Human, Social and Political Sciences Tripos
History and Politics Tripos
Part IIB 2023-24

Paper 15: The Politics of Africa

Paper Guide

Course Organiser  Dr Sharath Srinivasan
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Office hours  Dr Srinivasan (Michaelmas)
Wednesdays
4.00-5.00pm: Room 131, Alison Richard Building

Lecturers  Dr Sharath Srinivasan, Prof Adam Branch

Supervisors  TBC

Lectures:
MT:
Weeks 1-8: Wednesday, 11am, Alison Richard Building, Room SG1
And Weeks 1-5: Tuesday, 9am, Alison Richard Building, Room SG2
LT:
Weeks 1-8: Wednesday, 11am, Alison Richard Building, Room S2
And Weeks 3-6: Tuesday, 9am, Alison Richard Building, Room SG2

Classes
MT: Thursday, 1-3pm, SG2, Week 6
LT: Thursday, 11-1pm, S1, Week 6;

Aims and Objectives

- To provide a broad overview of major themes in African politics and economic development, including their historical and international dimensions and current debates.
- To provide opportunities for linking theoretical and conceptual arguments with in-depth empirical analysis of country and region case studies.
- To encourage multi-disciplinary approaches to the study of politics.
- To encourage critical reflection on representations, epistemologies and knowledge hierarchies in academic study and popular discourse concerning ‘Africa’.

Brief Description

The politics of Africa compels students to reckon with the weight of a tumultuous past and the rapidly changing politics of the present to make sense of a crucially important future in world politics. Colonial legacies are as important to today’s questions of climate justice and contemporary neo-imperial threats as they are to understanding state formation, configurations of state-society relations and how
African states interact with international order. Equally, in a continent with the world’s fastest population growth and rapidly growing economies and urban societies, nothing is determined by the past alone and new political imaginaries are taking flight in ways that require fresh attempts at understanding.

This paper explores the interaction of local and international factors that have influenced the social, political and economic trajectories of communities, states and regional organisations in Africa. Students are encouraged to consider how the study of Africa – and indeed all of the formerly colonised world – can challenge ways of thinking about politics that have been grounded primarily in the western experience, as well as how discourses on ‘Africa’ or ‘the global south’ relate to the economic, strategic and ideological projects of those who shape and deploy them.

The course is taught thematically, however students develop case-based knowledge of a diverse range of African experiences through country-specific readings, classes and essay work. Students are encouraged to give due consideration to the agency of African people and political actors alongside the powerful external pressures on the continent from colonialism until the present day.

The course, in common with much of the literature, has the ambition to talk about themes that are continental but this is no easy task. Literature dealing with ‘African’ politics and history by necessity involves a large degree of generalisation that sits awkwardly with diverse and plural histories and societies. Studying the politics of African countries involves weighing the validity and usefulness of generalisations against their limitations. For reasons relating to history and language, a majority of the literature on Africa in English is about former British colonies. This bias is reflected in the reading list for this course. Students should feel free to be curious well beyond the paper guide in building their understanding of the continent.

Students are expected to demonstrate the ability to discuss the applicability and limits of competing theories in light of particular cases in supervision essays and in the examination. To this end, it is essential that students pursue interests in particular country case studies, and choose at least two to study in depth. Over Michaelmas and Lent terms, classes will be offered in which students have the opportunity to discuss readings about a particular country or region under the guidance of an area specialist. However, if you have a particular interest in a country other than those featured in classes, you are encouraged to read about it as much as you can: not only in the academic literature, but follow relevant news sources, blogs and social media accounts to keep up to date with contemporary events and debates.

**Structure of the Paper**

The paper is divided into eight sections, five core Parts in Michaelmas Term and three Modules in Lent Term. Michaelmas Term begins with Africa’s global and historical politics before shifting to themes in economy, political institutions, conflict and violent and international intervention. In Lent Term, three standalone modules are taught on contemporary themes in African politics. It will be helpful to keep the following introduction to the structure of the paper front of mind as the year progresses.

**Michaelmas Term**

*Part I: Africa & the world: The past of the present*

The paper begins in Lectures 1-3 by reflecting on African politics as a field of study and on knowledge production about Africa. More than simply questions about how we study African politics today, questions of how Africa has been encountered, imagined and ‘produced’, and *why – for what purposes, and to what and whose ends?* – are central to understanding pre-colonial African political systems, the nature and impact of colonial rule, the ideologies and strategies of anti-colonial struggle,
and their legacies in the post-colonial independence era. Part I also introduces students to different socio-historical frameworks, and how they compare in evaluating the significance of the period of European colonial presence for modern African politics.

**Part II: Global economic order & African development**

In Part II, Lectures 4-6, we examine Africa’s place in global economic structures and those structures’ repercussions for African politics. The first lecture explores the debate around development and underdevelopment in the late colonial and post-independence period; the second turns to the era of Structural Adjustment Programmes and so-called democratic transitions in the late 1980s and early 1990s; and the third examines contemporary transformations in African economies by the rise of China and the other “BRICS”, including the renewed importance of African natural resources, the return of ‘developmental states’ and the lauding of ‘emerging markets’.

