

PLS 343: POLITICS OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Nazarbayev University

Spring 2023

BASIC INFORMATION

Professor: Karol Czuba

Classes: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 5–5.50 pm, 8.322

Office hours: Monday, 3.30–4.30 pm, and Wednesday and Friday, 9.30–10.30 am, 6.214; you can optionally book an appointment with me here: <https://karolczuba.youcanbook.me>

Contact: Moodle forum and messages

OUTLINE

This course is designed to introduce you to the politics of contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa and to provide you with an opportunity to think critically about how context affects political behavior and institutions. We will explore the phenomena that help to explain politics in Africa, across some 50 countries and nearly one billion people. I hope that the course will inspire in you a lasting interest in Africa and African politics.

The course addresses some key questions in African politics:

- What are the legacies of the continent's precolonial and colonial political history?
- Why is the capacity of African states generally low?
- What explains the limited accountability of African politicians and states?
- How do African politicians mobilize political support and stay in power?
- Why have some African countries experienced high levels of political violence while others have not?
- What explains the patterns of economic development in Africa?
- How effectual have been Africans' efforts to challenge the political status quo?

In the first part of the course, we will review Africa's recent political history, focusing on the impacts of colonization and on the types of states that have emerged from the continent's colonial experience and evolved in the subsequent decades. In the second part, we will turn to the challenges that postcolonial governments face as they attempt to manage the interests of diverse societies and reform their economies and political institutions. Throughout the course, we will pay particular attention to the continent's diversity and to the substantial cross-country and sub-national variation that we will observe during our discussions of all of the topics covered by the course.

OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The course has multiple objectives, which correspond to the knowledge and skills that you should attain during the semester. By the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. Identify the key phenomena that have shaped contemporary African politics.
2. Know some notable scholarly contributions intended to explain important aspects of African politics.
3. Develop your own perspective on these issues.
4. Productively contribute to your own and fellow students' learning through careful and critical engagement with the course material, presentations, and active participation in class discussions.
5. Conduct your own research, develop and substantiate arguments, and communicate your analysis and findings through both speaking and writing.

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

This is an introductory course in that I do not assume that you will have any prior knowledge of Africa and African politics and in that we will only address a small fraction of the many political and socioeconomic phenomena relevant to the subject matter, theories intended to explain those phenomena, and rich empirical evidence that scholars and others have collected in different settings. At the same time, this course will challenge you. We will cover concepts, theories, explanations, and empirical evidence that may be difficult to understand. To make sense of the course content, you will need to build on the skills that you have already begun to develop and to think about it carefully, logically, critically, and creatively. In other words, you will need to think like a social scientist.

This is a difficult set of skills to acquire and I am committed to helping you develop it. I fully expect that some of the material I ask you to absorb and the tasks I want you to complete will be challenging and confusing. Indeed, I will expose you to new content and ways of knowing and thinking precisely so that you come up against and grapple with the limits of your own understanding. All this new-ness can be destabilizing and disorienting. This is good because not having the knowledge and skills needed to decipher social reality forces us to learn, to discard erroneous preconceptions, to make sense of existing explanations and develop new ones, to collect new empirical evidence that challenges our assumptions, and to communicate what we have learned to others through careful and clear writing and speaking based on evidence, rather than emotional arguments. I welcome your every question about any aspect of the course and this learning process, but you will also need to work hard to benefit from and do well in the course.

Involvement in class activities is an integral and necessary component of learning in the course. Active learning fosters students' ability to think clearly, logically, and critically and develop essential analytical skills. Because my students are active participants in their learning, I expect you to be prepared for, attend, and productively contribute to our classes.

Equally important to this learning process is the development of your ability to conduct your own research. I have designed the assignments in this course so that you will not only have to demonstrate your knowledge of the course material, but also collect additional empirical evidence,

critically assess scholarly arguments, develop your own perspective, and—since academic work is a collaborative endeavor—present your analysis and findings in a coherent and articulate manner.

