Course Syllabus

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 course will examine a range of political issues in contemporary Africa, and will consider how these issues are interconnected at local, regional, and global levels.

The course will situate the broader study of 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 three parts. Part One will set the scene with a rudimentary overview of African politics and society. It will also provide a basic toolkit for examining empirical puzzles in Africa, where students will learn about several specific areas of Dr. Day’s current research agenda. This portion of the course is intended to be foundation for student research projects. Part Two, which will be the bulk of the course, will follow chapters of Dunn and Englebert textbook that examines a range of topics related to African politics and society. These include evolution of African states, the politics of identity, the nature of political authority, regime types, economic development, peace and security, and Africa’s international relations. In the final weeks of the semester, Part Three will have students present their research projects to one another in a workshop panel format and receive feedback from their classmates. The last week we will hear from different members of the African Studies faculty about their teaching and research.
Course Objectives and Methodology

Students come away from the course able to do the following:

- Demonstrate knowledge of African political systems including their institutions, processes, laws and constitutions and the relations between and among nations
- Demonstrate knowledge of the reasons why people behave in diverse political roles and spaces, especially in African countries
- Distinguish their own views from those of others and can defend their own perspective
- Demonstrate mastery of the independent research process

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 ~100 pages or more per week, including a textbook chapter and a supplementary reading drawn primarily from current events – Dr. Day will provide these supplementary readings on a weekly basis. 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 another “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.

- **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:
  - You are strongly encouraged to sign up for the excellent weekly bulletin, “This Week in Africa,” curated by Jeffrey Paller. You can sign up here: [https://thisweekinafrica.tumblr.com/SignUp](https://thisweekinafrica.tumblr.com/SignUp)
  - Even better is to listen daily to the 23-minute BBC World Service Focus on Africa, found online at: [https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00gbjvb/episodes/player](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00gbjvb/episodes/player)
  - 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:

- **Map Quiz (5%)**. Geographical literacy of Africa is the baseline of this course. Therefore, students will have to know all of Africa’s countries plus their capitals. This quiz will be the easiest part of the entire semester but only if you study for it.

- **SERSAS Attendance (5%)**. Students will attend the Southeast Regional Seminar in African Studies (SERSAS), which will be hosted at the College of Charleston October 8-9.

- **Weekly Thought Pieces (30%)**. Students will upload to OAKS 2-page thought pieces in response to weekly readings. Students are responsible for **SIX** of these thought pieces over the course of eight weeks (weeks 4-11). These are due by midnight on the following dates: 9/13; 9/20; 9/27; 10/4; 10/11; 10/20; 10/25; 11/1. Each is worth 5% of the total course grade.

- **Research Proposal (50%)**. 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 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 14**: Finding the Puzzle (5%)
- **October 5**: Literature Review (5%)
- **November 2**: First Draft (10%)
- **November 9-23**: Research Presentations (10%)
- **December 13**: FINAL DRAFT (20%)

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

- **Class Participation (10%)**. The quality of this class depends on the quality of discussion. Therefore students are expected to participate in class.
Course Policies

Communication. This is an in-person course. In the event that we shift online, it will be a synchronous course, which can be crowded on a screen. Students are strongly encouraged to direct any substantive comments and questions about the course content to the discussion board in order to encourage the development of an online community.

All inquiries to me should be made via email, and I will make every effort to respond to emails promptly. Students can expect replies within 24 hours for messages received between 9am and 5pm on Monday through Friday. I generally do not respond to emails on weekends. Students are also encouraged to arrange a Zoom appointment with me anytime they would like during the week to discuss anything they would like.

Community Standards. You are sharing the experience of working through important issues with other people – not just usernames on a discussion board. Please bear this in mind when engaging with each other and be thoughtful in your contributions and generous in your interpretations.

Netiquette. Please bear in mind that online communication precludes many of the non-verbal cues that normally facilitate face-to-face communication. This being the case, it is important to err on the side of generous interpretation and civility. What was written as a simple statement can easily come across as aggressive or argumentative. Vignette: “Texting Confusion” from Key & Peele (Content warning: some spicy language): [https://vimeo.com/121923151](https://vimeo.com/121923151)

Grading Scale

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<td>A</td>
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<td>C-</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td>D-</td>
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Submission of Work. Students are expected to submit their work on the day it is due. In the event that students cannot submit work on time because of Life Circumstances, they must inform the professor at least 24 hours beforehand, and provide a concrete date for submission. After this date, work will not be accepted. Also, please note that “My computer crashed” = “My dog ate my homework”.

Honor Code and Academic Integrity. Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when suspected, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.

Incidents where the instructor determines the student’s actions are related more to misunderstanding and confusion will be handled by the instructor. The instructor designs an intervention or assigns a grade reduction to help prevent the student from repeating the error. The response is recorded on a form and signed both by the instructor and the student. It is forwarded to the Office of the Dean of Students and placed in the student’s file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive an XXF in the course, indicating failure of the
course due to academic dishonesty. This status indicator will appear on the student’s transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the XX to be expunged. The F is permanent.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook at: https://deanofstudents.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/student-handbook-2020-2021-8.27.20.pdf

Accommodations for students with disabilities. Any student eligible for and needing accommodations because of a disability is requested to speak with the professor during the first two weeks of class or as soon as the student has been approved for services so that reasonable accommodations can be arranged.

