

African Politics
CPO 3204
Summer A 2025
May 12 – June 20
M, T, W, R, F 9:30 A.M. – 10:45 A.M.
Anderson 0032

Instructor: Baba Adou

Email: adou.baba@ufl.edu

Office Hours: M & W 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM. (or by appt.)

Office: Anderson Hall 301

[Calendly Link](#)

Zoom Link:

<https://ufl.zoom.us/j/95067918484?pwd=ojqnA7giOxirGqBWzM8WxIYDyMN0Pi.1>

Course Description:

This course offers an introduction to the politics of contemporary Africa. It critically examines prevailing narratives that depict the continent as conflict prone, economically underdeveloped, and politically unstable. Instead, the course presents Africa as a dynamic region comprised of 54 independent states with diverse political and economic conditions. Students will explore key themes including colonial legacies and state formation, the nature and challenges of political authority in postcolonial states, processes of democratization and political reform, debates surrounding development and foreign aid, the politics of identity—such as ethnicity, religion, and gender—and Africa’s evolving role in the global system. These themes are examined through a variety of learning materials and collaborative-learning methods that expose students to dominant theoretical approaches and political science methodologies. It is important to note that this class is designated a “WR” (or Gordon Rules) which means “writing must be evaluated on the content, organization and coherence, effectiveness, style, grammar and punctuation.”

Student Learning Objectives

At the end of the course, students should be able to

- identify common depictions of Africa in popular media
- apply dominant comparative politics theories and methodologies to the study of African politics
- assess the perspectives of leading scholars and policy experts on African affairs through essays and collaborative assignments
- conduct research on an important issue challenging Africa’s political, economic or social development and present findings in written form

- demonstrate higher-level critical thinking skills, such as analysis and synthesis
- demonstrate an ability to write coherent, logical and carefully written prose at a level expected of upper-division students

Required Texts:

- Thomson, Alex. 2022. *An Introduction to African Politics*. Routledge. (Fifth Edition)

In the course schedule below, this book will be referred to as “Thomson”. This textbook is available for purchase in both physical and digital form, and either format is acceptable.

Instructional Requirements:

- Students will be required to have access and use a personal computer with access to the Internet.
- You may access Canvas from UF’s e-Learning webpage: <https://elearning.ufl.edu/>. Please contact the UF Help Desk, <https://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>, if you have any technical difficulties with Canvas.

Course Requirements and Assignments:

- Class Participation (15%):
 - Attendance for this course is mandatory and an attendance record will be taken for every class. Students are expected to come to class having done the reading and ready to contribute to class discussions. If students are routinely absent—or attend without doing the proper preparation—they will not receive full credit for participation. Students who miss more than three classes without a formal excuse may receive additional reductions to their overall grade.
 - If a student does not participate in at least one of the first two class meetings of the course and they have not contacted the department or the instructor to indicate their intent, the student can be dropped from the course. Students must not assume that they will be dropped, however. The department will notify students if they have been dropped from a course.
 - In addition to contributing to daily class discussions, students are expected to actively participate in Friday sessions, which will focus on exploring the week’s central theme in depth. To guide these conversations, each student must post at least two thoughtful questions on that week’s readings to Canvas by 11:59 PM on Thursday. These questions should reflect critical engagement with the material and will serve as the basis for our Friday discussions.

- 1 Review Essay (35%): Students are required to write one review essay (at least 6 page double-spaced), analyzing two readings selected from the required or recommended readings assigned during Week 2 (Politics of the State) or Week 3 (Democracy and Political Reform).
 - Detailed information about the review essay requirements will be provided. Essays are to be submitted through TURNITIN on Canvas.
- 2 Exams (25% each: total 50%). There will be two in-class exams. Both exams will evaluate your understanding of course materials, including assigned readings, lectures, and class discussions. The format will consist of a combination of multiple-choice questions and short-answer prompts. A study guide and additional information about the content, structure, and expectations for each exam will be provided in advance.

