AFRICAN POLITICS (POLS 3143.001)
Fall 2018
Tuesday/Thursday 2:30-3:45 p.m.
Fretwell 120

Professor: Dr. Beth Elise Whitaker Email: bwhitaker@uncc.edu
Office: Fretwell 445H Phone: 704-687-7479
Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 1:00-2:00 p.m. and by appointment

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

There are two conflicting visions of the future of the African continent. One vision is of a prospering Africa where democratically-elected leaders govern, free-market economies attract investment, and people enjoy opportunities. The other vision is of an Africa in which opportunistic leaders milk the state coffers and stir up violent conflicts to maintain power, leaving the majority to fend for themselves in an environment of poverty, disease, and despair. The seeds for each of these futures lie in the current struggles on the continent.

This course is designed to increase students’ understanding of the complexities and diversity of African politics. We review the roots of present-day political dynamics, including the legacy of colonialism and the variety of post-colonial governments. Next, we examine the politics of economic development, covering topics such as structural adjustment, debt relief, and HIV/AIDS. We turn to the relationship between state and society, focusing on the dimensions of ethnicity, class, and gender. Subsequently, we explore the dynamics of political transition, including steps toward democratization and factors behind recent conflicts. The course relies on lectures, academic literature, novels, films, and class debates to challenge students to think comprehensively about African politics. In the end, it is hoped that students will be better able to analyze news they hear about Africa, and that they will work to share that understanding with others.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Students must complete the following requirements with points distributed as noted:
- 15% Participation (attendance, discussion, etc.)
- 5% Map quiz
- 5% Debate
- 10% Book quizzes
- 15% “Take your pick” paper
- 25% Midterm exam
- 25% Final exam

Participation: You are expected to do the assigned readings before class and be prepared for discussion. Attendance is required and quality contributions are rewarded. Each class begins with a discussion of current events in Africa (check the BBC Africa page and AllAfrica regularly for updates).

Map quiz: The quiz will cover the locations and names of countries and major cities from the map posted on Canvas. Spelling counts for countries only; you will match cities to the corresponding country.

Debate: Each student is required to participate as part of a team in one of four debates. The class will be divided into eight teams, two for each debate; students will receive individual grades. The broad topics are listed in the syllabus. Specific resolutions and detailed instructions will be posted on Canvas.

Book quizzes: The quizzes will test your knowledge about the two assigned novels. If you have read the books thoroughly, you should not have problems with these questions.
“Take your pick” paper:

- **Literature review:** Each student will write a 2,000-word literature review on one of the four discussion topics listed in the syllabus (or another topic approved by me). In addition to the three assigned readings for the topic, you are expected to use at least four more academic articles from the list of approved journals on Canvas. The literature review should synthesize the main arguments from the chosen articles and highlight the key areas of agreement and disagreement. Further guidelines will be posted on Canvas, and all papers will go through VeriCite.

OR

- **Election analysis:** Each student will write a 2,000-word analysis of a recent election (past 10 years) in an African country of their choice. You are expected to use at least four academic articles from the list of approved journals on Canvas and at least four reliable media sources. The paper should provide the background of the elections, discuss the issues at stake, explain the reasons for the outcome, and analyze the implications for democracy in that country. Further guidelines will be posted on Canvas, and all papers will go through VeriCite.

**Exams:** The midterm will cover the first half of the course and the final will cover the second half. For each exam, you will answer six short answer questions and one essay question. The exams will be conducted through Canvas and you are allowed to use your notes.

**REQUIRED READING MATERIALS:**

The books listed below are available at the bookstore. Readings marked with an asterisk (*) are posted on the Canvas site for the course (available at [http://canvas.uncc.edu](http://canvas.uncc.edu)). The site also includes lecture notes, grades, useful links, and other information. For discussions days, students will be divided into three groups (1, 2, 3); each group is responsible for discussing one article as noted on the reading schedule below, but students are expected to know the key arguments from all of the articles for the exams.