**Part III: State and society (i): rule, mobilization and identity**

Part III, Lectures 7-9, examines how politics – at national and sub-national scales - in Africa is imagined, conditioned and practiced through comparative, interdisciplinary and thematic lenses. Lectures examine the nature of political authority and mobilization, and the relationships between the state and citizens, and between identity, class and politics in Africa. This Part also examines African political experience through ethno-linguistic, religious and class lenses.

**Part IV: State and society (ii): coercion and contestation**

Lectures 10 and 11 in Part IV takes the state and society inquiry to the nature of, and reasons for, political violence and non-violent struggle across the continent. This begins with the historical experience and contemporary character of warfare and armed struggle. The second lecture examines collective action and popular protest, past, present, and future.

**Part V: International intervention: democracy, human rights, security**

The final lectures in Michaelmas Term Lectures 11 and 12 look at recent international interventions in African politics. The first lecture critically assesses Western interventions claiming to promote liberal democratic institutional orders, whether through electoral democracy promotion, civil society development and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or human rights. The second lecture turns to the politics of humanitarian intervention into African conflicts, broadly conceived to include relief aid, peacebuilding, and military intervention, all in the name of upholding Africans’ human rights.

**Lent Term**

In Lent Term 3 standalone modules are taught, which cover topical themes and debates in African Politics.

**Module 1: African Political Thought and African Studies**

**Module 2: African Environments and Politics**

**Module 3: Communication Technology and African Politics**
Mode of teaching

Teaching comprises of 25 one-hour lectures, 2 two-hour classes and 6 supervisions (3 in each of Michaelmas and Lent Terms). In Easter Term, there will be 1 one-hour revision lecture. Films may be shown during the course as ancillary to lectures and supervisions. All students are expected to attend all classes, to read one core text and some of the supplementary texts in preparation for each, and to participate in discussions. Every member of the group will also be required to lead class discussions once per term, through a brief presentation about the relevance of another reading to the debates raised in the core text. This will be organised at the first lecture each term.

Mode of assessment

Students will be assessed through a written examination in the Easter Term.

The examination paper will consist of at least twelve questions, which will address topics covered in both Terms’ lectures. Detailed guidance on modes of assessment will be provided by the Faculty in due course.

Outline of Lectures and Classes

Michaelmas Term

Part I: Africa & the World: The Past of the Present (Dr Srinivasan)
1. Introductory lecture. Africa in World Politics: Exception or Comparator? Victim or Agent? Self or Other?
2. Pre-colonial and Colonial Africa
3. Independence and the Politics of the ‘Third World’

Part II: Global economic order & African development (Dr Srinivasan)
4. Underdevelopment, Developmental States, Neo-Colonialism
5. Debt and Development: From Structural Adjustment to Good Governance

Part III: State and society (i): rule, mobilization and identity (Dr Srinivasan)
7. Political Mobilization, Control and the State
8. Identity, Ethnicity and Political Competition
9. Class and Politics: Peasants and Workers, Rulers and Capitalists

Part IV: State and society (ii): coercion and contestation (Dr Srinivasan)
10. Conflict, Society and the State
11. Social Movements and Popular Protest

Class: War, Peace & Popular Revolution in Sudan (Week 6) (Dr Srinivasan)

Part V: International intervention: democracy, human rights, security (Prof Branch)
12. Trajectories of Democracy
13. Intervening in Political Violence: Humanitarianism, Peacebuilding, and Security

Lent Term

Module 1: African Political Thought and African Studies (Prof Branch)
14. African History and World History (W1, Wed 11am)
15. Anti-Colonial, Nationalist, and Pan-African Political Thought (W2, Wed 11am)
16. Defining African Philosophy and Political Thought (W3, Wed 11am)
17. Rethinking African Studies (W4, Wed 11am)

**Module 2: African Environments and Politics (Prof Branch)**
18. Environmental History, Knowledge, and Power (W5, Wed 11am)
19. Environment, Territory, and Political Authority (W6, Wed 11am)
20. Politics of Conservation (W7, Wed 11am)
21. Climate Change, Politics and Justice (W8, Wed 11am)

*Class:* The Politics of Energy and “Natural Resources”: Charcoal (Week 6) (Prof Branch)

**Module 3: Communication Technology and African Politics (Dr Srinivasan)**
22. Histories of Communication Technology and African Politics (W3, Tue 9am)
23. Technology, the State and Security (W4, Tue 9am)
24. Digital Capitalism and Global Development (W5, Tue 9am)
25. Contentious Politics in a Digital Age (W6, Tue 9am)

**Easter Term**
Revision Lecture/Class: Rethinking African politics and Q&A

**Resources**
The following are basic introductory texts that come at the issues from rather different perspectives and may be read before term starts. The series of Basil Davidson films on YouTube are very watchable (see link in week 2 reading list).


