

Government and Politics of Africa (PS 454) Spring 2007

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Tues/Thurs. 2:25-3:40
LAB 206
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Mon. 11-12; 2-4

Africa is on the move in many positive ways. Liberia recently elected Africa's first woman President. Kenya's new government is run, in part, by human rights activists who led the drive to oust an authoritarian regime. And today African students, mothers, lawyers, opposition politicians, and others are more aware of their human rights and determined to have more freedom than ever before.

But the compelling images of genocide in Darfur, Sudan, and movies like *Blood Diamonds*, about Sierra Leone's civil war, *Hotel Rwanda*, and the earlier *Black Hawk Down*, about the U.S. involvement in Somalia, focus on the violence of Africa. And the devastating and lingering civil war in Congo adds to the public perception of a continent adrift in chaos.

Those images, while reflecting some facets of the real Africa, miss the full story of a continent making significant progress, while still facing major challenges. For example, the number of conflicts in Africa has dropped from 16 in 2002 to 5 in 2005; rather than a population explosion, the fertility rates have dropped in every African country; poverty is falling rapidly in several countries; primary school enrollment is up to 93 percent in Africa.

This is an exciting time to be studying Africa. In this course you will learn much more than just who is in power; you will learn about the struggle Africans have gone through to win their freedom; how their sense of dignity lives in the literature, their culture, their politics; how ethnicity is used at times to pit people against each other, and at other times to provide a strong, peaceful bond.

This is also a time of great challenge for Africans. In the early 1990s most of the 50+ nations that make up Africa experienced democratic reforms. Then the surge stalled as authoritarian-minded incumbents learned to stave off further reforms and as Western nations lost some of their initial post-Cold War enthusiasm for democracy. Famines grip parts of Kenya and Ethiopia today; war continues to flare up in parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire); AIDS is killing many Africans, and though peace has come to most of Sudan, genocide continues in the Darfur region in Western Sudan.

The **objectives of this course** are several: first, to develop your critical thinking and analytical skills, as well as your ability to ask probing questions about new topics and search for the answers. In addition, the course will help you discover some of the strengths and weaknesses of a continent that is rich in diversity and long in history; to better understand why at times the forces of freedom are on top, and at times submerged beneath the lust for personal power and greed. In addition you will come to know and understand some of the individuals who have helped shape recent African politics. On a more basic level, you will become familiar with the map of Africa and its people. You will also be exposed to some of the dominant theories that attempt to explain Africa's past and present.

To help you **achieve these objectives**, you will read selections of African politics and history (the two are intertwined), some literature, and assessments of modern Africa and prominent theories explaining the democratic transformation. In addition, you will interview someone from Africa; and you will have the opportunity to write a research paper that will allow you to focus on a topic of your interest with close guidance from your professor. Such a paper not only develops your analytical skills but also may become part of your applications for future studies and employment.

The format of the course will involve considerable student discussions, as well as lectures. This requires you to keep up with the readings in order to enhance the quality of the discussions. Some videos will also be presented to illustrate various themes.

I Class policies

Attendance is required. Because the class involves discussions, attendance is required. **Irregular attendance will result in a grade reduction.** Two undocumented absences will be allowed, however, given your busy lives and many commitments.

Any assignment turned in late is subject to a reduction of one grade the first week and two grades after two weeks. Exams must be turned in on time. In other words, an end-of-semester flurry of papers is not acceptable. You must keep up with the readings and the related written assignments.

If you cannot be physically present (excused or not) when an assignment is due and want to receive credit, you may email a copy – but only in Microsoft word, not Word, etc. Then print a copy of the email that shows the date sent; attach this to a printed copy of your assignment and turn them in. Email submissions are not graded; only paper versions handed in are graded.

University policies on attendance, grades, honesty, and **plagiarism** (using another's words or ideas as your own) apply in this course.

Your professor reserves the right to adjust this syllabus to meet class needs.

Disabilities. Any student with any kind of a documented handicap should make this known to the instructor at the start of class for appropriate assistance.

American with Disabilities Act (ADA): If a student has a disability that qualifies under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and requires accommodations, he/she

should contact the Office for Disability Accommodations (ODA) for information on appropriate policies and procedures. Disabilities covered by ADA may include learning, psychiatric, physical disabilities, or chronic health disorders. Students can contact ODA if they are not certain whether a medical condition/disability qualifies. Mailing address: 118 College Drive #8586, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001; Telephone (601) 266-5024; TTY: (601) 266-6837; Fax: (601) 266-6035

Writing help. Students who feel uncertain about the quality of their writing are encouraged (and may be required by the professor) to first pass their papers through the USM writing center for assistance in time to meet class deadlines.