OAKS. OAKS will be used for this course throughout the semester to provide the syllabus and class materials and grades for each assignment, which will be regularly posted.

Inclement Weather, Pandemic or Substantial Interruption of Instruction. If in-person classes are suspended, faculty will announce to their students a detailed plan for a change in modality to ensure the continuity of learning. All students must have access to a computer equipped with a web camera, microphone, and Internet access. Resources are available to provide students with these essential tools.

Center for Student Learning: The Center for Student Learning’s (CSL) academic support services provide assistance in study strategies, speaking & writing skills, and course content. Services include tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and the services 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.

Mental & Physical Wellbeing: At the college, we take every student’s mental and physical wellbeing seriously. If you find yourself experiencing physical illnesses, please reach out to student health services (843.953.5520). And if you find yourself experiencing any mental health challenges (for example, anxiety, depression, stressful life events, sleep deprivation, and/or loneliness/homesickness) please consider contacting either the Counseling Center (professional counselors at http://counseling.cofc.edu or 843.953.5640 3rd Robert Scott Small Building) or the Students 4 Support (certified volunteers through texting "4support" to 839863, visit http://counseling.cofc.edu/cct/index.php, or meet with them in person 3rd Floor Stern Center). These services are there for you to help you cope with difficulties you may be experiencing and to maintain optimal physical and mental health.

Food & Housing Resources: Many CofC students report experiencing food and housing insecurity. If you are facing challenges in securing food (such as not being able to afford groceries or get sufficient food to eat every day) and housing (such as lacking a safe and stable place to live), please contact the Dean of Students for support (http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/about/salt.php). Also, you can go to
http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/student-food-housing-insecurity/index.php to learn about food and housing assistance that is available to you. In addition, there are several resources on and off campus to help. You can visit the Cougar Pantry in the Stern Center (2nd floor), a student-run food pantry that provides dry-goods and hygiene products at no charge to any student in need. Please also consider reaching out to Professor ABC if you are comfortable in doing so.

Inclusion: The College of Charleston offers many resources for LGBTQ+ students, faculty and staff along with their allies.

Preferred Name and Pronoun Information
On Campus Gender Inclusive facilities
Campus Resources
College of Charleston Reporting Portals
National Resources for Faculty & Staff
GSEC Reports
Documenting LGBTQ Life in the Lowcountry (CofC Addlestone Library Special Collections Project)
College of Charleston Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)
Articles about CofC and LGBTQ+ Issues

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.

Extra Credit. Periodic extra credit opportunities may be available during the semester. Please note that these opportunities are EXTRA credit, not SUBSTITUTION credit for missed assignments. Also, keep in mind extra credit also does not mean extra work for your professor.

Attendance Policy. Attendance is required. Tardiness is not acceptable,

Required Readings

The following book is available at the campus bookstore:


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

Introduction

1. August 24-26: Africa 101


Park Map, Busch Gardens, Tampa Bay

Part I: Analyzing Contemporary Issues in Africa

2. August 31- September 2

***MAP QUIZ TUESDAY AUGUST 31***


3. September 7-9

Students will peruse the following websites:

Fragile State Index: [https://fragilestatesindex.org](https://fragilestatesindex.org)
Freedom House: [https://freedomhouse.org](https://freedomhouse.org)

Part II: African Politics


**Finding the Puzzle Due September 14**

Dunn & Englebert Chapter 1, pp. 1-16

5. September 21-23: The Evolution of African States

Dunn & Englebert Chapter 2, pp. 17-66
Dunn & Englebert Chapter 3, pp. 67-140

7. October 5-7: The Practice of Power
**Literature Review DUE 10/5**
Dunn & Englebert Chapter 4, pp. 141-198

8. October 12-14: Regime Types Across the Spectrum
Dunn & Englebert Chapter 5, pp. 199-230

**No class Tuesday, October 19 for Fall Break**
Dunn & Englebert Chapter 6, pp. 231-288

10. October 26-28: War, Conflict, and Security
Dunn & Englebert Chapter 7, pp. 289-342

11. November 2-4: The International Relations of African States
**Research Design First Draft DUE 11/2**
Dunn & Englebert Chapter 8, pp. 343-406

Part III: Student Research

12. November 9-11
Student Research Panels I and II

13. November 16-18
Student Research Panels III and IV

14. November 23
*No Class Thursday, November 25 for Thanksgiving Break*
Student Research Panel V (if necessary)
Conclusion

15. November 30-December 2

TBA

*Final Draft of Research Proposal due Tuesday December 13 at 10am via OAKS*

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

“Like” the Department of Political Science on Facebook:
https://www.facebook.com/CofCPoliticalScienceClub?ref=hl

“Like” the African Studies Program on Facebook:
https://www.facebook.com/CollegeOfCharlestonAfricanStudiesProgram

Instagram: cofc_african_studies

Instagram: CofC African Studies Club