An excellent foundational book, recently updated, covering important history of African politics and with a strong line of argument is:

* Cooper, Frederick. *Africa since 1940: the past of the present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019 (new edition)

The *Oxford Encyclopaedia of African Politics*, while not used directly during the year, is comprehensive and up to date with some strong contributions from recognized leading thinkers. See: [https://oxfordre.com/politics/page/african-politics/the-oxford-encyclopedia-of-african-politics](https://oxfordre.com/politics/page/african-politics/the-oxford-encyclopedia-of-african-politics)

Starting out, you might also want to take a look at two excellent film series on Africa, by eminent scholars Ali Mazrui and Basil Davidson:

Mazrui, Ali, *'The Africans: A Triple Heritage’*, [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0dOB0uDQc3ppMrNmqhH-sBQ8QE2SSK0](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0dOB0uDQc3ppMrNmqhH-sBQ8QE2SSK0)

Davidson, Basil, *‘Africa: A Voyage of Discovery’*, [youtube.com/watch?v=bPTUnzLOnJU&list=PL1_tlxrH8tQxTwCZ7-sMv276Z2QaA8wAY](https://youtube.com/watch?v=bPTUnzLOnJU&list=PL1_tlxrH8tQxTwCZ7-sMv276Z2QaA8wAY)

The **key texts** below are relevant across the paper’s topics. Students should be aware that many texts speak to different lecture topics, and so cherry-picking individual lecture reading lists alone is often not
sufficient. This list may be used as a check-list later in the year, to ensure that you have read relevant foundational texts for the course.


    Mamdani, Mahmood, *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics and the War on Terror*, Pantheon, 2010, Ch. 2, conclusion


Reference material

The reading list divides material into two categories. Under each of the lecture descriptions you will find lists of Core and Supplementary readings. Students are expected to read the Core readings prior to lectures, and to prepare for exams, and these are all *starred in this document. The Supplementary reading lists offer alternative takes on the issues, delve into particular aspects of the issues, and offer further case-studies. Note that many of the readings are relevant for more than one lecture or section of the course – the best student work in supervision essays and exams tends to see the links between issues and to draw these out.

All of the starred books should be available either online via iDiscover, on Moodle or in hard copy at the Seeley Library (Faculty of History) or the Centre of African Studies Library, ARB 3rd Floor. The library website is: www.african.cam.ac.uk/library/

Many of the other texts can be found online via iDiscover, on Moodle or in the Seeley Library or the Centre of African Studies Library.

Discussion of African politics is vibrant and diverse, with rich crossover between scholarly debates and policy research and practice. Those wanting to follow the debates, from a variety of different perspectives, should explore the following specialist publications and academic journals (those in italics are particularly prominent; most or all are available either on-line, at the Seeley library or at the Centre of African Studies library):

Africa: Journal of the International African Institute
African Affairs,
Africa Confidential,
Africa Today,
African Studies Review,
African Studies Quarterly,
Commonwealth and Comparative Politics,
Development and Change,
Journal of African and Asian Studies,
Journal of Modern African Studies,
Journal of East African Studies,
Journal of Southern African Studies,
Journal of African Economies,
New African,
Review of African Political Economy,
Round Table,
Third World Quarterly
Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity
Feminist Africa

The following internet sites are good for news and research about Africa:

Check out online resources at the Centre of African Studies Library (www.african.cam.ac.uk/library/). A large number of articles and speeches by radical African leaders of the independence era on nationalism and anti-imperialism are available at: www.marxists.org/subject/africa/index.htm

More contemporary material
African Arguments  https://africanarguments.org/
Africa is a Country  https://africasacountry.com/
This Week in Africa  https://thisweekinafrica.substack.com/p/this-week-in-africa-14f?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email
The Elephant  https://www.theelephant.info/
Democracy in Africa  https://democracyinafrica.org/
AllAfrica.com  http://allafrica.com/
BBC news  http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/default.stm /
Afrobarometer  www.afrobarometer.org
Think Africa Press  http://www.thinkafricapress.com
Africa Research Institute  http://www.africaresearchinstitute.org

A note on dealing with primary materials

Documents written by or for African Governments, donor agencies, activist groups, think tanks and NGOs are sometimes referenced in the reading list. Students should also search the web for relevant, up to date, publicly available policy material about particular cases and places. This so-called ‘grey literature’ often presents data and analysis in a non-contestable form, generating what sound like anodyne and technocratic policy proposals designed to appeal to ‘common sense’. That’s no reason to take it at face value - as with the scholarly literature, students should be alert to the questions of who is making an argument and why, whose interest and ideologies it reflects and serves.

Nonetheless, it is not always wise to critique policy literature in quite the same terms as academic studies. Political actors tend to be self-aggrandizing and not to respect standards of evidence that would be considered appropriate in the academy. Explaining why they are doing what they are doing rhetorically can be interesting, and critiquing an NGO campaign can be done insightfully, but beware knocking over straw men – of criticizing a TV advert for a lack of nuance, for example. Similarly, essays that efface differences within those writing from similar institutional backgrounds, comparing the positions of ‘donors’, ‘African Governments’, ‘NGOs’ and ‘critics’, as if those labels explain everything we need to know about an argument, are rarely interesting.
Part I: Africa & the world: The past of the present

Lecture 1. Introductory Lecture. Africa in world politics: Exception or comparator? Victim or agent? Self or Other?