II Grades*

Mid Term exam	20%
Final Exam	20%
Quizzes	5%
Attendance	10%
African interview (2 pgs)	5%
Brief papers on readings	10%
Research paper	
Annotated bibliography -	
Initial findings (3 pgs)	5%
Final paper (10 pgs)	20%
Oral Presentations	5%

*Exams, research and analysis papers are evaluated as to whether they address the questions analytically or are mostly a compilation of unanalyzed facts. There are no 'right' answers, but responses should be clear, well written, and analytical; positions taken must be defended with supportive facts. References from the assigned readings (with page numbers) must be included in exams and analysis papers but not in in-class quizzes.

III Course Requirements

Readings. In a discussion-based class such as this one, readings are the core of the class. Therefore you are expected to carefully read assignments and complete any related papers by the class date shown on your syllabus for each reading. You are also expected to participate in class discussions based on your preparation. This requires close listening to others' and respect for their views. Unprepared students should not avoid coming (attendance counts), but they deny other students the benefit of sharing informed ideas and may do poorly in terms of their participation grade and any quizzes.

For some reading assignments you will be asked to write a brief analysis (2 pages double-spaced). Be analytical in your responses, not just descriptive. In other words, explain *why* things happened the way they did, not just what happened. Most readings analysis papers have been scheduled (below); a few others may be announced later.

Quizzes (announced or not), will reward your keeping up with the readings.

Exams. A take-home mid-term and final will involve essay answers with frequent citations from the readings, analyses of case studies, theoretical explanation, and a conclusion.

Research paper. You will have your choice of a topic to write on, subject to approval by your professor. This paper will be completed in stages: topic selection, annotated bibliography, 3-page paper of initial findings, and final paper (10 pages plus final abstract and final annotated bibliography, with guidance from your professor at each stage. A due date schedule appears below. Students will make an oral presentation of their findings.

State your research question (which can change as you get deeper into the research) at the top of each element of your research assignment you submit.

News reports: Two brief (approx. 10 minutes) news reports on one African country of your choice. The first report will include some general background information on the history and politics of the country. The second will focus on important political news major news of the country with your explanation of its importance.

Interview. (2-page paper) This in-person interview with an African (there are many on campus and in the community and I can help you locate them) will be about their life in Africa, focusing on whatever aspects are of mutual interest. The interview may or may not tie in with your research topic, but if it does, you may use a few brief quotes in your final research paper. You will present the interview paper orally to the class, discussing it, not reading it.

Excuses (or elephants smashed my computer): everyone gets behind; two undocumented absences will be allowed, even if elephants are not involved.

IV Texts (required)

Things Fall Apart by Achebe

An Introduction to African Politics, 2nd ed. by Thomson

The Black Holocaust for Beginners by Anderson

The New Africa: Dispatches from a Changing Continent by Press

V SCHEDULE

Section I: Introduction

Tues Jan 16	Introduction of syllabus, books, students, and your professor
Thurs Jan 18	Theme: Visual images of modern Africa Video
Tues Jan 23	Theme: overview of African politics Press , chap. 1 (9-53). Due: 2 pages: list the main themes; briefly mention what you have learned about them.

Thurs Jan 25

Theme: Personal freedom
Press, chap 7 (296-339)

Research workshop in class: planning for your paper
Read Research tips on library home page
Web browse for research topic ideas

Section II: Slavery, Traditional Politics and Colonial Impact on Africa

Tues Jan 30

Black Holocaust: Introduction; and Parts 1 and 2 (pgs 1-73)
Due: *one paragraph identification of your research topic with justification of your choice. Include your research question.*

Thurs Feb 1

Black Holocaust: Parts 3 & 4 (74-155)

Tues Feb 6

Achebe: chaps 1-6
Due: 1-page reaction to the first six chapters

Thurs Feb 8

Achebe: chapters 7-13
Due 2-page summary of what you have learned so far about the traditional African village pre-colonialism. Give examples.
Due: name of your African interview

Tues Feb 13

no readings; video and discussion
Due: *State your research question at the top of the paper:*
(1) Annotated bibliography (3-pages); at least 12 sources, only two of which can be web-based sources.
(2) List of books ordered thru USM inter-library loan service

Thurs Feb 15

Achebe: chapters 14-20

Tues Feb 20

No class: Mardi Gras holiday

Thurs Feb 22

Achebe: chapter 20 to end of book
Due 1-page summary of what you have learned of the impact of colonialism on a traditional village. Please give specific examples.

Tues Feb 27

Theme: **Balance sheet on colonialism**
On electronic reserves: **Boahen:** chap 4 (94-112)
Due 2-pg analysis of the positive and negative effects on Africa of colonialism.

Section III: Political Themes in Africa Today

Thurs Mar 1

Theme: The politics of ethnicity (part I)
Thomson: Chapter 4; 59-81 [22 p]

Quiz: what is the difference between “primordial” and “instrumental” identity and how are these relevant to politics in Africa. Give examples.

MID-TERM HANDED OUT IN CLASS. Due back March 7.

