

# Government 1135: Politics of Development in Africa

Spring 2021, Tuesday & Thursday, 1.30-2.45 pm

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Office Hours: Monday 9.40-12.40 (schedule at <https://calendly.com/piaraffler/oh>), Thursday after class (no appointment necessary)

Course website: <https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/70211>

## Course description

This lecture 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, the role of foreign aid, climate change, and migration. Readings draw from comparative politics, political economy, history, geography, and development economics. The course puts an emphasis on research design, evaluating causal claims, and evidence-based policy solutions.

## Course Aims and Objectives

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 goals of the course are fourfold:

- 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.

## Course Policies and Expectations

You are expected to:

- Attend lectures and sections. If you are unable to participate in lectures due to time zone issues, let me know in advance and we will find another arrangement.

- Have read all required readings *before* class and to actively engage in classroom discussions and the online discussion board. You should come prepared to defend or question the arguments presented in the readings.
- Complete assignments on time.
  - Exceptions are made only with prior approval for excused absences.

## 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

Performance will be evaluated on the basis of comprehension of and critical engagement with the reading materials, active participation in class and section, and assignments. In particular, grades will be composed of:

- Participation: 25%
- Presentation: 20%
- Midterm: 25%
- Final: 30%

**Participation (25%):** The participation grade will factor in participation in the lecture and section, the discussion board, and your grade on a brief map quiz.

In class and section: You are expected to attend classes and sections and to actively participate in the discussion of the readings. If you are unable to participate in lectures due to time zone issues, let me know in advance and we will find another arrangement. For students in time zones making regular lecture attendance challenging, I will ensure face-to-face time through office hours and group Q&A sessions. Lectures will be recorded and made available as needed.

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 and will conduct independent research tasks about your focus country.

Discussion board: We will have an online discussion board for the readings on Slack, to which you are expected to contribute regularly.

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

**Presentation (20%):** You will sign up for one topic. You will apply the arguments discussed in the relevant readings to your focus country and then collaborate with others in your group to work out the similarities and differences across your respective countries.

**Midterm exam (25%):** The midterm asks you to critically engage with the material covered thus far. It will consist of a combination of short questions assessing factual knowledge about the core concepts discussed in class and essay questions.

**Final exam (30%):** The final exam is cumulative. Like the midterm, it will consist of a combination of short questions assessing factual knowledge about the core concepts discussed in class and essay questions.

All written assignments should be submitted through the course website. Late submissions will be reflected in the grade.

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

To mimic a physical classroom, I ask everyone to keep their cameras on during class and section. To help you focus, turn off other apps, emails, and notifications. Please put your phones on silent and keep them out of reach.

## Special accommodations

If you need academic adjustments or accommodations because of a disability, let me know by the end of the second week of the term and we will figure things out together.

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](#)

Reading regression tables: [Finding the line](#), [EGAP: 10 things to know about reading regressions tables](#)

## TOPICS AND READINGS

Below is a list of the topics we'll cover and the associated readings. You should complete and critically engage with the relevant readings prior to the lecture on the listed date. You will further digest the assigned readings in the section. *Further readings* are just that: Suggested readings if you want to learn more about a given topic. Consider them a service to you. You will not be expected to have read them, nor will they factor into exams.

### Topic 1: Initial conditions

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

#### January 26

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

Chimamanda Adichie: [The Danger of a Single Story](#) (Ted Talk)

Herbst, Jeffrey, 2000. [States and Power in Africa](#). (Chapter 2, Power and Space in Precolonial Africa)

#### January 28

[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)

*Further reading:*

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

Michalopoulos, S. and Papaioannou, E., 2013. [Pre-Colonial Ethnic Institutions and Contemporary African Development](#). *Econometrica*, 81(1).

More on [pre-colonial societies in West Africa](#)

## Topic 2: Legacies of slave trade and colonialism

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

### February 2

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) <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

### February 2

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) <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

*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).

Lowes, Sara and Eduardo Montero, 2018. [Blood Rubber: The Effects of Labor Coercion on Institutions and Culture in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#). *Working paper*.

["It's been 50 years since the British left. Why are so many African judges still wearing wigs?"](#) Washington Post, 9/18/2017

## Topic 3: Ethnicity

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

### February 9

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.

## February 11

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.

## Topic 4: 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?*

## February 16

Hyden, G., 2012. *African Politics in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge University Press. (Chapter 3: [The Problematic State](#) and Chapter 5: [Big Man Rule](#))

Sanchez de la Sierra, Raul, Forthcoming. [On the Origins of the State: Stationary Bandits and Taxation in Eastern Congo](#). *Journal of Politics*. (*in general: no need to read the appendices*)

## February 18

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.