Core readings


* Hegel, G.W.F., Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, CUP, 1975, Appendix, pp. 174-90
Lecture 2. Pre-colonial and colonial Africa

Sample questions

- Did Colonial rule simply reproduce European ideas of the state in Africa?
- In what ways and why did Colonial elites ‘invent’ tradition in Africa?

Core readings

* Mamdani, Mahmood, Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism, Princeton University Press, 1996 – particularly Introduction and Ch. II, III


Supplementary readings


Thompson, Alex, An Introduction to African Politics, Oxford: Routledge, 2016, Ch. 2.


Cases

Caplan, Gerald L. ‘Barotseland’s Scramble for Protection’ J of African History, 1969, 10


Lecture 3. Independence and the politics of the ‘Third World’

Sample questions

- Did African nationalism fail independent Africa?
- What role did ideology play in the politics of independent Africa?
- Did the superpowers call the shots in Africa during the Cold War?

Core readings

* Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, Penguin Classics, 1961, ‘Concerning Violence’ and ‘Pitfalls of National Consciousness’ (and preface by Jean-Paul Sartre)


Supplementary readings


Cases

Kenya


Zambia


**Ghana**

Allman, Jean, *The Quills of the Porcupine: Asante nationalism in an emergent Ghana*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1993


**French West Africa**


Chafer, T. *The end of empire in French West Africa* (2002)


**On the Cold War in Africa**


On Ethiopia and Somalia in the Cold War


Ottaway, Marina. *Soviet and American influence in the Horn of Africa* (New York, 1982)


Thompson, Alex, 'Case study: Somalia’s International Relations', *An Introduction to African Politics*, Routledge, 2016, Ch. 8.


On Southern Africa in the Cold War


Part II: Global economic order & African development

Lecture 4. Underdevelopment, Developmental States, Neo-Colonialism

Sample questions

- To what extent did colonialism determine post-colonial economic possibilities in Africa?
- What has been the relationship between the global economy and economic growth in Africa?

Core reading

* Cooper, Frederick, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present*, Cambridge University Press, 2019, Ch. 1, 5

Supplementary readings


Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Ch. 6


Shivji, Issa, ‘The state in the dominated social formations of Africa: some theoretical issues’,
International Social Science Journal XXXII, no. 4 (1980)


Shivji, Issa, Class Struggles in Tanzania, Heinemann, 1976, Ch. 1, 2

Amin, Samir, Unequal Development, Monthly Review Press, 1976, Introduction and Ch. 1


Hochschild, Adam, King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa, Houghton Mifflin, 1999, Ch. 7-15

Lecture 5. Debt and Development: From Structural Adjustment to Good Governance

Sample questions

- Has development in Africa been a political or economic project?
- Good governance has been characterized as a disciplinary project – is this accurate? If so, who is being disciplined and to what effect?

Core reading


Supplementary readings

* Structural Adjustment and Foreign Aid


*Good Governance*


Young, Tom, and David Williams, ‘Governance, the World Bank and Liberal Theory’, *Political Studies* 42, no. 1 (1994)


*The Development Discourse*


Hickey, Sam, ‘The return of politics in development studies: getting lost within the poverty agenda?’, *Progress in Development Studies* 8, no. 4 (2008): 349-358


**Lecture 6. Rising Global Powers and Changing African Economies**

**Sample questions**

- Does the rise of “emerging powers” in “emerging markets” mark a new phase in Africa’s relations with the world?

- Is there anything different about today’s developmental states in Africa compared to state-led development in the past?

**Core Reading**

* Carmody, Pádraig, *The New Scramble for Africa*, Polity, 2011, Introduction, Ch. 1, 5, 6, 7


**Supplementary readings**


* Harvey, David, *The New Imperialism*, Oxford University Press, 2003, Ch. 4

* Radelet, Steven, *Emerging Africa: How Seventeen Countries are Leading the Way*, Center for Global Development, 2010


* Carrier, Neil, and Gernot Klantschnig, *Africa and the War on Drugs*, Zed Books, 2012, Ch. 3-4

**Rising Global Powers**


Carmody, Pádraig, The Rise of the BRICS in Africa: The Geo-politics of South-South Relations, Zed Books, 2013, Ch. 1, 6, 7

French, Howard, China’s Second Continent: How a Million Migrants Are Building a New Empire in Africa, 2015


Neo-Developmental States, New Opportunities


Mann, Laura, and Marie Berry, ‘Understanding the political motivations that shape Rwanda’s emergent developmental state.’ New Political Economy 21, no. 1 (2016): 119-144.


Part III: State and society (i): rule, mobilization and identity

Lecture 7. Political Mobilization, Control and the State

Sample questions
- Why do some argue that African politics is ‘neopatrimonial’?
- What does clientalism explain and what does it overlook in the study of African politics?

