

Government 94PI: Politics of Development in Africa

Fall 2018, CGIS Knafel 401, Wednesday, 3-5 pm

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Office Hours: Tuesday 1.30-2.30 pm and Wednesday, 5-6 pm
Course website: <https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/43773>

Final version

Course description

This seminar is an introduction to the politics and political economy of development in modern Africa. Topics include the legacies of colonial rule, state formation, state failure and conflict, democratization and democratic erosion, corruption and political accountability, and the role of foreign aid. Readings draw from comparative politics, political economy, history, geography, and development economics. The course puts an emphasis on research design and evaluating causal claims.

Course Aims and Objectives

In this course, we will tackle the big questions of political development, using different examples from Sub-Saharan Africa as our case studies. Particular emphasis is put on governance challenges in modern Africa. We will read a mix of classic theories on African politics, cutting edge research articles, and journalistic accounts.

The goal is to learn about specific cases, develop a nuanced understanding of political development in Africa as well as the promises and pitfalls of proposed solutions, learn practical tools for assessing the effectiveness of different interventions, and to walk away with an appreciation for the complexities of development.

Performance will be evaluated on the basis of comprehension of and critical engagement with the reading materials, active participation in class, and writing.

Course Policies and Expectations

You are expected to have read all required readings before class and to actively engage in classroom discussions. You should come prepared to defend or question arguments presented in the readings. Take notes as you read and bring any questions you have on the readings to class. Clarifying questions as well as well-documented counterarguments – from other classes or readings you have done outside of class – are welcome and encouraged. This being an advanced seminar, regular attendance is non-negotiable. If you have a valid reason to miss a class (with

prior excuse) you need to submit a response essay about the material covered in the missed class, due by the beginning of the following class. This essay will count toward your total submissions of response essays.

Materials and Access

You only need to purchase one book for this class:

- Wrong, Michela, 2009. *It's Our Turn to Eat. The Story of a Kenyan Whistleblower.*

All other readings will be available online through the links on Canvas (to download gated articles you need to be on the Harvard network or log in to the library website).

Assignments and Grading Procedures

This is a writing intensive class. Grades will be composed of:

- Participation and map quiz: 20%
- Response essays: 20%
- Book report: 25%
- Final paper: 35%

Participation: You are expected to attend all classes and to actively participate in the discussion of the readings. Every student will pick one country in Sub-Saharan Africa at the beginning of the semester. You will be our in-house country expert for the entire course.

Map quiz: You will be asked to identify ten countries on a blank map of Africa. [Here](#) is a good study tool.

Response essays: The purpose of these essays is to synthesize the week's readings succinctly and to use them to respond to the question posed each week on the syllabus. Synthesizing large quantities of information and writing concisely is one of the most important skills you can learn in college. Response essays should be no longer than two pages (1-inch margins, 12-point font, double-spaced). Bibliographies can be included on a third page. You can write up to three response essays, the best two will be considered for your grade. Response essays are due by the beginning of the relevant class.

Book report: You will write a book report on Michela Wrong's "It's Our Turn to Eat". Book reports should be no longer than 4 pages (1-inch margins, 12-point font, double-spaced). Bibliographies can be included on a fifth page. The report must have an argumentative thesis, which is supported by evidence from the book and secondary sources. Questions for the book report are posted on Canvas.

Final paper: You will write one long research paper, due at the end of the semester. The paper is due in two parts, a two-page outline summarizing your argument and the evidence you plan to present (due November 14), and the final paper (15-20 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins; due TBD). The paper topics are posted on Canvas.

All written assignments, except for response essays, should be submitted through the course website. Late submissions will be reflected in the grade. Response essays will not be accepted after the beginning of class.

Some tips on writing in the social sciences:

[How to Write an Essay](#) (Blattman)

[Good Writing in Political Science. An Undergraduate's Student's Short Illustrated Primer](#) (Farrell)

[Writing Resources for Government Concentrators](#) (GovWrites)

Collaboration and academic integrity policy

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. After all, one key objective of the course is for you to develop your own arguments and practice your writing and critical thinking. You must adhere to the standard citation practices in Political Science and clearly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, speeches etc. that have helped you with your work. If you receive help with your writing, such as for example feedback on drafts, you must also acknowledge this assistance. For more information and exercises, see the [GovWrites website](#).

Technology policy

Given mounting evidence of the [benefits of taking notes by hand](#) and the distraction laptops tend to offer, I encourage you to use pen and paper. While I do not forbid the use of laptops, they should be strictly used for note taking and referencing reading material. Internet should be switched off during class. If laptops prove too much of a distraction I reserve the right to change this policy. Please put your phones on silent and keep them out of reach during class.