SYLLABUS ADJUSTMENTS

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may disrupt my plans for the course. I also welcome your feedback and suggestions for changes to the course that you think would facilitate your learning. For these reasons, the syllabus is subject to change—at any time during the semester and at my discretion. I will endeavor to notify you of any syllabus adjustments as far in advance as possible.

CLASS ORGANIZATION

The exceptional circumstances may also require changes to the usual course schedule and organization of classes. In general, we will meet in person three times a week. On Mondays and some Wednesdays, I will deliver lectures. You will give presentations on Wednesdays, when—time-permitting—we will also start discussions of each week’s material. Fridays will be fully devoted to those discussions, intended to ensure your active engagement with course material and help you to make sense of lectures and readings. Participation in class discussions is mandatory, as is attendance of all (synchronous) classes. I will measure your engagement by administering quizzes on the content of readings and lectures in some classes. Your class involvement grade will reflect your performance on those quizzes as well as your active participation in class discussions.

Depending on the epidemiological situation and prevailing regulations, some classes may be held online. Online lectures will be fully asynchronous; I will make them available to you before scheduled class time. Online seminars will be synchronous and held on Zoom during scheduled class time.

All course readings and other content that you will need in the course are available online.

I hope that this organization of classes will help all of you to engage with course material. I am also always available to discuss specific challenges that you may encounter at any point during the semester.

ASSESSMENT

OVERVIEW

Grading scheme

Research project proposal	5%
Research project essay:	
Initial draft	15%
Final draft	20%

Map quiz	5%
Term test	15%
Final exam	15%
Presentation	10%
Class involvement	15%

Research project submission deadlines

Proposal	February 22
Essay:	
Initial draft	March 29
Final draft	April 26

Quiz, test, and exam dates

Map quiz	January 27
Term test	February 17
Final exam	TBA

ASSESSMENT DETAILS

Research project

The research project is the main assignment in the course. Its primary purpose is to help you to develop your research skills, gain hands-on experience of conducting your own research, and, in the process, consolidate your knowledge and understanding of African politics. The project has three components: a research proposal and two drafts—initial and final—of the research essay.

Research project proposal

The purpose of the research proposal is to assist you in selecting an essay question from a list that I will provide, locating sources, and organizing your ideas as well as to provide you with feedback about your work that you can use as you prepare your research essay. Each proposal should be 1 page long. It should: a) identify your selected question; b) state your thesis; c) outline the key arguments that you intend to advance in support of that thesis; and d) explain what scholarly and nonacademic sources you will draw on in your research essay. You should attach a one-page proposed bibliography to your proposal. You do not need to have read all the sources prior to proposal submission, but you will need to justify your choices.

Research project essay

In the research essay you will answer one of the questions provided by me. You will build on the work you did while preparing the research proposal and develop a cogent argument that demonstrates your knowledge of the existing scholarship on the topic and ability to use empirical evidence found in secondary sources to develop your own explanation.

The research essay must be on the same topic as the research proposal. The essay should be 10-12 pages long and follow the standard structure of a university essay. It should draw upon at least 20-25 *academic* sources; you may also use nonacademic sources.

Assessment of the essay will be in two parts.

First, you will prepare and submit to me an initial draft of your research essay.

Second, you will revise the essay based on feedback that you will receive from me. The second grade for the essay will reflect the improvement that you have made to the assignment as well as the quality of your research and presentation and the cogency of your argument.

Map quiz

You will be asked to identify from memory several African countries and their former colonial powers by filling in a blank map. This exercise is designed to ensure that you are familiar with the countries that we will discuss in the course.

Term test and final exam

The term test and final exam will both comprise short-answer questions intended to test your familiarity with material covered in the lectures and readings.

Presentation

Presentations will take place during Wednesday classes. Together with one or two fellow students in the course, you will give one ten-minute-long presentation that will examine the topic that we consider in a particular week through the lens of an African country of your choice.

Class involvement

The class involvement grade will reflect the productive contributions that you make to our seminar discussions. During the discussions you will need to demonstrate that you have read and reflected on the readings, paid attention to the content introduced by me in lectures, and carefully listened to your fellow students' contributions as well as ask questions and offer your own answers and analysis on class topics. To help you prepare for classes, before some seminars I may place discussion questions on Moodle.

