

CPO 6206: Graduate Seminar in African Politics

Meeting Time: W 6:15 PM – 9:10 PM

Venue: MAT 0151

Instructor: Dr. Sebastian Elischer

Office: Anderson 320

Office Hours: M: 1:00-3:00 PM

M: 5:00-6:00 PM

W: 4:30-5:30 PM

Email: selischer@ufl.edu

Seminar Description

The seminar examines key issues in contemporary sub-Saharan African politics. Open to all graduate students, it discusses sub-Saharan Africa's political dynamics from a variety of methodological and disciplinary angles. The following reoccurring themes will be at the heart of our weekly meetings: the logic behind and the consequences of European colonialism, the challenges of state formation, the emergence of hybrid political regimes, the dynamics of contemporary political regimes, key features of the continent's political economy, the drivers of violence and conflict, gender in African politics, and the effects of regional cooperation arrangements. The readings are a mix of classic and recent works. To fully grasp their content, students are expected to spend considerable time reading and thinking. Students should feel free to consult and discuss additional material they regard as beneficial to the discussion.

Assignments, and Grading

To follow and to participate in the discussions in class, students need to read the required reading prior to class. As this is a graduate seminar, students lead the class discussions.

All seminar participants select two African countries and regularly provide information on how the topic we discuss unfolds in the two countries of their choice. The exercise is designed to make students transfer their thematic and conceptual knowledge to empirical cases. ***Class attendance (10%) and active participation (20%) account for 30% of the final grade.***

Students provide a thematic review (around 10 pages excluding bibliography; Times New Roman 12; 1.5 line spacing) of a topic that we discuss in class. The thematic review follows the format of a book review. It compares and summarizes 3-5 peer-reviewed sources that students read in addition to the required reading. Students *present their review* in class (around 30 minutes plus Q&A session) and distribute the written review to all participants one week after the oral presentation.

The thematic review (20%) and the oral presentation (10%) account for 30% of the final grade.

Finally, all seminar participants write a research paper on a topic of their choice (15-17 pages excluding bibliography, Times New Roman 12; 1.5 line spacing). By early March all students need to discuss their research assignment with me during my office hours. The research outline for the final assignment (1 page outline plus short bibliography) is due on ***March 13***. The research outline accounts for 10% of the final grade. The due date of the final research paper (30%) is ***April 27***. ***The research outline and the research paper account for 40% of the final grade.***

Assignments: regular attendance (10%), class participation including regular updates on the political trajectory of two African countries (20%), written thematic review (20%) and class presentation (10%), research outline (10%) and final research paper (30%).

For each assignment I will provide more detailed instructions in class

Grading scale

A	93 or above	B	84-86
A-	90-92	B-	81-83
B+	87-89	C+	78-80

Policies

This course complies with all UF academic policies on:

- Attendance and make-up policies
- DRC information
- Assigning grade points
- Gator Eval
- Honesty policy
- In-class recording
- Academic and wellness resources

For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see [this link](#)

Class Calendar

Any session may be subject to change

January 14: Introduction

Introductions, discussion of the syllabus, discussion of your expectations, and initial discussion about the drivers of African politics.

<https://aeon.co/essays/decolonise-political-thought-africas-alternatives-to-liberalism>

The empty ideology. Liberalism hasn't delivered on its promises in Africa. The alternative will be found in ideas rooted in Africa's own soil. ***Please read in preparation for our first meeting.***

January 21: Colonialism and Independence

Foucher, M. (2020). African Borders: Putting Paid to a Myth. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 35(2), 287–306. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2019.1671213>.

PAINE J, QIU X, RICART-HUGUET J. Endogenous Colonial Borders: Precolonial States and Geography in the Partition of Africa. *American Political Science Review*. 2025;119(1):1-20. doi:10.1017/S0003055424000054

Coleman, James (1954). Nationalism in Tropical Africa. *American Political Science Review* 48 (2): 404-426.