Special accommodations

Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the [Accessible Education Office](#) (AEO) and speak with the professor by the end of the second week of the term. Failure to make these arrangements by this date may negatively affect our ability to implement the arrangements on time.

A (non-exclusive) list of resources to stay up to date on African politics

[AfricaUpdate](#), [Al Jazeera Africa](#), [allAfrica](#), [An Africanist Perspective](#), [BBC Africa](#) and [BBC Focus on Africa](#), [Economist](#), [Monkey Cage](#), [New York Times](#), [Washington Post](#)

Course Schedule

Week 1: September 5. Introduction

Week 2: September 12. Initial conditions

How did pre-colonial political institutions and geography shape today's political and economic development?

Binyavanga Wainaina, 2005. [How to Write About Africa](#). *Granta* 92.

Herbst, Jeffrey, 2000. *States and Power in Africa*. (Chapter 2, Power and Space in Precolonial Africa) (see link on Canvas Syllabus page)

[The Road to Hell is Unpaved](#). *The Economist*, 21 December 2002.

Sachs, Jeffrey D., Andrew D. Mellinger, and John L. Gallup, 2001. [The geography of poverty and wealth](#). *Scientific American*, 284(3), pp. 70-5.

Collier, Paul, 2007. *The Bottom Billion*. Oxford, Oxford University Press. (Chapter 3, The Natural Resource Trap) (see link on Canvas Syllabus page)

Further material:

Adichie, Chimamanda, 2009. [The Danger of a Single Story](#). TED Talk

Michalopoulos, Stelios, and Elias Papaioannou, 2013. [Pre-colonial Ethnic Institutions and Contemporary African Development](#). *Econometrica*.

Week 3: September 19. Legacies of slave trade and colonialism

You can begin submitting response essays.

Through which channels did colonialism and the slave trade weaken modern African states?

Moss, Todd, 2007. *African Development*. ([History and the Legacy of Colonialism](#), Chapter 2)

Herbst, Jeffrey, 2000. *States and Power in Africa*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. ([National Design and the Broadcasting of Power](#), Chapter 5)

Nunn, Nathan, 2008. [The Long-Term Effects of Africa's Slave Trades](#). *Quarterly Journal of Economics*.

Mamdani, Mahmood, 1996. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of*

Late Colonialism. Princeton University Press. ([Decentralized Despotism](#), Chapter 2)

Further reading:

Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, James A. Robinson, 2001. [The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation](#). *The American Economic Review*, 91(5).

Moss, Todd, 2007. *African Development*. ([The Complexities and Uncertainties of Development](#), Chapter 1)

Week 4: September 26. Ethnicity

Brief map quiz in class

Through which mechanisms does ethnicity shape modern politics and public goods provision? What are the origins of ethnic cleavages?

Posner, Daniel, 2004. [The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi](#). *American Political Science Review*.

Robinson, A.L., 2014. [National versus Ethnic Identification in Africa: Modernization, Colonial Legacy, and the Origins of Territorial Nationalism](#). *World Politics*, 66(4), pp.709-746.

Habyarimana, James, Macartan Humphreys, Daniel Posner and Jeremy Weinstein, 2007. [Why Does Ethnic Diversity Undermine Public Goods Provision?](#) *American Political Science Review*, 101(4), pp. 709-725

Ichino, Nahomi and Noah Nathan, 2013. [Crossing the Line: Local Ethnic Geography and Voting in Ghana](#). *American Political Science Review*, 107(2), pp. 344-361.

["The Trouble with South Sudan's New Peace Deal"](#), New York Times Opinion, September 24, 2018.

Further reading:

Kasara, Kimuli, 2017. [Does Local Ethnic Segregation Lead to Violence? Evidence from Kenya](#). *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*.

Miguel, Edward, 2004. [Tribe or Nation? Nation Building and Public Goods Provision in Kenya versus Tanzania](#). *World Politics*, 56, pp. 327-62.

Week 5: October 3. State building, taxation, and accountability

Why are many African states weak? What conditions hampered the formation of social contracts between the rulers and the ruled?

Hyden, G., 2012. *African Politics in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge University Press. (Chapter 3)

Sanchez de la Sierra, Raul, Forthcoming. [On the Origins of the State: Stationary Bandits and Taxation in Eastern Congo](#). *Journal of Politics*.

Dincecco, Mark, James E. Fenske, and Massimiliano Gaetano Onorato, 2016. [Is Africa Different? Historical Conflict and State Development](#). CSAE working paper.