Needless to say, you must show up to be a part of the shared intellectual work of the course. I expect you to attend every scheduled class meeting. See the Policies section of the syllabus for exceptions.

In some seminars I will administer quizzes to ask a few questions about the content of course readings or other relevant course content. These are low-stakes exercises intended to ensure and measure your engagement with course material. The quizzes will not be announced in advance and they cannot be made up if you miss a seminar or are not online at the start of the scheduled class time, no matter the reason. The quiz in which you did worst during the semester will not count towards your final grade.

Particularly helpful Moodle forum posts may also count towards your class involvement grade.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Writing standard

Development of the ability to express your ideas and knowledge in writing is a key component of your university education. Your grade is dependent on you turning in assignments that clearly convey your analysis and findings using standard language, format, citation style, etc. I encourage you to work with the Writing Center to improve your writing. I will use my discretion in requiring students to use the Writing Center if assignments are consistently poorly written.

Research support

University librarians are available to help you locate appropriate scholarly sources, learn to use reference management software, and perform other foundational research tasks. You can schedule an appointment with a librarian here: <https://nu-kz.libcal.com/appointments/>. Alternatively, you can reach out directly to April Manabat, the subject librarian for Political Science; her email address is april.manabat@nu.edu.kz.

Assignment formatting

All assignments should be double-spaced with one-inch margins in Times New Roman 12-point font. All citations should follow the American Political Science Association Style Manual (<https://connect.apsanet.org/stylemanual/>).

Assignment submission

You will submit all assignments on Moodle. Every assignment should be submitted by 11.59 pm on the day that assignment is due.

I strongly advise you to keep rough and draft work *and* final copies of all of your assignments. You should keep all assignments until the marked assignments have been returned to you and the grades have been posted.

Late submission

I will apply a late submission penalty of 1% of the assignment grade per weekday (Monday to Friday) to the components of the research project submitted after the submission deadline.

I will not accept late submission of the map quiz, term test, and the final exam.

Assignment return

I will grade and return all assignments submitted on time no later than two weeks after submission.

Grade appeals

If you wish to appeal your grade for any assignment, you should approach me no earlier than 72 hours and no later than two weeks after that assignment was returned to you. To appeal the grade, please submit a 150–200-word written explanation of why you wish to have the grade reviewed to me. I will decide whether or not to review the grade based on the strength of your argument. If I decide to review the grade, I may keep the grade that you originally received, reduce it, or increase it.

Grading scale

A	95-100%
A-	90-94%
B+	85-89%
B	80-84%
B-	75-79%
C+	70-74%
C	65-69%
C-	60-64%
D	55-59%
D-	50-54%
F	0-49 %

POLICIES

Contact

I strongly encourage you to raise questions not answered by the syllabus during classes and office hours.

You are very welcome to stop by my office during office hours anytime you wish to speak with me. These office hours are open to all students. If you prefer to speak with me privately, please make a booking on my [youcanbook.me](#) page.

I am also happy to answer short questions via the course forum on Moodle or Moodle messages. If your question is of general interest, you should post it in the forum, which I hope will become a useful source of information for students in the course. Questions that require more than one short response should be addressed during classes or office hours. I will respond to forum posts and messages within one full working day. I have every confidence that you know better than to message your professors to ask questions answered in the syllabus. To streamline electronic communications in the course, you should only use Moodle to contact me. If you email me, I may miss your message; I will also only respond to your questions via Moodle messages.

Attendance

I expect you to participate in every scheduled class meeting (except asynchronous online lectures) and I will take attendance.

You may have up to three emergency absences before your grade is negatively affected. These absences may be used for any reason. The three emergency absence dates are “no questions asked”; that is, you do not need to communicate with me the reasons for your absence.

Except for documented medical emergencies, each additional absence will result in a reduction of your overall class involvement grade by 25%. I will also reduce your class involvement grade if you habitually arrive late or leave early.

It is your responsibility to obtain from fellow students notes on the material covered in classes that you miss.