*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.

Bates, Robert, 1981. [Markets and States](#). The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies. University of California Press. (Chapters 5-7)

## Topic 5: Democracies, dictatorships, and hybrid regimes

*What factors affect whether (African) countries develop into democracies, autocracies, or hybrid regimes? Which strategies do autocrats use to consolidate and stay in power?*

### February 23

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 any 2 of the 14 country case studies))

### February 25

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

Posner, Daniel and Daniel Young, 2018. [Term Limits and the Transfer of Power](#). In: Nicholas Cheeseman, Ed. *Politics in Africa: The Importance of Institutions*. Cambridge University Press.

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

*Further reading:*

[A continent remade](#), New York Times Interactive, February 2020

De Mesquita, B.B. and Smith, A., 2011. The dictator's handbook: why bad behavior is almost always good politics. *Public Affairs*. Read Chapter 1 [online](#)

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. [L]  
[SEP]

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

## Topic 6: Democratic consolidation and erosion

*Under what conditions do elections promote political accountability?*

### March 2

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.

### March 4

Nathan, Noah. [Electoral Politics and Africa's Urban Transition](#), Cambridge University Press, 2018. Chapter 1. [Optional: [Chapter 9](#)]

Read either option 1 or option 2:

Option 1: 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.

Option 2:

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

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

[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

*Further reading:*

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

## Topic 7: Patronage and corruption. The case of Kenya

### March 9 and 11

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

### March 16: Wellness day, no classes

## Topic 8: Conflict

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

### March 18

[Conflict trends in Africa](#), 1989-2017, PRIO.

Bates, Robert H, 2008. [When Things Fell Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa](#). Cambridge University Press. (Chapter 2, Chapter 1 optional) <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

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

### March 23

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:*

[\*Portraits of Rwandan Genocide Survivors\*](#). *Humans of New York*.

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

Lowes, Sara, and Eduardo Montero. 2018. "[Blood Rubber](#)". Working paper.

## Topic 9: Research Design. How do we know what works?

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

### March 25

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)

### March 30

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.

Andrabi, T., Das, J. and Khwaja, A.I., 2017. [Report cards: The impact of providing school and child test scores on educational markets](#). *American Economic Review*.

## Topic 10: Foreign Aid

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

### April 1

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

Nunn, Nathan, 2020. [Restraining Ourselves: Helping by Not Hurting](#).

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

### April 6

Moyo, Dambisa, 2009. [\*Dead Aid\*](#). Chapter 10: Making Development Happen. Optional: Chapter 2: A Brief History of Aid.

[China in Africa](#). Backgrounder, Council on Foreign Relations, 2017.

[Advocates Highlight Foreign Aid's Success Stories Amid Talk of Cuts](#). NPR, September 13, 2017.

[Is Cash Better for Poor People Than Conventional Foreign Aid?](#) New York Times, September 12, 2018

[Most of Us Are Wrong About How the World Has Changed](#). Our World in Data.

[How the 'white-savior industrial complex' failed Liberia's girls](#). Vox, October 24, 2018.

*Research task: Find one case of a successful aid program and one of an unsuccessful one (beyond those described in the readings). What did they set out to achieve? In which ways did they succeed/fail? Why?*

*Further reading and watching:*

[When China Met Africa](#). An award-winning documentary on China's foray into African development (highly recommended)

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.

Banerjee, A.V. and Duflo, E., 2011. [Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty](#). Public Affairs. Chapter 1: Think Again, Again. Chapter 11: Conclusion.

## Topic 11: (How) Can governance be improved?

*Olken and Pande conceptualize accountability problems as a set of nested principal-agent problems, (1) from citizens to politicians and (2) from politicians to bureaucrats. What kinds of interventions have been tested to improve them? What are their potentials and pitfalls?*

### April 8

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)

### April 13

Raffler, Pia, 2019. [Does Political Oversight of the Bureaucracy Increase Accountability?](#) Field Experimental Evidence from an Electoral Autocracy. Working paper.

Platas, Melina and Pia Raffler, 2020. [Closing the Gap: Information and Mass Support in a Dominant Party Regime](#). *Journal of Politics*.

#### *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*.

### April 15: Wellness day. No classes

## Topic 12: Climate change

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

### April 20

[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

*Research task:* Select one case where environmental changes have affected livelihoods in your focus country 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?

## Topic 13: Migration

**April 22**

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

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.)

*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.

## Recap

**April 27: What have we learned? What are the most promising approaches to promoting development in Africa?**

May 10: Final exam due