North, Douglass C. and Barry R. Weingast, 1989. [Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England](#). *Journal of Economic History*, 49(4), pp. 803-832.

Bates, Robert, 1981. *Markets and States. The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies*. University of California Press. (Introduction and Chapter 1)

Further reading:

Robinson, James A, 2002. [States and Power in Africa by Jeffrey I. Herbst: A Review Essay](#). *Journal of Economic Literature*, 40(2), pp. 510-519.

Week 6: October 10. Democracies, dictatorships, and hybrid regimes

What factors affect whether (African) countries develop into democracies, autocracies, or hybrid regimes?

Moss, Todd, 2007. *African Development*. ([Political Change and Democratization](#), Chapter 5)

Levitsky, Steven and Lucan A. Way, 2010. *Competitive Authoritarianism*. Cambridge University Press. (Chapter 1: [Introduction](#) and Chapter 6: [Africa—Transitions without Democratization](#) (read 2 of the 14 country case studies))

Posner, Daniel and Daniel Young. [Term Limits and the Transfer of Power](#). Forthcoming in Nicholas Cheeseman, Ed. *Politics in Africa: The Importance of Institutions*. Cambridge University Press.

Svolik, Milan, 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge University Press ([Chapter 1](#))

[Africa: A shrinking space for autocrats](#). Financial Times, January 23, 2017

Further reading:

Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson, 2002. [An African Success Story: Botswana](#). In: *In Search of Prosperity: Analytic Narratives on Economic Growth*, ed. D. Rodrik. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Bates, Robert H., John H. Coatsworth, and Jeffrey G. Williamson, 2007. [Lost Decades: Post-independence Performance in Latin America and Africa](#). *The Journal of Economic History*.

Van de Walle, Nicolas, 2001. *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979-1999*. Cambridge University Press.

Week 7: October 17. Democratic consolidation and erosion

Under what conditions do elections promote political accountability?


Tripp, Aili Mari, 2010. *Museveni's Uganda: Paradoxes of power in a hybrid regime*. Lynne Rienner Publishers. ([Introduction and Chapter 1](#))

Harding, Robin and David Stasavage, 2013 [What Democracy Does \(and Doesn't Do\) for Basic Services: School Fees, School Inputs, and African Elections](#). *Journal of Politics*, 76(1), pp. 229–245.

Bratton, Michael and Eric C. C. Chang, 2006. [State Building and Democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa: Forwards, Backwards, or Together?](#) *Comparative Political Studies* 39, p. 1059.

Nathan, Noah. [Electoral Politics and Africa's Urban Transition](#), Cambridge University Press, 2018. [theory chapter]

Further reading:

Magaloni, Beatriz. *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and Its Demise in Mexico* (Cambridge University Press, 2006). [Introduction](#)

["Inside Museveni's Life Presidency Project"](#), The Independent, August 7, 2017.

[Can Burkina Faso — Africa's most coup-prone state — become a stable democracy?](#) *Washington Post*, September 21, 2015

[Uganda's president epitomises Africa's perceived democratic deficit](#) *The Guardian*, January 12, 2016.

[Free universal secondary education in Uganda has yielded mixed results](#), *The Guardian*, October 25, 2011.

[Uganda's success in universal primary education is falling apart](#), *The Guardian*, April 23, 2015

[Patients go private as health sector crumbles](#), *IRIN News*, September 18, 2012

Week 8: October 24. Patronage and corruption: The Case of Kenya

Book reports due before class

Wrong, Michela, 2009. *It's Our Turn to Eat. The Story of a Kenyan Whistleblower*.

Week 9: October 31. Conflict

What are the root causes of conflict on the continent? How have they changed over time?

Bates, Robert H, 2008. *When Things Fell Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa*. Cambridge University Press. (Chapters 1-2)

Roessler, Philip, 2016. *Coup-Civil War Trap*. Cambridge University Press (Introduction, Chapter 1)

Annan, Jeannie and Christopher Blattman, 2016. [Can employment reduce lawlessness and rebellion? A field experiment with high-risk men in a fragile state](#). *American Political Science Review*, 110(1), pp. 1–17.

Blattman, Christopher and Edward Miguel, 2010. [Civil War](#). *Journal of Economic Literature* 48(1), pp. 3-57 (particularly Section 4: Economic legacies of civil conflict)

Further reading:

Blattman, Christopher, 2009. [From Violence to Voting: War and political participation in Uganda](#). *American Political Science Review*, 103(2), pp. 231-247.

Week 10: November 7. Foreign Aid

What are the main arguments of these critics of foreign aid?