Academic misconduct

Academic misconduct is defined broadly, to include a wide variety of behaviors that conflict with the values and mission of NU. Students should become familiar with the NU Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (Student Code), which is the official document outlining policies and procedures around academic misconduct at NU. Students are responsible for complying with NU policies, as well as those described in the syllabus for an individual class, whether the student has read them or not.

Copyright and data protections

The materials that I create for the course and share with you are my intellectual property and are to be used solely for your learning in the course. The materials may not be reproduced or shared with others outside the course without my written permission.

Online copies of student assignments and other student data will only be stored on university servers or using services (such as Google Drive and Moodle) governed by NU's data protection policies.

SCHEDULE AND READINGS

All readings are available online through Moodle or links in the syllabus. There is no textbook assigned in this course.

Please pay attention to specified page numbers; in many cases only a section of a particular reading is required.

All readings listed in the syllabus are required.

I am likely to amend the schedule and readings to align them better with the learning needs of students in the course. For this reason, the schedule is tentative and likely to change as we move through the course material this semester.

PART I. HISTORICAL LEGACIES

Week 1: Introduction to African politics

Hyden, Goran. 2013. Chapter 1 ("The Study of Politics and Africa") in *African Politics in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–21.

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. 2009. "The Danger of a Single Story." Video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg/>.

Wainaina, Binyavanga. 2005. "How to Write About Africa." *Granta* 92.
<https://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/>.

Seay, Laura. 2012. "How Not to Write About Africa." *Foreign Policy*, April 25.
<https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/04/25/how-not-to-write-about-africa/>.

Week 2: Precolonial Africa

- Evans-Pritchard, E. E., 1940. Chapter 4 (“The Political System”) in *The Nuer. A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 139–142, 147–150, and 172–184.
- Herbst, Jeffrey. 2000. Chapter 2 (“Power and space in precolonial Africa”) in *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 35–57.

Week 3: Colonialism in Africa

- Young, Crawford. 1994. Chapters 1 (“Bula Matari and the Contemporary African Crisis,” Section 1: “Bula Matari: The Origins”) and 4 (“Constructing Bula Matari”) in *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 1–2, 77–80, 95–113, and 138–140.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. 1996. Chapter 2 (“Decentralized Despotism”) in *Citizen and Subject*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, Chapter 2, pp. 37–44 and 49–61.
- Herbst, Jeffrey. 2000. Chapter 3 (“The Europeans and the African Problem”) in *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 58–96.

Week 4: Decolonization and nation-building

- Freund, Bill. 1984. Chapter 9 (“The Decolonization of Africa: 1940-60”) in *The Making of Contemporary Africa*. London: Macmillan Press, pp. 191–233. (skim 217–233)
- Bates, Robert. 1983. Chapter 4 (“The Commercialization of Agriculture and the Rise of Rural Protest”) in *Essays on the Political Economy of Rural Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 92–104.
- Herbst, Jeffrey. 2000. Chapter 4 (“The Political Kingdom in Independent Africa”) in *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 97–103.

Week 5: African states and Africa’s states-system

- Herbst, Jeffrey. 2000. Chapters 1 (“The Challenge of State Building in Africa”) and 4 (“The Political Kingdom in Independent Africa”) in *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 15–28 (skim pp. 21-28) and pp. 103–113.
- Jackson, Robert and Carl Rosberg. 1982. “Why Africa’s Weak States Persist: The Empirical and Juridical in Statehood.” *World Politics* 35(1): 1-24. (skim pp. 2–21)
- Ensminger, Jean. 1996. Chapter 6 (“Collective Action: From Community to State”) in *Making a Market: The Institutional Transformation of an African Society*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 143–165.

