Course Syllabus

Course Description
Africa matters. On one hand it might seem this way for the worst reasons. Many see a homogenous and tragic Africa in perpetual crisis, where images of collapsed states, grinding poverty, epidemics, and deadly armed conflict draw in intervening outsiders – at best reluctant donors and naïve relief workers, and at worst rapacious arms dealers and terrorist cells. On the other hand Africa matters for the best of reasons. Here, others see a diverse and dynamic Africa in transition, where resources and economic growth, political reform, and a decline in conflict produce real changes on the ground and strategic importance to big global players. Either way, Africa is a distinct and compelling region that is invariably connected to the wider world. This class will examine a range of political issues in contemporary sub-Saharan Africa, and will consider how these issues are interconnected at local, regional, and global levels.

The class will situate the broader study of sub-Saharan Africa more specifically within the discipline of Political Science. This means that we are not simply interested in learning historical facts about African politics and society. We are also interested in a range of academic theories designed to explain patterns of African politics, and the variations between and within African states that occur along a number of dimensions. The goal will be to understand this body of literature and to think about new research questions generated from a careful examination of empirical puzzles that appear at all levels of African politics.

The course proceeds in four parts. Part One will examine the historical institutions of pre-colonial Africa, the colonial states of European conquest, and the emergence of modern African states. We will then look at a range of challenges these states face. Part Two will look more closely at the nature of political authority in African states. We will examine what factors shape political identities and state-society relations, and how African states interact with one another and on the global stage. Part Three will look at how African states have constructed their regimes, have ushered in transitions to democracy, their various political ideologies, and how they deal with the more pressing issues of economic development and poverty. Finally, we will look at political violence in Africa, particularly the evolution of warfare, the formation armed groups, and how these conflicts are solved. We will conclude the class with a practical guide for those who wish to travel to or conduct their own research in Africa.
Course Objectives and Methodology
Students come away from the course with the following:

• A detailed, myth-free, historical, theoretical, and empirical grasp of, and an appreciation for, contemporary African Politics (readings and lectures)
• An understanding of how Political Science approaches African Studies (readings)
• The ability to formulate a research question, conduct and write a literature review, and develop a hypothesis (Research Proposal)
• The ability to apply theories and concepts to new contexts and situations (class discussions, quizzes, Research Proposal)
• The ability to comprehend the views of others and articulate and defend one’s own position (class discussions, Research Proposal)
• Strengthened skills in writing, reading comprehension, and critical thinking and analysis (readings, quizzes, Research Proposal)
• Strengthened skills in oral communication (class discussions)

The course is taught through readings, lectures, class discussions, and by following current events in Africa:

• Readings. This is an upper-level class, and students should expect to read 30-40 pages per class session. Readings are drawn primarily from social science scholarship to show students this approach to the study of African politics. Students are expected to have completed the readings before the class sessions. Keeping up with these readings will be vital to your overall course performance, and it will be difficult to catch up if you fall behind. The knowledge acquired in the readings will be cumulative. That is, each week you will be introduced to new ideas that will become part of the "tool-box" you will use to analyze readings and lectures in subsequent weeks.

• Lectures. Each week will feature a specific topic and a corresponding lecture that will essentially serve as the “textbook” for the class, undergirding the readings and class discussions with key terms, concepts, cases, and historical context.

• Discussions. Class discussions will be fundamental to this class and students are expected to participate. Each week, students will submit 1-3 discussion questions on the OAKS discussion board, which will be based on the readings.

• Current Events. Each day, students are expected to independently follow current events and trends in African politics. In class, students should expect to discuss these events. Here are some good sources for African news:
  - Even better is to listen daily to the 23-minute BBC World Service Focus on Africa, found online at: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/2011/04/000000_focus_on_africa.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/2011/04/000000_focus_on_africa.shtml)
  - The most comprehensive source of African news online posts up to 700 stories per day from various news sites from the continent: [http://allafrica.com](http://allafrica.com)
Course Requirements
Evaluation will be based on the following exercises:

• **Research Proposal (40%).** A Research Proposal will address a significant empirical puzzle in African politics. It will not be about simply describing a phenomenon. The exercise will ask a specific research question and argue why this question matters. The proposal will evaluate current approaches to addressing this question, will justify the need for additional research, and outline a research methodology. It will then develop a hypothesis to address this absence, but will stop short of conducting the empirical research. The exercise will give students a chance to focus on a particular country or set of countries, and on a particular topic in comparative politics that interests them, allowing students to explore what this topic looks like in sub-Saharan Africa. Students will also learn and practice how to approach doing research in Political Science. It is hoped that students will use it as chance to develop a substantial writing sample for job or school applications. Students may also use this exercise as a vehicle to try out ideas for an Independent Study or a Bachelor’s Essay. Others may wish to use it as a way to develop an actual grant proposal to fund a research trip to Africa.

Research Proposals should be 10-12 pages, typed, double-spaced typed, with regular margins, 12 pt font, in Times New Roman, with page numbers, with a word count at the bottom, and stapled in the top left corner.

