

Political Science 391W
African Political Systems
Prof. Griffiths
Spring 2008

This course examines the major issues facing sub-Saharan Africa including the political and economic legacy of colonialism, military intervention in politics, ethnic/communal conflict, and the challenges these problems pose to democratization and development. Africa's role in the world, especially its low level of participation in the international economy and its growing strategic importance are also examined. The emphasis is on understanding the challenges facing sub-Saharan Africa in the context of Africa's history, political culture, and its role in the world.

The class format will be a combination of lecture and discussion with an emphasis on discussion. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned material. The reading will consist of a basic text as well as works of fiction and non-fiction. Readings will be supplemented by videos to gain a better understanding of contemporary Africa. Class attendance is **essential**.

After completing the course, students will be able to do the following:

- understand the impact of colonialism on Africa
- discuss the consolidation of state power during the independence era and its implications
- analyze the connection between Africa's historical experience and current circumstances on the continent
- assess Africa's prospects for stability and democracy

Texts- *An Introduction to African Politics* by Alex Thomson; *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe; *A Continent for the Taking* by Howard W. French. There may also be additional reserve readings. Students are also required to keep up with current events in Africa through the internet, for instance the BBC World Service Africa Page, and by reading *The Economist* or a national daily newspaper such as *The New York Times* on a regular basis.

Requirements- The emphasis of this class is on sharpening students' writing skills and there will be a variety of written assignments throughout the semester. Each student will be required to prepare a 12-15 page research paper on a **current** African topic of their choice. The topics should be cleared with me before beginning the research. This should take place no later than 1/30/08. A 1-2 page proposal/draft introduction with a preliminary annotated bibliography will be due 2/4/08. A first draft of the paper will be due 3/7/08. The final draft will be due 4/14/08. Late assignments will be penalized. Students will also choose a sub-Saharan African country and prepare a 5-8 page historical, political, economic, and social profile of the country along with a summary of recent developments within the country. Details regarding this assignment will be distributed in an additional handout. There will also be shorter writing assignments such as a summary/analysis of the readings and videos. Finally, there will also be a take-home final exam. Electronic submissions of assignments will not be accepted without prior permission. Class participation is encouraged and can help your final grade.

Grading- I grade on a ten-point scale. The approximate weight of these requirements will be:

Intro/Proposal- 10%
Country Profile- 20%
Final Essay- 25%

Paper- 30%
Summaries/Critiques- 15%

Reading Assignments- Week of:

- 1/14- Introduction. Thomson, ch.1; Achebe, part 1.
- 1/21- Historical Background. Thomson, ch. 2; Achebe, parts 2-3.
- 1/28- Decolonization and Independence. Thomson, ch. 3.
- 2/4- Ethnicity, Religion, & Class. Thomson, ch. 4-5.
- 2/11- Methods of Governing. Thomson, ch. 6;
- 2/18- The Role of the Military. Thomson, ch. 7.
- 2/25- The Cold War Era. Thomson, ch. 8.
- 3/3- Crisis of the State. Thomson, ch. 10.
- 3/17-3/24- Chaos in West and Central Africa. French, Intro. & ch. 1-5.
- 3/31-4/7- French, ch. 6-11.
- 4/14-4/21- Democratization. Thomson, ch. 11.
- 4/28- Africa and the Global Economy. Thomson, ch. 9.
- 5/5- Conclusions. Thomson, ch. 12.

Contact Information

My office is in 222 Graham. Office Hours- 9:00-10:00 MWF and by appointment. My office phone number is 256-0518 and my email address is rjgriffi@uncg.edu.