Core reading


Supplementary readings


*The Future of Electoral Democracy*

Cooper, Frederick, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present*, 2019, Ch. 7, 8

Lindberg, Staffan, *Democracy and Elections in Africa*, 2006, Ch. 1, 3, 7


Cheeseman, Nic, *Democracy in Africa*, Cambridge UP, Ch. 5


**Cases**


Lecture 8. Identity, Ethnicity and Political Competition

Sample questions

- What can identity and belonging help to explain regarding African politics?
- Is ethnic politics simply the response of rational actors to weak states and poor societies in Africa?

Core reading


Supplementary readings


Berman et al., *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa*, Oxford: James Currey, 2004. Essays by Berman, Eyoh, Kymlicka (ch 1); Lonsdale (ch 5); Falola (ch. 9); and conclusion (18)


Thompson, Alex, *An Introduction to African Politics*, Oxford: Routledge, Ch. 4.


Cases


Lecture 9. Class and Politics: Peasants and Workers, Rulers and Capitalists

Sample questions

- Are African peasants neglected, or exploited, or both?
- What are the constraints facing political protest by Africa’s urban underclass?

Core reading


Supplementary readings


Harrison, Graham, ‘Peasants, the agrarian question and lenses of development’, *Progress in Development Studies*, 1 (3), 2001: 187-203


Tandon, Yash, Ed. (1982), *The University of Dar es Salaam Debate on Class, State, and Imperialism*. Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, particularly: Ch7: Tandon ‘Who Is the Ruling Class in the Semi-Colony’ (pp.50-54); Ch8: Nabudere ‘Imperialism, State, Class and Race’ (pp.55-67); Ch16, Shivji The State in the Dominated Social Formations of Africa: Some Theoretical Issues (pp.172-181); Ch30, Omwony-Ojwok ‘Review of the Debate on Imperialism, State, Class, and the National Question’ (pp.283-299).


Thompson, Alex, ‘Social class: the search for social class in Africa’, *An Introduction to African Politics*, Routledge, 2016, Ch. 5.


**Cases**


Part IV: State and society (ii): coercion and contestation

Lecture 10. Conflict, Society and the State

Sample questions

- Is violent conflict in Africa an unavoidable feature of economic and political development?
- To what extent is violence politically motivated in contemporary Africa?

Core reading

* Cramer, Christopher (2006) Civil War is not a Stupid Thing Hurst, London (concentrate on chapter 3 for this lecture)

(Alternatively, the following two articles by Cramer set out some of the arguments in the book)


* Frantz Fanon, Wretched of the Earth, Penguin Classics, 1961, ‘Concerning Violence’


Supplementary readings (those marked * are particularly recommended)

(The edited books include some useful case studies)


http://www.iss.co.za/pgcontent.php?UID=30496


Zachariah Mampilly (2011), Rebel Rulers: Insurgent governance and civilian life during war (Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY)

Reno, W. *Warlord Politics and African States*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998, Ch. 4 (Sierra Leone), Ch. 5 (DR Congo), Ch. 6 (Nigeria).

Richards, P. *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone*, James Currey, 1996.


Further reading on “greed” /resources and conflict


(The above is a “plain language”, non-technical exposition of Collier and Hoeffler’s ideas: a good introduction to their approach if you are unfamiliar with econometric method)


Weinstein, J. ‘Resources and the information problem in rebel recruitment’, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, 4 (2005), pp. 443–50


*New Armed Movements*


*Case studies*

For those interested in pursuing individual case studies, here are some suggestions to get started. Please speak to Dr Srinivasan for more recommendations on these or other case studies that interest you.

*Sierra Leone*


(also good on Liberia and how the two conflicts are interrelated)


Keen, D., (2005) Conflict and collusion in Sierra Leone (James Currey, Oxford)

Mozambique


Robert Gersoni, Summary of Mozambican Refugee Accounts of Principally Conflict-Related Experience in Mozambique (Department of State Bureau for Refugees) 1998.


Zimbabwe


Angola


Chabal, Patrick and Vidal, Nuno (eds) 2007. Angola: The Weight of History. Hurst, London. (Chapter by Newitt is good for historical context, Hodges for wartime and post-war political economy, Messiant on the continuities between wartime and post-war politics.)


Lecture 11. Social movements and popular protest

Sample questions

- What galvanizes African Social Movements?

- How can we account for the increase in public protest in African cities over the last decade?

Core Reading


Supplementary readings

**Anti-Colonial Movements**


Young, Robert J. C., ‘Fanon and the turn to armed struggle in Africa’, *Wasafiri* 20, no. 44 (2005): 33–41


Biko, Steve, ‘Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity’, and ‘The Definition of Black Consciousness’, in I Write What I Like, Heinemann, 1987


Debating Social Movements


Harrison, Graham, Issues in the Contemporary Politics of Sub-Saharan Africa: The Dynamics of Struggle and Resistance, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, Ch. 1, 5

Ellis, Stephen and Ineke van Kessel, Movers and Shakers: Social Movements in Africa, Brill, 2009, Ch. 1, 3


Tripp, Aili Marie, Isabel Casimiro, Joy Kwesiga, and Alice Mungwa, African Women’s Movements: Transforming Political Landscapes, 2009, Ch. 3-4


Popular Protest


Bond, Patrick, ‘South African people’s power since the mid-1980s: two steps forward, one back’, *Third World Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (2012)


**Transnational Movements**


Part V: International intervention: democracy, human rights, security

Lecture 12. Trajectories of Democracy

Sample questions
- Is populism a useful concept for understanding contemporary African politics?
- Can trends in democratization be identified in Africa?
- Are elections a necessary part of democracy in Africa?

