presidents and Legislatures 1. Cheeseman, Nic. 2024. "Blondel's African Presidential Republics: proof presidentialism can perform even in the most challenging contexts?." <i>European Political Science</i>. 23:567-580. Link. 2. Opalo, Ken. 2019. <i>Legislative Development in Africa</i>. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1. 3. Optional: Klobucista, Claire and Mariel Ferragamo. 2023. "Africa's 'Leaders for Life.'" <i>Council on Foreign Relations</i>. Link.

Class	Content
Class 17: October 27	• Supranational Institutions: The AU and Regional Organizations 1. Cowell, Frederick. 2011. "The Impact of the ECOWAS Protocol on Good Governance and Democracy." <i>African Journal of Comparative and International Law</i>. 19(2): 331-342. Link 2. Moller, Bjorn. 2009. "The African Union as a Security Actor: African Solutions to African Problems?" <i>Crisis States Working Papers Series No. 2</i>. Link 3. Packer, Corinne A. A., and Donald Rukare. 2002. "The New African Union and Its Constitutive Act." <i>American Journal of International Law</i>. 96(2): 365-379. Link 4. Optional: Listen to Africa Daily. 2025. "Can the Africa Union help end the war in Sudan?" <i>BBC World Service</i>. Link
	Unit 3: Contemporary African Political Issues
Class 18: October 29	• Ethnic Politics I: Ethnic Identities 1. Laitin, David D. 1986. <i>Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change among the Yoruba</i>. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1. 2. Posner, Daniel N. 2004. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." <i>American Political Science Review</i>. 98(4):529-545. Link 3. Optional: Fearon, James D. 1999. "What is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)?" Unpublished Manuscript. Link 4. Optional: Posner, Daniel N. 2004. "Measuring Ethnic Fractionalization in Africa." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i>. 48(4): 849-863. Link
Class 19: November 3	• Ethnic Politics II: Ethnic Voting 1. Adida, Claire. 2015. "Do African Voters Favor Coethnics? Evidence from a Survey Experiment in Benin." <i>Journal of Experimental Political Science</i>. 2(1): 1-11. Link 2. Horowitz, Jeremy. 2019. "Ethnicity and the Swing Vote in Africa's Emerging Democracies: Evidence from Kenya." <i>British Journal of Political Science</i>. 49(3): 901-921. Link 3. Optional: Ichino, Nahomi and Noah L. Nathan. 2013. "Crossing the Line: Local Ethnic Geography and Voting in Ghana." <i>American Political Science Review</i>. 107(2): 344-361. Link
Class 20: November 5	• Ethnic Politics III: Ethnic Conflict 1. Boone, Catherine. 2017. "Sons of the Soil Conflict in Africa: Institutional Determinants of Ethnic Conflict Over Land." <i>World Development</i>. 96: 276-293. Link 2. Fearon, James D. 1995. "Ethnic War as a Commitment Problem." Unpublished Manuscript. Link 3. MacLean, Lauren M. 2004. "Mediating ethnic conflict at the grassroots: the role of local associational life in shaping political values in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana." <i>The Journal of Modern African Studies</i>. 42(4): 589-617. Link
Class 21: November 10	• Blood Diamonds and the Resource Curse 1. Knutsen, Carl Henrik, Andreas Kotsadam, Eivind Hammersmark Olsen, and Tore Wig. 2017. "Mining and Local Corruption in Africa." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i>. 61(2): 320-334. Link 2. Stearns, Jason. 2011. <i>Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa</i>. New York, NY: Public Affairs. Chapter 19. 3. Optional: Ross, Michael. 2006. "A Closer Look at Oil, Diamonds, and Civil War." <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i>. 9(1): 265-300. Link

Class	Content
Class 22: November 12	- Public Health: From HIV/AIDs to Ebola - Dionne, Kim Yi. 2011. "The Role of Executive Time Horizons in State Response to AIDS in Africa." <i>Comparative Political Studies</i>. 44(1):55-77. Link - Meredith, Martin. 2005. <i>The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair</i>. New York, NY: Public Affairs. Chapter 21. - Windt, Peter van der, and Martin Voors. 2020. "Traditional Leaders and the 2014-2015 Ebola Epidemic." <i>The Journal of Politics</i>. 82(4) Link
Class 23: November 17	- Poachers and Natural Resource Management - Readings: - Büscher, Bram and Maano Ramutsindela. 2016. "Green violence: Rhino poaching and the war to save Southern Africa's peace parks." <i>Africa Affairs</i>. 115(458): 1-22. Link - Gibson, Clark. 1999. <i>Politicians and Poachers</i>. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 2 and 3.
Class 24: November 19	- In-Class Workshop ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY AND PROSPECTUS DUE
Class 25: November 24	- Africa and the World: Neo-Colonialism and China Calling - Readings: - Langan, Mark. 2017. <i>Neo-Colonialism and the Poverty of 'Development' in Africa</i>. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan. Chapter 1. - Hoeffler, Anke and Olivier Sterck. 2022. "Is Chinese Aid Different?" <i>World Development</i>. 156. Link - Optional: Ikoku, Obiora. 2023. "Adieu to a post-colonial bully?" <i>African Arguments</i>. Link.
Class 26: December 1	Research Presentations
Class 27: December 3	Research Presentations
Final December 10	Final Paper Due at 5:00PM