Grading Scale:

Each grade that you earn for assignments will be based on the weightings indicated above. Your final grade will be converted based on the following scale:

A: 93-100	B: 83-86	A-: 90-92
B+: 87-89	C: 73-76	B-: 80-82
C+: 77-79	D: 63-66	C-: 70-72
D+: 67-69		D-: 60-62
F: 59 and below		

Policies on Course Readings, Attendance, Cell Phones & Computers

- All required readings must be completed by the class period for which they are assigned. Each class session includes one required reading; students are encouraged to engage with the recommended readings to deepen their understanding. I reserve the right to change the course readings or course structure during the semester as I see fit. Any changes will be updated on the syllabus and uploaded to Canvas.
- Cell phones should be placed on silent during class sessions and activities such as browsing and texting should be kept to an absolute minimum.
- Students are allowed to use computers for course-related purposes, including taking notes, reviewing assigned readings, and completing class assignments.
- Canvas will serve as a repository for course materials, this includes:
 - Updated copies of the syllabus;
 - Assigned readings not contained in required texts;
 - Additional reading list;

- Internet and electronic resources on Africa;
- Review papers and exam review materials.

Policies on Cheating and Plagiarism

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Policies on Late Assignments, Make-up Exams, & Contact

- Assignment extensions will only be offered under extenuating circumstances. Late assignments submitted without a valid extension will be penalized as per my discretion.
- Make-up exams will only be arranged for university-accepted excuses.
- When contacting me by email please utilize standard grammar and punctuation. In most instances, I will do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours.

Policies for Persons with Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

A student with an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19, as determined by the CDC, can register with the Disability Resource Center to request a temporary course modification and/or academic accommodation. The student will need to provide medical documentation that identifies their diagnosis and their medical provider’s concerns related to possible COVID-19 exposure. Students should be mindful that remote course access is not always a feasible modification for every course. The DRC will work in partnership with the student’s instructor to determine a reasonable modification that meets the course

requirements while considering the student's concerns for exposure. Students can begin the process to register with the DRC by completing the form located on the [DRC website](#). For questions, please contact the DRC at 352-392-8565 or drc@ufsa.ufl.edu

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

Policies on In-Class Recordings

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session. Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040.

Campus Resources

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 - 392 1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS): Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

University Police Department: 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

<http://www.police.ufl.edu/>

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support: 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning support@ufl.edu. <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.

Career Resource Center: Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling.

<http://www.crc.ufl.edu/>

Library Support: <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>. Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

<http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>

Writing Studio: 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

Student Complaints Campus:

https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF_Complaints_policy.pdf

Course Schedule

***Please note that the syllabus can be changed as needed during the semester. ***

Week 1: Pre-colonial and Colonial Legacies			
		Required readings	Recommended readings
5/12	Monday	Syllabus & Course Introduction	ENGLEBERT, Pierre and Kevin DUNN (2013). “Why Study African Politics?” In Inside African Politics. CHEESEMAN, Nic, Carl DEATH, and Lindsay WHITFIELD (2017). “Notes on Researching Africa.” African Affairs. MEREDITH, Martin (2005). “Heart of Darkness.” In The Fate of Africa.
5/13	Tuesday	Thomson: Chapter 2	
5/14	Wednesday	EKEH, Peter (1975). “Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa.” Comparative Studies in Society and History, 17(1): 91–112.	
5/15	Thursday	MAMDANI, Mahmood (1996). Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism. Introduction: “Thinking Through Africa’s Impasse.” Princeton: Princeton University Press.	
5/16	Friday	Discussion + map quiz	

Week 2: Politics of the State			
		Required readings	Recommended readings
5/19	Monday	Thomson: Chapter 10	POSNER, Daniel N. and Daniel J. YOUNG (2008). “The Institutionalization of Political Power in Africa.” Journal of Democracy. PREMPEH, H. Kwasi (2008). “Presidents Untamed.” Journal of Democracy.
5/20	Tuesday	YOUNG, Crawford (2012). “The African Postcolonial State: Concluding Reflections.” In The Post-Colonial State in Africa: Fifty Years of Independence, 1960–2010, University of Wisconsin Press (Canvas)	
5/21	Wednesday	BRATTON, Michael (2007). “Formal Versus Informal Institutions in Africa.” Journal of Democracy, 18(3): 96–110.	
5/22	Thursday	Thomson: Chapter 6	
5/23	Friday	Discussion + engaging with the Fragile States Index	