Chinua Achebe, *A Man of the People* (originally published 1966)

**LECTURE AND READING SCHEDULE (subject to change):**

**Roots of Contemporary Politics**

August 21: Overview of African history  
Watch “The Danger of a Single Story,” TED Talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009)

August 23: Pre-colonial and colonial inheritance (Zimbabwe)  
Thomson, *An Introduction to African Politics*, Chapter 1, Chapter 2 thru p. 21 (skip Kenya case study for now), and Zimbabwe case study (pp. 259-68)

August 28: Nationalism and independence  
Thomson, *An Introduction to African Politics*, Chapter 3  

August 30: NO CLASS (American Political Science Association conference)

September 4: MAP QUIZ, Post-colonial states: One-party systems & personal rule (Tanzania, Côte d’Ivoire)  
Thomson, *An Introduction to African Politics*, Chapter 6
September 6: Post-colonial states: Military rule (Uganda, Nigeria)
   Thomson, *An Introduction to African Politics*, Chapter 7 and Nigeria case study (pp. 74-80)

September 11: Discussion: What explains the survival of weak states in Africa?

**The Politics of Economic Development**

September 13: Post-colonial development policies (Zaire/Congo)
   Thomson, *An Introduction to African Politics*, Chapter 10

September 18: Structural adjustment and debt relief (Ghana)
   Thomson, *An Introduction to African Politics*, Chapter 9

September 20: DEBATE #1 on cultivating genetically modified crops in Africa (Teams A & B)

September 25: The economic and political implications of HIV/AIDS

September 27: BOOK QUIZ, Chinua Achebe’s *A Man of the People* (read entire book)

October 2: DEBATE #2 on regulating the informal economy (Teams C & D)

October 4: Discussion: What explains Africa’s relative lack of development?

October 9: NO CLASS (Fall Break)

October 11: MIDTERM EXAM (available on Canvas at 8:00 a.m. for 24 hours)
State-Society Relations

October 16 & 18: Ethnicity and politics in Africa (Rwanda)
Thomson, An Introduction to African Politics, Chapter 4

October 23: Discussion: What explains ethnic competition in Africa?

October 25 & 30: The politics of class and gender (Botswana)
Thomson, An Introduction to African Politics, Chapter 5

November 1: DEBATE #3 on gender quotas in African parliaments (Teams E & F)

November 6 & 8: Ousmane Sembène’s “Moolaadé” (2005 film)

November 13: Civil society and democracy

November 15: BOOK QUIZ, Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s Matigari (read entire book)

The Dynamics of Political Transition

November 20: Political liberalization since the 1990s (Kenya)
Thomson, An Introduction to African Politics, Chapter 11 and Kenya case study (pp. 23-28)

November 27: PAPER DUE, The mixed record of democratization in Africa
November 29: DEBATE #4 on anti-homosexuality legislation in Africa (Teams G & H)

December 4: Discussion: What factors influence electoral outcomes in Africa?

December 11: FINAL EXAM (available on Canvas during exam time 2:00-4:30 p.m.)

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR:
You are all adults and will be treated as such. In return, you are expected to behave as adults and to conduct yourself in a professional manner. This includes addressing the professor appropriately, using proper grammar and punctuation in your emails, and treating one another with respect. Examples of unprofessional behavior include but are not limited to: leaving your phone on during class, texting during class, leaving class once it has started (unless it is an absolute emergency), arriving late to class, and emailing the professor as if you were sending a text message to a friend. As adults, you can determine legitimate reasons to miss class; I do not get into the business of determining excused versus unexcused absences. Instead, you are given two “personal days” during the term to use as you wish; any additional absences after these two will be penalized.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:
Students have the responsibility to know and observe the requirements of the UNC Charlotte Code of Student Academic Integrity. This code forbids cheating, fabrication or falsification of information, multiple submissions of academic work, plagiarism, abuse of academic materials, and complicity in academic dishonesty. Students who violate the code can be expelled from UNC Charlotte. The normal penalty for a first offense is zero credit on the work involving dishonesty and further substantial reduction of the course grade. In almost all cases, the course grade is reduced to “F.” Standards of academic integrity will be enforced in this course. Students are expected to report cases of academic dishonesty to the course instructor.

DISABILITY SERVICES:
UNC Charlotte is committed to access to education. If you have a disability and need academic accommodations, please send me your accommodation letter as early as possible in the semester. You are encouraged to meet with me to discuss the accommodations outlined in your letter. For more information on accommodations, contact the Office of Disability Services at 704-687-0040 (Fretwell 230).

COUNSELING CENTER:
The Center for Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers individual counseling, group counseling, couples counseling, and consultative services at no charge to students. Students come to counseling to get help for a variety of concerns, including anxiety, symptoms of depression, and relationship issues. To make an initial appointment with a counselor, call 704-687-0311 or stop by CAPS in the building behind the Student Health Center. This first session will help you assess your needs with a counselor and make a plan for how best to address your concerns. CAPS also offers outreach programs including prevention, awareness, and education about mental health treatment.