Core reading
* Claude Ake, *The Feasibility of Democracy in Africa* (CODESRIA, 2000), Ch. 1, 2.
* Tukumba Lumumba-Kasongo, ed., *Liberal Democracy and Its Critics in Africa: Political Dysfunction and the Struggle for Social Progress* (CODESRIA, 2005), Ch. 1, 2, Conclusion.

Supplementary readings

* Post-Cold War Political Liberalization


Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), Introduction, Ch. 3.

Cheeseman, Nic, *Democracy in Africa*, Cambridge University Press, 2015, Ch. 3, 4


Harrison, Graham, *Issues in the Contemporary Politics of Sub-Saharan Africa: The Dynamics of Struggle and Resistance*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, Ch. 4

Young, Crawford, *The Postcolonial State in Africa*, University of Wisconsin Press, 2012, Ch. 5, 6

LeBas, Adrienne, *From Protest to Parties: Party-Building and Democratization in Africa*, Oxford University Press, 2011, Ch. 1, 2


**Term Limits, Elections, and Authoritarianism**


Gabrielle Lynch and Peter VonDoepp (eds), *Routledge handbook of democratization in Africa* (Routledge, Abingdon, 2019).


**Populism**


**Civil Society, NGOs and Human Rights in Context**

Young, Crawford, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*, Yale University Press, 1997, Ch. 7


Ferguson, James, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*, Duke University Press, 2006, Introduction and Ch. 4


Mutua, Makau (ed.), *Human Rights NGOs in East Africa: Political and Normative Tensions*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009


Lecture 13. Intervening in Political Violence: Humanitarianism, Peacebuilding, and Security

Sample questions
- Will human rights intervention in Africa always be counterproductive?
- What have been the political consequences of the War on Terror in Africa?

Core reading

Supplementary readings

*Humanitarianism*
Fassin, Didier, ‘Humanitarianism as a Politics of Life’, *Public Culture* 19, no. 3 (2007): 499–520
de Waal, Alex, *Famine Crimes: Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa*, James Currey, 1997, Ch. 3, 4, 7-11

**Peacebuilding**


Duffield, Mark, *Development, Security and Unending War: Governing the World of Peoples*, Polity, 2007, Ch. 1


**R2P and Humanitarian Military Intervention**


Securitization and Counterterrorism
Schmidt, Elizabeth, Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror, Cambridge University Press, 2013, Ch. 8
Lent Term

Module I: African Political Thought and African Studies (Weeks 1-4, Wed 11am)

Lecture 14: African History and World History

Sample questions

- What are the assumptions behind different ideas of Africa?

- How has “the Part Which Africa Has Played in World History” (in Du Bois’s phrase) shaped the continent’s politics?

Core Reading


* Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses (University of Minnesota, 1997), Preface, Chapter 1.


Supplementary Reading


Frederick Cooper, Africa in the World (Harvard, 2014), Introduction, Chapter 2.


Luise White, Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa (University of California, 2000), Chapter 1.


Lecture 15: Anti-Colonial, Nationalist, and Pan-African Political Thought

Sample questions

- How did colonial rule shape anti-colonial struggle?
- What role does culture play in liberation?

Reading (core is * starred in each of the three sections below*)

Writings by Anti-Colonial Political Leaders


Frantz Fanon, Chapter 2: “Grandeur and Weakness of Spontaneity,” in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). [Note that the title may vary in different translations.]


Debating Anti-Colonial Thought


*Histories of Pan-Africanism*


Lecture 16: Defining African Philosophy and Political Thought

Sample questions

- What makes African philosophy or political thought African?

- How does attention to gender help rethink what is meant by African philosophy or political thought?

Core Reading

* V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa* (Bloomington, 1988), Introduction, Ch. 1.


* Ousmane Kane, *Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa* (Harvard, 2016), Prologue, Ch. 2-5.


Supplementary Reading


Sylvia Tamale, *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism* (Daraja Press, 2020).


Lecture 17: Rethinking African Studies

Sample questions

- Does decolonising African Studies mean different things in different contexts?
- How does knowledge being produced about African politics inside the university relate to that being produced outside the university?

Readings (core * starred in each of the three sections below)

African Studies in Western Universities


Contestations around African Universities


**Knowledge Production beyond the University**


Module 2: African Environments and Politics (Weeks 5-8, Wed 11am)

Lecture 18: Environmental History, Knowledge, and Power

Sample questions

- How do colonial narratives of the environment shape postcolonial environmental politics?
- Is “the environment” a useful concept in the study of Africa?