Below are the important due dates for each step of the project:

- **September 18:** Topic Report (5%)
- **October 11:** Literature Review (10%)
- **November 1:** First Draft (10%)
- **December 2:** FINAL DRAFT (15%)

More detailed guidance will be provided as the Fall Semester progresses.

• **Quizzes (40%).** Four take-home quizzes will test students’ grasp of basic concepts and the vocabulary of African Politics. Quizzes will be administered online through OAKS and will take place during **Weeks 4, 7, 10, and 13.** Specific dates and procedures will be determined by the second week of the Fall Semester.

• **Discussion Questions (10%).** To stimulate discussion, each week students will go onto the Politics of Africa Discussion Forum available on OAKS. Students will submit up to 3 discussion questions based on the week’s readings. The purpose of these questions is to focus students’ ideas prior to the discussion and to provide interplay of these ideas with other students. Discussion question submissions are due no later than **9:00am on Fridays.** Students are allowed a maximum of **TWO** “off weeks” where they are not required to submit questions. Otherwise, failure to submit questions regularly will result in poor overall performance.

• **Class Participation (10%).** The quality of this class depends on the quality of discussion, therefore students are expected to participate in class.
Course Policies
Here are the rules of the road:

Grading Scale
A  93-100  A-  90-92  B+  88-89  B  83-87  B-  80-82
C+  78-79  C  73-77  C-  70-72  D+  68-69  D  63-67
D-  60-62  F:  Below 60

Attendance Policy. Attendance is REQUIRED.

Submission of Work. Late work will not be accepted. Work submitted electronically will not be accepted.

Honor Code. All students are expected be familiar with the College of Charleston Honor Code, and to abide by it. Violations will not be tolerated and will be dealt with appropriately. More information is found here: http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php

Learning Disabled. If you have a documented learning disability, please let me know as soon as possible so special arrangements can be made for certain class requirements.

Other Special Circumstances. I normally will do business with anyone who lets me know in advance of any special circumstances. But please note that the expression “it is better to ask for forgiveness than permission” was not invented by a College Professor.

Center for Student Learning. I encourage you to utilize the Center for Student Learning’s (CSL) academic support services for assistance in study strategies and course content. They offer tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and they are available to you at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL website at http://csl.cofc.edu or call (843) 953-5635.

Required Readings
The following books are available at the campus bookstore:


All other readings will be available on OAKS.
Course Outline and Readings

1. August 22-24: Introduction
   August 21 – Course Overview
   August 23 – Field trip to the Avery Research Center on 125 Bull Street at 1:00pm

Part I: Setting the Scene


   ***No class Friday, August 30 for APSA Conference***


   Herbst, Introduction and Chapter One, pp. 1-31

   Nugent, Chapter 1, pp. 7-57

3. September 2-6: Pre-Colonial Africa

   Herbst Chapter Two, pp. 35-57


   *QUIZ ONE*

   Film: Mobutu King of Zaire Part I

   Herbst, Chapter Three, pp. 58-96

   Nugent, Chapters 2 and 3, pp. 58-105

   Reno Chapters 2 and 3, pp. 37-78 and pp. 79-118
Part II: Authority, Identity, and African States

5. September 16-20: Political Authority

***No class Friday, September 20 for “Fates of Rebels” Book Workshop***

*TOPIC REPORT DUE WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18*

Herbst, Chapters Four and Six, pp. 96-136 and pp. 173-197

Clapham, Chapters 1-3, pp. 3-74; Nugent, Chapter 4, pp. 106-137


Patrick Chabal & Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*, pp. 45-76


7. September 30-October 4: Africa’s Regional and International Politics

*QUIZ TWO*

*Film: Mobutu King of Zaire Part II*

Clapham, Chapters 4-6, pp. 77-159


Part III: Democracy and Development

8. October 7-11: Military Regimes and Democratic Transitions

*LITERATURE REVIEW DUE*

Nugent Chapters 6 and 9, pp. 204-259 and pp. 368-433

9. October 14-18: Ideology and Development

***October 14 No Class Fall Break***


Nugent Chapter 5 pp. 138-203

10. October 21-25: Poverty and Economic Reform

*QUIZ THREE*

*Film: Mobutu King of Zaire Part III*

Clapham, Chapters 7 and 8, pp. 163-207

Nugent Chapter 8, pp. 326-367


Part IV: Political Violence in Africa

11. October 28-November 1: Local and Domestic Dimensions of Conflict

*FIRST DRAFT OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE*

Reno, Chapters 1, 4, and 6, pp. 1-36, pp. 119-162, and pp. 206-241


Optional: Nugent Chapter 7, pp. 260-325

12. November 4-8: Regional and International Dimensions of Conflict

Reno, Chapter 5, pp. 163-205

Clapham, Chapter 9, pp. 208-243

13. November 11-15: Solving Africa’s Conflicts

*QUIZ FOUR*

Film: War Don Don

Nugent Chapter 10, pp. 434-489


Part V: Going to Africa


Readings TBA

15. November 25: TBA

***November 21-23 No Class Thanksgiving Break***

16. December 2: Last Class and Wrap-up

***FINAL PAPER DUE DECEMBER 2***

NOTE: Additional readings may be assigned and the course outline may be adjusted to serve the needs of the class.