- Tues Mar 6 No readings. Video
Due: MID-TERM HANDED IN AT START OF CLASS
- Thurs Mar 8 **Theme: The Politics of Ethnicity (part II)**
Press: Chaps 6 and 7; Rwanda (219-295)
Due: 2-page summary: what caused the genocide in Rwanda?
- Mar 12-16 Spring Break
- Tues Mar 20 No readings; discuss research findings to date
Due State research question at the top of paper:
(1) *Initial research findings (3 pages); must include your research question at top of first page.*
(2) *Updated abstract and additions/deletions to annotated bibliography*
- Thurs Mar 22 **Theme: The struggle for legitimacy in African politics**
Thomson: chap 6; 107-128
Due: Interview paper (2 pgs)
- Tues Mar 27 **Theme: Challenging the dictators**
Press: chap 2 (55-96)
Due: 2-page paper: How did activists challenge dictators? What were their strategies; were they effective?
- Thurs Mar 29 **Theme: military power in Africa**
Thomson: chap 7; 129-149
Come to class prepared to make a coup using chapter information.
- Tues April 3 **Theme: International Influences on Modern Africa (Part I)**
Thomson: chap 8; 149-174
- Thurs April 5 **Theme: Intervention in Africa (Part II)**
Press: chap 4 (Somalia); 143-218
Due 2-pages: what are the lessons learned in Somalia for U.S. military involvement. Cite specific examples from the readings to back up your argument.
- Tues April 10 no readings; video and discussion

***Due:** Final research paper-10 pages, not including your updated annotated bibliography and final abstract. Be sure to state research question on first page. Final paper must include the following: (1) title sheet with title, your name, USM, class name, instructor name, date; (2) abstract: single-spaced paragraph located on next page after title sheet at top of page in **bold**; (3) text of paper – ten pages; (4) annotated bibliography (this does not count as part of your ten pages.*

- Thurs April 12 **Theme: The African state today**
Thomson: chap 10; 200-227. (good preparation for exam)
- Tues April 17 **Theme: Democracy comes to much of Africa**
Thomson: chap 11 (pgs. 228-254)
Due: 2 pages: what led to the growth of democracy in Africa
- Thurs April 19 **Theme: human rights in Africa:** Case studies: Kenya and Liberia
Press Chap 3 (on Kenya); no readings on Liberia (lecture)
- Tues April 24 Open
Due: *electronic copy of corrected final paper to*
press.bob@gmail.com *Required for full credit for paper.*
FINAL EXAM HANDED OUT IN CLASS; due back April 26
- Thurs April 26 **Due: FINAL EXAM HANDED BACK** at start of class
Oral presentations of research
- Tues May 1 Oral presentations of research
- Tues May 3 (last class)
Oral presentations of research

Research Paper: Format and Schedule:

The research paper is your opportunity to dig deeply into a course-related topic of your choice, approved by the instructor. AVOID mere presentation of unanalyzed information from whatever sources. Facts and data must be integrated into a logical analysis. The key is to start with a good research question; you may revise the question more than once during your research as you learn more.

Strive for excellence. The papers should be of such quality that you can present them on a student panel at an academic conference. You may have that opportunity, which would enhance your employability. Also, a good research paper helps your chances of getting a good job. Try to add to general knowledge about your topic, using your class texts and (mostly) outside sources.

Format:

The final paper must have:

A title sheet (see sample below)

On the next page, at the top, single-spaced, labeled Abstract, summarize the main point and findings of your paper.

The text begins below the abstract, on the same page, with about 4-5 lines between.

Each section of the paper should be labeled with a sub-heading in **bold**.

An annotated bibliography with single-spaced entries, and double-spaced between entries, follows the end of the text, beginning on a separate page titled **Select Bibliography in bold**.

Schedule

- Jan 30 *one paragraph identification of your research topic with justification of your choice. State your research question.*
- Feb 13 *State your research question at the top of the paper:
(1) Annotated bibliography (3-pages); at least 12 sources, only two of which can be web-based sources.
(2) List of books ordered thru USM inter-library loan service*
- March 20 *State research question at the top of paper:
(1) Initial research findings (3 pages); must include your research question at top of first page.
(2) Updated abstract and additions/deletions to annotated bibliography*
- April 10 *Final research paper-10 pages, not including your updated annotated bibliography and final abstract. Be sure to state research question on first page. Final paper must include the following: (1) title sheet with title, your name, USM, class name, instructor name, date; (2) abstract: single-spaced paragraph located on next page after title sheet at top of page in **bold**. (3) text of paper – ten pages; (4) annotated bibliography (this does not count as part of your ten pages)*
- April 24 *Electronic copy of corrected final paper to bob.press@usm.edu. Required for full credit for paper.*

Sample title page

The Wa-Benze (Mercedes Benz) Women Cloth Sellers: A Business Success Story from West Africa

By Jonathan Cook

University of Southern Mississippi

A paper submitted in PS 454, Government and Politics of Africa,
Spring 2007

The University of Southern Mississippi.

Dr. Robert Press, Professor

(or some similar version of this style)