Rupert Emerson (1962). Pan-Africanism. *International Organization* 16 (2): 275-290.

Geiss, Imanuel (1969). Pan-Africanism. *Journal of Contemporary History* 4 (1): 187-200.

January 28: State Building and Nationhood

Herbst, Jeffrey (2014). *States and Power in Africa. Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Sebastian Elischer, Weapons of the Weak: How African States Counteract Homegrown Jihadi Salafism, *Journal of Global Security Studies*, Volume 9, Issue 3, September 2024, ogae022, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogae022>

February 4: One Party Rule and Military Dictatorships

Cheeseman, Nicholas (2015). *Democracy in Africa*. Chapter 1 and 3. I will circulate electronic copies of the two chapters.

Peter Anyang' Nyong'o (1992). Africa: The Failure of One-Party Rule. *Journal of Democracy* 3 (1): 90-96.

Bienen, Henry (1967). The Ruling Party in the African One-Party State: TANU in Tanzania. *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 5 (3): 214-230.

McGowan, Patrick (2005). Coups and Conflicts in West Africa, 1955-2004. Part I: Theoretical Perspectives. *Armed Forces & Society* 32.

Clark, John (2007). The Decline of the African Military Coup. *Journal of Democracy* 18 (3): 141-155.

Elischer, S., & Lawrence, B.N. (2022). Reassessing Africa's New Post-Coup Landscape. *African Studies Review* 65 (1): 1-7.

Elischer, S (2026). Toward Praetorian-Led Electoral Authoritarianism? *Democratization* (forthcoming).

February 11: Institutions

Bratton, Michael (2007). Formal versus Informal Institutions in Africa. *Journal of Democracy* 18 (3): 96-110.

Cheeseman, Nic (2018): *Institutions and Democracy in Africa: How the Rules of the Game Shape Political Developments*. New York: Cambridge University Press. I will provide a copy of the required chapters.

Erdmann, Gero and Ulf Engel (2007). Neopatrimonialism Reconsidered: Critical Review and Elaboration of an Elusive Concept. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 45 (1): 95-119.

Bach, Daniel (2011). Patrimonialism and Neopatrimonialism: Comparative Trajectories and Readings. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 49 (3): 275-294.

Pitcher, Anne, Mary Moran, and Michael Johnston (2009). Rethinking Patrimonialism and Neopatrimonialism in Africa. *African Studies Review* 52 (1): 125-156.

February 18: Regime Dynamics in Africa since the early 1990s

Cheeseman, Nicholas (2015). *Democracy in Africa*. Chapter 3. I will circulate electronic copies of the two chapters.

Robinson, Pearl (1994). The National Conference Phenomenon in Francophone Africa. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36 (3): 575-610.

Lynch, Gabrielle and Gordon Crawford (2011). Democratization in Africa 1990–2010: An Assessment. *Democratization* 18 (2): 275-310.

Albaugh, Erika (2011). An autocrat's toolkit: adaptation and manipulation in 'democratic' Cameroon. *Democratization* 18 (2): 388-414.

Reyntjens, Filip (2013). *Political Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda*. New York: Cambridge University Press, Chapter 1 and 2.

Van de Walle, Nicholas and Michael Bratton (1994). *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* USA. Cambridge University Press, Chapter 3 and 6.

February 25: Electoral Politics

Bleck and van de Walle (2019). *Elections in Africa*. Chapter 1, 2, 4 and 8.

Letsa NW. Expressive Voting in Autocracies: A Theory of Non-Economic Participation with Evidence from Cameroon. *Perspectives on Politics*. 2020;18(2):439-453.
doi:10.1017/S1537592719001002

Maltz, Gideon (2007). The Case for Presidential Term Limits. *Journal of Democracy* 18 (1): 128-142.

Gazibo, Mamoudou (2006). The Forging of Institutional Autonomy: A Comparative Study of Electoral Management Commissions in Africa. *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 39 (3): 611-633.