Week 3: Democracy and Political Reform			
		Required readings	Recommended readings
5/26	Monday	** NO CLASS, HOLIDAY **	GYIMAH-BOADI, E. (2015). "Africa's Waning Democratic Commitment." <i>Journal of Democracy</i> . DEVERMONT, Judd and Joshua TEMIN (2019). "Africa's Democratic Moment: The Five Leaders Who Could Transform the Region." <i>Foreign Affairs</i> . BRATTON, Michael (2013). "Where Do Elections Lead?" In <i>Voting and Democratic Citizenship in Africa</i> .
5/27	Tuesday	THOMSON: 11	
5/28	Wednesday	LYNCH, Gabrielle and Gordon CRAWFORD (2011). "Democratization in Africa 1990–2010: An Assessment." <i>Democratization</i> , 18(2): 275–310. In-class review for Exam 1	
5/29	Thursday	LINDBERG, Staffan (2006). "The Surprising Significance of African Elections." <i>Journal of Democracy</i> , 17(1): 139–151.	
5/30	Friday	Exam 1	

Week 4: Politics of Development			
		Required readings	Recommended readings
6/2	Monday	Thomson: Chapter 9	LOPES, Carlos (2013). "Structural Adjustment Policies and Africa: A Reply to Shantayanan Devarajan." <i>Think Africa Press</i> . DEVARAJAN, Shantayanan (2013). "This is How Structural Adjustment Policies Worked in Africa — A Rejoinder to Carlos Lopes." <i>Think Africa Press</i> .
6/3	Tuesday	MOSS, Todd (2011). "The International Aid System." In <i>African Development</i> , Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.	
6/4	Wednesday	SACHS, Jeffrey (2014). "The Case for Aid." <i>Foreign Policy</i> (Canvas)	
6/5	Thursday	MOYO, Dambisa (2009). "Why Foreign Aid is Hurting Africa." <i>Wall Street Journal</i> , March 21. (Canvas)	
6/6	Friday	Discussion Review for Review Essay	

			<p>LEWIS, Peter (2008). "Poverty, inequality, and democracy: Growth without prosperity in Africa." <i>Journal of Democracy</i> 19(4): 95-109.</p> <p>JERVEN, Morten (2014). "Why Saying 'Seven out of Ten Fastest Growing Economies Are in Africa' Carries No Real Meaning." <i>African Arguments</i>.</p>
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Week 5: Politics of Identity			
		Required readings	Recommended readings
6/9	Monday	THOMSON: Chapter 4	<p>AFROBAROMETER (2014). "Support for African Women's Equality Rises: Education, Jobs, and Political Participation Still Unequal."</p> <p>IZAMA, Melina (2014). "The Rise of Morality Politics in Africa: Talk Is Cheap and Dangerous, but Wins Votes." <i>Washington Post: Monkey Cage</i>.</p>
6/10	Tuesday	POSNER, Daniel N. (2004). "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." <i>American Political Science Review</i> , 98(4): 529–545.	
6/11	Wednesday	MCCAULEY, John F. (2012). "Africa's New Big Man Rule? Pentecostalism and Patronage in Ghana." <i>African Affairs</i> , 112(446): 1–21 (Canvas)	
6/12	Thursday	ALIDOU, Ousseina (2021). "Muslim Women's Social Movements in the Sahel." In <i>The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel</i> , pp. 587–603. Oxford University Press (Canvas)	
6/13	Friday	Exam 2	

Week 6: Africa and the Global System			
		Required readings	Recommended readings
6/16	Monday	TAYLOR, Ian (2014). Africa Rising: BRICS—Diversifying Dependency. London: Zed Books (Chapter 1)	DREHER, Axel et al. (2019). “African Leaders and the Geography of China’s Foreign Assistance.” Journal of Development Economics, September: 44–71. LARMER, Brook (2017). “Is China the World’s New Colonial Power?” New York Times, May 2. TEMIN, Jon (2021). “Africa Is Changing – and U.S. Strategy Is Not Keeping Up.” Foreign Affairs, October 8.
6/17	Tuesday	Thomson: Chapter 8	
6/18	Wednesday	--BRAUTIGAM, Deborah (2011). The Dragon’s Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa. New York: Oxford University Press (Introduction) -- SIEGLE, Joseph (2021). “Russia and Africa: Expanding Influence and Instability.” In Russia’s Global Reach: A Security and Statecraft Assessment, pp. 80–90.	
6/19	Thursday	** NO CLASS, HOLIDAY **	
6/20	Friday	Discussion Review Essay due	