Moss, Todd, 2007. *African Development* (The International Aid System, Chapter 8)

Podcast with Binyavanga Wainaina. [The Ethics of Aid: One Kenyan's Perspective](#) (or see transcript)

Moss, Todd, Gunilla Pettersson, and Nicolas Van de Walle, 2006. [An aid-institutions paradox? A review essay on aid dependency and state building in sub-Saharan Africa](#). *Center for Global Development Working Paper 74*.

Moyo, Dambisa, 2009. *Dead Aid*. Chapter 1: The Myth of Aid, Chapter 2: A Brief History of Aid.

Week 11: November 14. Research Design: How do we know what works?

Outline for final paper due

What are the main arguments in favor and against using field experiments to study development interventions?

Angrist, J.D. and Pischke, J.S., 2008. *Mostly harmless econometrics: An empiricist's companion*. Princeton University Press ([Chapters 1-2](#))

Dunning, Thad, 2016. *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences: A Design-Based Approach*. Cambridge University Press ([Chapter 1](#))

Banerjee, Abhijit, and Esther Duflo, 2011. *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty*. Public Affairs ([Chapter 7](#))

Deaton, Angus, 2010. [Instruments of development: Randomization in the tropics, and the search for the elusive keys to economic development](#). *Journal of Economic Literature*, 48, pp. 424–455.

Further reading:

Humphreys, Macartan and Jeremy Weinstein, 2009. [Field Experiments and the Political Economy of Development](#). *Annual Review of Political Science*, 12, pp. 367-378.

Fearon, James D., Macartan Humphreys, and Jeremy M. Weinstein, 2009. [Can Development Aid Contribute to Social Cohesion After Civil War? Evidence from a Field Experiment in Post-Conflict Liberia](#). *American Economic Review*, 99(2), pp. 287-291.

November 21: Thanksgiving recess

Week 12: November 28. (How) can governance be improved?

Olken and Pande conceptualize accountability problems as principal-agent problems. Which principal-agent problems do they mention? What kinds of interventions have been tested to improve them? What are their potentials and pitfalls?

Olken, Benjamin A., and Rohini Pande, 2012. [Corruption in Developing Countries](#). *Annual Review of Economics*, 4(1), pp. 479–509.

Banerjee, Abhijit, and Esther Duflo, 2011. *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty*. Public Affairs. ([Policies, Politics](#), Chapter 10)

Raffler, Pia, 2016. [Does Political Oversight of the Bureaucracy Increase Accountability? Field Experimental Evidence from an Electoral Autocracy](#). Working paper.

Further reading:

Pande, Rohini, 2011. [Can informed voters enforce better governance? Experiments in Low Income Democracies](#). *Annual Review of Economics*, 3(1), pp. 215-237.

Björkman, Martina and Jakob Svensson, 2009. [Power to the People: Evidence from a Randomized Field Experiment of Community-Based Monitoring in Uganda](#). *Quarterly Journal of Economics*.

Week 13: December 5. Climate change and migration

What are the main implications of climate change in Sub-Saharan Africa?

Climate change

[Five ways climate change could affect Africa](#), BBC News, 11 December 2015

Müller, C., Cramer, W., Hare, W.L. and Lotze-Campen, H., 2011. [Climate change risks for African agriculture](#). *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 108(11), pp.4313-4315.

[CO2 and other greenhouse gas emissions](#), Our World in Data

[Overview: climate change](#), World Bank

Migration

[The Paradox of Prosperity](#), Foreign Policy 2017 (recommended: see also the other parts of the [series](#))

Climate change and migration

Barrios, S., Bertinelli, L. and Strobl, E., 2006. [Climatic change and rural-urban migration: The case of sub-Saharan Africa](#). *Journal of Urban Economics*, 60(3), pp.357-371.

[Out of Africa](#). A National Geographic Documentary by Thomas Friedman (This is a non-academic piece. You may find some claims convincing and others less so.)

A task for everyone: Select one case where environmental changes have affected livelihoods in Africa and be ready to briefly discuss it in class. What environmental changes are taking place? How are they affecting livelihoods? What are the political downstream effects? Are any solutions in sight?

Further reading:

Bryan, G., Chowdhury, S. and Mobarak, A.M., 2014. [Underinvestment in a profitable technology: The case of seasonal migration in Bangladesh](#). *Econometrica*, 82(5), pp.1671-1748.

Chassang, S. and Padro-i-Miquel, G., 2009. [Economic shocks and civil war](#). *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 4(3), pp.211-228.

December 16: Final papers due