Mattes, Robert, and Michael Bratton (2007). Learning About Democracy in Africa: Awareness, Performance, and Experience. *American Journal of Political Science* 51 (1).

March 4: The Search for Economic Growth

Welz (2021): Chapter 5 and 6.

Mkandawire T. Neopatrimonialism and the Political Economy of Economic Performance in Africa: Critical Reflections. *World Politics*. 2015;67(3):563-612.
doi:10.1017/S004388711500009X

Taylor, Ian (2014): Is Africa Rising? *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 21 (1) (Fall/Winter): 143-161.

Ian Taylor (2019) France à fric: the CFA zone in Africa and neocolonialism, *Third World Quarterly*, 40:6, 1064-1088.

March 11: Conflict I

Welz (2021). Chapter 11

Boone, Catherine, and Lydia Nyeme. "Land institutions and political ethnicity in Africa: evidence from Tanzania." *Comparative Politics* 48.1 (2015): 67-86.

Ahmed, A., & Kuusaana, E. D. (2021). Cattle Ranching and Farmer-herder Conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa: Exploring the Conditions for Successes and Failures in Northern Ghana. *African Security*, 14(2), 132–155. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2021.1955496>

Klaus, Kathleen and Mitchell, MI. (2015): Land grievances and the mobilization of electoral violence: Evidence from Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya. *Journal of Peace Research*, 52(5), 622–635.

Bah, Abu Bakarr (2010). Democracy and Civil War: Citizenship and Peacemaking in Côte d'Ivoire. *African Affairs* 109 (437): 597-615.

Tor A. Benjaminsen & Boubacar Ba (2019) Why do pastoralists in Mali join jihadist groups? A political ecological explanation, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 46:1, 1-20.

No class on March 18 (Spring Break).

March 25: Conflict II

De Bruin, Erica (2022): Power Sharing and Coups d'état in Postconflict Settings: Evidence from Burundi and Guinea-Bissau. *Armed Forces & Society*, Online First.

Roessler, Philip & Ohls, David (2018): Self-Enforcing Power Sharing in Weak States. *International Organization*, 72 (2), 423-454.

Mehler, Andreas (2012). Why Security Forces Do Not Deliver Security. Evidence from Liberia and the Central African Republic. *Armed Forces & Society* 38 (1): 49-69.

Hendrix, Cullen and Salehyan, Idean (2012): Climate change, rainfall, and social conflict in

Africa. *Journal of Peace Research*, 49(1), 35–50.

April 1: Gender and African Politics

Edgell, Amanda (2018): Vying for a Man Seat: Gender Quotas and Sustainable Representation in Africa. *African Studies Review*, 61(1), 185-214.

Erin Accampo Hern (2020): Gender and participation in Africa's electoral regimes: an analysis of variation in the gender gap, *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 8 (2), 293-315.

Kang, A., & Tripp, A. (2018): Coalitions Matter: Citizenship, Women, and Quota Adoption in Africa. *Perspectives on Politics*, 16(1), 73-91.

April 8: Africa in Regional and International Affairs

Harman, Sophie, and William Brown (2013): In From the Margins? The Changing Place of Africa in International Relations? *International Affairs* 89 (1), 69–87.

Hartmann, C. (2017): ECOWAS and the Restoration of Democracy in the Gambia. *Africa Spectrum*, 52(1), 85–99.

Paul D. Williams (2018): Joining AMISOM: why six African states contributed troops to the African Union Mission in Somalia, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 12 (1): 172-192.

Souare, Issaka. 2014. The African Union as a Norm Entrepreneur on Military Coups D'Etat in Africa (1952-2012): An Empirical Assessment. *Journal of Modern African Studies* 52 (1): 69–94.

April 15: Contemporary African Politics

To be determined

No class on April 22. Additional time to work on their final research assignment!