Week 6: Part I review and term test

PART II. KEY ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN POLITICS

Week 7: Authoritarianism, neopatrimonialism, and state-society relations

- Bratton, Michael, and Nicholas Van de Walle. 1997. Chapter 2 (“Neopatrimonial Rule”) in *Democratic Experiments in Africa*, pp. 61–68.
- Wantchekon, Leonard. 2003. “Clientelism and Voting Behavior: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Benin.” *World Politics* 55: 399–403, 406–407, 413–414, and 421–422.
- Arriola, Leonardo. 2009. “Patronage and Political Stability in Africa,” *Comparative Political Studies*, 42(10): 1339–1341, 1341–1349, and 1358–1359. (skim pp. 1349–1358)

Week 8: Politics of identity: ethnicity, nationality, and race

- Ekeh, Peter. 1975. “Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17: 91–112.
- 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* 98(4): 529–530 and 543–544. (skim pp. 530–543)
- Miguel, Edward. 2004. “Tribe or Nation? Nation-Building and Public Goods in Kenya versus Tanzania,” *World Politics* 56(3): 327–328, 335–339, and 360–362. (skim other pages)

Week 9: Politics of identity: gender and religion

- Maxwell, David. 2000. “‘Catch the Cockerel before Dawn’: Pentecostalism and Politics in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 70(2): 249–251 and 273–274. (skim pp. 251–273, paying close attention to the main claims within subheadings)
- Turkington, Rebecca. 2018. “A Step Forward for Women in African Politics.” *Council on Foreign Relations Blog*, October 25. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/step-forward-women-african-politics>.
- Arriola, Leonardo and Martha Johnson. 2014. “Ethnic Politics and Women’s Empowerment in Africa: Ministerial Appointments to Executive Cabinets.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 58 (2): 495–499 and 507–508. (skim pp. 499–507)

Week 10: Political violence

- Pinaud, Clémence. 2021. Introduction (“From Predation to Genocide”) and Conclusion (“Ethnic Supremacy and Genocidal Conquest”) in *War and Genocide in South Sudan*. Ithaca New York: Cornell University Press, pp. 1–16 and 215–224.
- Strauss, Scott. 2012. “Wars Do End! Changing Patterns of Political Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa.” *African Affairs*, 111/443 (April): 179–201.

Week 11: Economic development

- Collier, Paul and Willem Jan Gunning. 1999. “Why Has Africa Grown Slowly?” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 13: 31, pp. 3–22.
- Robert Bates, 1981. Introduction and Chapters 2 (“The Food Sector”), 5 (“The Market as Political Arena and the Limits of Voluntarism”), 6 (“Rental Havens and Protective Shelters”), 7 (“The Origins of Political Marginalism”), and 8 (“Commonalities and Variations”) in *Markets and*

States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 1–6, 43–44, 81–82, 96–97, 103–113, 120–121. (skim pp. 82–90)

Robinson, James and Soeren J. Henn. 2021. “Africa’s Latent Assets.” *VoxEU*, April 26. <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/africas-latent-assets/>.

Week 12: Democratization

Gibson, Clark C. 2002. “Of Waves and Ripples: Democracy and Political Change in Africa in the 1990s.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 5 (1): 201–21.

Week 13: African democracy in practice

Van de Walle, Nicolas. 2003. “Presidentialism and Clientelism in Africa’s Emerging Party Systems.” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41(2): 297–321.

Cheeseman, Nic and Sishuwa Sishuwa. 2021. “Africans Want Consensual Democracy—Why is That Reality So Hard to Accept?” *Democracy in Africa*, July 13. <https://democracyin africa.org/africans-want-consensual-democracy-why-is-that-reality-so-hard-to-accept/>.

Mueller, Lisa. 2018. “Introduction: The Puzzle of Africa’s Third Wave of Protests” in *Political Protest in Contemporary Africa*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–24.

Week 14: Recent trends in African politics

Cheeseman, Nic. 2020. “A Changing of the Guards or a Change of Systems?” Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung.

Gyimah-Boadi, Emmanuel. 2015. “Africa’s Waning Democratic Commitment.” *Journal of Democracy*. 26 (1): 101–113.

Matfess, Hilary. 2015. “Rwanda and Ethiopia: Developmental Authoritarianism and the New Politics of African Strong Men.” *African Studies Review* 58 (2): 181–191.

Albaugh, Erika. 2011. “An Autocrat’s Toolkit: Adaptation and Manipulation in ‘Democratic’ Cameroon.” *Democratization* 18 (2): 388–391 and 405–406. (skim pp. 391–405, paying close attention to the main claims within subheadings)

Week 15: Review