POLI 399 ST: African Political Thought  
Spring 2021 Express II (synchronous) 

Professor Christopher Day  
JC Long, 9 Liberty Street, Room 210  
Office Hours: by appointment  
Email: dayc@cofc.edu

Course Syllabus

Course Description
This course introduces students to some of the main currents and themes in African political thought. This effort will emphasize the perspective of African statesmen, African political thinkers, as well as scholars of African Studies, whose ideas and impression about politics, state, and society reflect how power has been exerted and resisted in Africa from precolonial times, during the colonial period, and since independence through to the contemporary era.

A big part of this course will be to consider how we study African politics more generally within the discipline of Political Science, and from the perspective of Western academic institutions. Towards this effort, students will participate in a research project that examines how the politics of Africa is taught in the West.

Course Objectives

- Demonstrate understanding of readings, analyze texts critically, effectively write papers, increase the quality of student’s reading, writing, debate and critical thinking skills
- Improve student’s understanding of how different theories define and approach the issue of political thought
- Distinguish their own views from those of others and can defend their own perspective

Course Methodology

- Readings. Students are expected to have completed the readings before the online 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. Synchronous Zoom lectures serve as the anchor for this course. Each module will feature a specific set of topics and corresponding lectures that will tie together the readings and class discussions with key terms, concepts, cases, and historical context.
- Group work and independent research. A significant part of this course will be dividing up into research “teams” and conducting research together in class.
• *Films.* Each week students will be asked to view films outside of class and be prepared to discuss them online.

**Technological Requirements**

1. **A computer with Internet access, sound card, microphone, and speakers.** You must have a reliable Internet connection. Having to rely on the public library or Starbucks, for example, will likely make it challenging to have a consistent presence inside OAKS. If you are concerned, please contact me within the first week so we can determine if this course will be manageable for you.

2. **OAKS proficiency.** This course is administered through OAKS, so students must have a thorough working knowledge of the platform. Please spend some time educating yourself about its organization and use. Tutorials are available here: [http://blogs.cofc.edu/oaks/students/tutorials/](http://blogs.cofc.edu/oaks/students/tutorials/)

**Course Requirements**

*Thought Pieces (50%)* Students will write five 2-page “thought pieces”. These are due by midnight on the following Mondays: *3/15; 3/23; 3/29; 4/5; 4/12*

*Final Essay (25%)* There will be a final essay that ties together the themes of the course. There will be a prompt for this final assignment.

*Class participation (25%).* This is an upper level seminar style course where students are expected to engage and discuss the course materials – even where it is difficult. Students must also be present to participate in the research portion of the course.

**Course Policies**

*Communication.* This is 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.* While this class is online, 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

**Grading Scale**

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>88-89</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>83-87</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>78-79</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>73-77</td>
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<td>C-</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>68-69</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>63-67</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Below 60</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:** [http://deanofstudents.cofc.edu/honor-system/pdf/honor-code-sample-language-for-syllabi.pdf](http://deanofstudents.cofc.edu/honor-system/pdf/honor-code-sample-language-for-syllabi.pdf)

“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: [http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php](http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php)”

**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, including Gradebook, 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.
Recording of Classes (via ZOOM). Class sessions will be recorded via both voice and video recording. By attending and remaining in this class, the student consents to being recorded. Recorded class sessions are for instructional use only and may not be shared with anyone who is not enrolled in the class.

Online Courses with Exam Proctoring. This course will require the use of an exam proctoring service for the course exams. Students are responsible for registering, scheduling, and the cost of the service prior to each exam. Instructions and additional information on proctoring can be found at https://academicaffairs.cofc.edu/distance-education/online-proctoring/index.php.

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 students’ 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.

Required Readings

Other readings will be made available on OAKS.
Course Outline and Readings

Week One March 9-11

Content:
Overview of the course; Crash course in African history, politics, and society; Discussion of comparative political thought.

Assignments:
Students are to watch the film *Black Panther* by 3/11


Robtel Neajai Pailey. “How to truly decolonise the study of Africa,” *Al Jazeera* 10 June 2019

Week Two March 16-18: Big Men and Philosopher Kings

Content:
African personality and negritude; Early African rulers and their political thought; Ideologies of development and political transformation vs. personal rule.

Assignments:
Students are to watch the film *Lumumba* by 3/18 (available on Kanopy)


Content:

Understanding African politics and society through the arts; Interrogating language and the African novel.

Assignments:

Students are to watch the film *Tableau Feraille* by 3/25 (available on Kanopy)


Week Four March 30-April 1: Pan Africanism and African Unity

Content: The Pan African ideal in theory and practice from the OAU to the AU.

Assignments:

Film TBD, to be viewed by 4/1


Week Five April 6-8: Revolutionary Political Thought

Content: The politics of rebellion and reform insurgencies.

Assignments:

Film TBD, to be viewed by 4/8.


Revolutionary United Front. *Footpaths to Democracy*.

**Week Six April 13-15: African Feminist Thought**

*Content:* Gender in Africa. Gender and politics.

*Assignments:*

Students will watch the film *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* by 4/15

Reading *TBD*.

**Week Seven April 20: Contemporary Thinkers? Africa in the World.**

*Content:* Who are the modern thinkers in contemporary Africa? Politicians? Scholars? Writers? Musicians? Artists?

*Assignments:*

Nnedi Okorafor, *Lagoon* (Saga Press 2018)