Core Reading


Supplementary Reading

James McCann Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land: An Environmental History of Africa, 1800–1990 (Heinemann, 1999), Chapters 1, 2, 7.


Emmanuel Kreike, Environmental Infrastructure in African History: Examining the Myth of Natural Resource Management in Namibia (Cambridge, 2013), Chapters 1, 2.


Lecture 19: Environment, Territory, and Political Authority

Sample questions

- How has the effort to control land shaped African states?
- What is the contemporary political relevance of forests in Africa?

Core Reading


Supplementary Reading


James C. Scott, “Compulsory Villagization in Tanzania: Aesthetics and Miniaturization,” Ch. 7 in *Seeing Like a State*.


Lecture 20: Politics of Conservation

Sample questions

- Has conservation always been a “big lie”?
- Are “neoliberal conservation” and “militarized conservation” complementary or contrasting?

Core Reading


Supplementary Reading


Lecture 21: Climate Change, Politics and Justice

Sample questions

- Why do African states participate in the UNFCCC process?
- What does climate justice prescribe in terms of adaptation and mitigation policies in Africa?

Core Reading

* Nnimmo Bassey, *To Cook a Continent: Destructive Extraction and the Climate Crisis in Africa* (Cape Town, Oxford: Pambazuka, 2012): Chapters 1, 6, 7.

Supplementary Reading


Module 3: African Politics in a Digital Age (Lent Term, weeks 3-6, Tu 9am)

Lecture 22. Histories of Communication Technology and African Politics

Sample questions

- What characterises the relationship between changes in communication technology and African politics?

- In what ways are Africans agents of political change in how they approach communication technology? Answer using a historical perspective.

Core Reading


Supplementary readings


Lecture 23. Technology, the State and Security

Sample questions

- Is digital communication technology changing who has power over whom in Africa?

- Do digital technologies allow African states to broadcast power over territory and populations more effectively?

Core Reading


Supplementary readings


Lecture 24. Digital Capitalism and Global Development

Sample questions

- Is digital technology creating new colonial relations between Africa and the world?
- Do the advantages of digital technology for African development outweigh the disadvantages?

Core Reading


Supplementary readings


Lecture 25. Contentious Politics in a Digital Age

Sample questions
- Is there anything distinctively new about African publics in a digital age?
- Have digital technologies strengthened protest and/or political change movements in Africa?

Core Reading

Supplementary readings
Sample examination paper

Answer three of the following questions:

1. Did colonial rule simply reproduce European ideas of the state in Africa?
2. Was African nationalism a failure?
3. Is armed violence in Africa best understood as a social phenomenon?
4. Have African polities been ‘disciplined’ by the global economic order?
5. Does engaging the world economy provide the best route out of poverty for African states?
6. Is good governance and civil society development a precondition for democracy in Africa or its antithesis?
7. What political mobilisation strategies by elites are the most successful in Africa?
8. Are political elites responsible for the ethnicization of politics in Africa?
9. Do African social movements marginalise women?
11. Are digital communications politically emancipatory in Africa?
12. Which actors in Africa stand to gain and lose the most over the 21st century?

Pol 15 Examination Paper 2021-22 (online, open-book, 3-hour window, no word limit)

Answer three of the following questions:

1. What is the biggest intellectual dilemma when approaching the study of African politics?
2. Were experiences of colonialism in Africa too varied to allow for arguments about shared colonial legacies?
3. Was African nationalism more of a curse than a blessing for independent Africa?
4. What explains the successes and failures of Africa’s developmental states after independence?
5. What does the African experience of Structural Adjustment reveal about the international politics of neoliberalism?
6. Are Western charges of neocolonialism against China merely self-serving?
7. What has been the biggest challenge facing democratisation in Africa?
8. Why do efforts to build peace in Africa often go wrong?
9. Why has ‘neopatrimonialism’ been a popular framework for explaining African politics?
10. What best explains the salience of ethnicity in contemporary African politics?
11. How can a class analysis help us understand political struggle in Africa?
12. To what extent are disagreements on explaining conflict in Africa about a relative emphasis on structure versus agency?
13. Why are political protests so common in Africa if they do not often bring about political change?
14. What is the most significant change to politics in Africa with the advent of digital communications?
15. What role do ‘youth’ play in analyses of African political futures?
16. What might a distinctively African contribution to political change in the world involve?
Pol 15 Examination Paper 2020-21 (online, open-book, 6 hour window, 4500 max words)

Answer three of the following questions:
1. How might the study of African politics reduce its reliance on Western political thought?
2. In what ways are debates about Africa’s colonial history politically significant today?
3. Why was decolonization in Africa mostly peaceful and what were the effects of this?
4. What does dependency theory illuminate and what does it obscure about the challenges facing post-colonial African economies?
5. Were the failures of Structural Adjustment Programmes in Africa due more to their diagnosis of the problem of African development than their prescription of a solution?
6. Given the growing importance of non-Western trading partners and political allies, why are there not more developmental states in Africa?
7. Does foreign support to develop African civil society enhance African democracy more than undermine it?
8. What is the most important change needed in international interventions in African conflicts in order to advance peace?
9. What is the most persuasive critique of ‘neopatrimonialism’ as an explanation of political authority and the African state?
10. To what extent should identity be relied upon to explain political mobilization and control in Africa?
11. Is a class analysis essential to understand the differences between rural and urban politics in Africa?
12. In what ways do different explanations of violent conflict in Africa disagree on explanations of African politics generally?
13. Have African protests merely changed the faces of power but not the structures of power?
14. Which types of African governments benefit more from digital technology than others?
15. Are students the vanguard of political change in Africa?
16. What distinctive role can Africa play in remaking world politics in the 21st century?

Pol 15 Examination Paper 2019-20 (online, open-book, 3.5 hour window)

Answer three of the following questions:
1. In what way is the study of politics in Africa political?
2. What was the biggest challenge facing newly independent African states?
3. How has the global economic order shaped economic development in Africa?
4. Is the good governance agenda helpful to the political aspirations of citizens of African countries?
5. Is Africa ‘rising’ a story of China ‘rising’?
6. Who are the major beneficiaries of Western peace and humanitarian interventions in African conflicts and crises?
7. In what ways does neopatrimonialism help with an understanding of political authority and behaviour in Africa?
8. Are unfulfilled expectations for democracy in Africa due to the politics of identity?
9. What does a class perspective explain about African politics?
10. Are violent conflicts in Africa more wars of economic accumulation than of political revolution?
11. Do urban protests in Africa influence political change?
12. Who stands to gain the most from Africa’s digital transformations?

Pol 15 Examination Paper 2016-17

Answer three of the following questions:
1. Does the history of colonialism in Africa remain politically contentious today?
2. Have independent states in Africa failed to live up to the promise of nationalism?
3. Is clientelism a symptom or a cause of the problems of political legitimacy in African states?
4. To what extent are elites responsible for the importance of ethnic identity in African politics?
5. Should more attention be paid to class dynamics in the study of African politics?
6. Is violent conflict in Africa best viewed as a cause or a consequence of political crisis?
7. Who has benefited from development in Africa?
8. Has the international economic order hurt the independent African state more than helped it?
9. To what extent have new rising global powers brought new possibilities for development in African states?
10. Do human rights non-governmental organisations in Africa benefit those they claim to serve?
11. Is electoral democracy in crisis in African states?
12. Are patterns of foreign intervention in Africa changing for the better?

Pol 15 Examination Paper 2015-16

Answer three of the following questions:
1. What was colonialism’s most important legacy for politics in post-independence Africa?
2. What was the significance of violence in nationalist struggles in Africa?
3. Are African states strong in their weakness, or weak in their strength, or neither?
4. Do variations in political institutions best explain the role of ethnicity in national politics in African countries?
5. What particular features of African politics require a class analysis to be best understood?
6. Why does most conflict in Africa occur within states and not between them?
7. Has development been a discourse of political control or of political struggle?
8. What has been the impact of the international order upon African states’ development trajectories?
9. To what extent does the “Africa Rising” narrative reflect a fundamental change in Africa’s status internationally?
10. Does violence or non-violence most predominantly characterize contemporary political struggles in Africa?
11. Do we see a push-back against liberal ideas of good governance and human rights from African states today?
12. Are elections a necessary part of democracy in Africa?
Pol 9 Examination Paper 2014-15

Answer three of the following questions:

1. Are the legacies of European colonialism in Africa overstated?
2. In what ways was the anti-colonial struggle in Africa a struggle over history?
3. What does an analysis of the relationship between state and society illuminate about political authority in African states?
4. Is there any trust to the assumption that African politics is all about ethnicity?
5. How useful is the notion of class struggle in understanding African politics?
6. Has the international state system increased or decreased the risk of war in Africa?
7. What best explains Africa’s ‘lost development decade’ in the 1980s?
8. What is new about the good governance agenda in Africa?
9. Are externally supported processes of democratisation in Africa a waste of time and money?
10. Do contemporary social movements in Africa hold promise for political progress emerging from within the continent?
11. Has security and stability in Africa replaced development as the primary concern of Western donor governments?
12. Do Western societies need Africa more than African countries need the West?

Pol 9 Examination Paper 2013-14

Answer three of the following questions:

1. What effects have environmental factors had on the types of political authority that have been common in Africa?
2. Did the nationalism of African anti-colonial movements kill hopes for democracy at independence?
3. Can African ethnicity be a source of progressive political ideas?
4. Is the idea that a social contract underpins African polities fanciful?
5. How much autonomy do African states have to make their own security decisions?
6. How useful is the concept of the labour aristocracy to understanding African politics?
7. Is the conscious planning of African industrialisation inevitably self-defeating?
8. Under what conditions might African states be able to negotiate trade regimes that enable them to flourish?
9. Why has donor thinking about the political management of economic reform in Africa changed over time?
10. Is democracy the only game in town in Africa?
11. What does Africa’s experience of the global economic crisis tell us about contemporary opportunities and challenges for development?
12. Does celebrity advocacy for African development matter?