The Politics of Africa

POLS 5330/4325
Spring 2013
Business Building, Room 260
Wednesdays 2-4:40pm

Instructor:
Dr. Amentahru Wahrlab
Email: awahrlab@nyu.edu
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 1-1:50pm; and by appointment as needed.

I. Course Overview:

The study of African politics almost always involves examining various military, political, ecological, humanitarian, and economic crises taking place on the continent of Africa. These political issues are often treated as unique to Africa—hence the study of “African politics.” Therefore, as in political and public discourse, the academic study of Africa often sets the continent aside from the rest of the world, treating it as a place of unfathomable crises which require “our” intervention.

This class, in contrast, starts from the assumption that Africa is not a discrete location to be studied in isolation but is instead always an active and dynamic site of human practices which intersect with and define the lives of people living throughout the world. In this vein, James Ferguson writes that “Africa” is a “category through which a ‘world’ is structured.”

In order to explore this claim, the course is organized around two themes—representation and political economy. The class is motivated by questions such as: What is Africa? How is Africa understood by African and non-Africans? What is the political significance of these representational practices? How is Africa tied into the international economy? What are the effects of these economic relations both on Africa in particular and the world more generally? In other words, what worlds are created through the representation of, and economic interaction with, Africa?

After thinking through a number of methodological questions concerning how we might study Africa, the class is arranged roughly chronologically. The class starts with colonialism, works through the era of decolonization and national liberation, and arrives at the present post-colonial moment. We will conclude by thinking through alternative ways of conceptualizing Africa, including the possibility of a return to pre-colonial imaginaries.

II. Readings and Office Hours

Readings

I have made an effort to insure that at least half of the authors we read in this class are African. I have listed several books that the course draws heavily from. They are available at the campus book store or online. I recommend that you purchase at least four of them.

REQUIRED:


- HIGHLY RECOMMENDED (i.e. you don’t need to buy these but you might want to):

- REFERENCE MATERIAL (i.e. you don’t need to buy these books but they provide useful background information):

All other readings will be available on the class’s Blackboard site.

**Film Screening**

We will also be watching three films during the course of the class: *Lumumba, Battle of Algiers* and *Darwin’s Nightmare*—in addition to being exceptionally good, there will be paper questions and class discussion dedicated to these films.

**News**

Because there is already quite a bit of reading for this class, students are not required to keep up with the news regarding Africa—although this is highly recommended. I will post links to good news sources on the class’ Blackboard website.

**Office Hours**

I really enjoy meeting with student during office hours and encourage all students to stop by. I have traditional (i.e. walk-in, no appointment necessary) office hours from 1-1:50pm on Mondays and Wednesdays in Business Room 233. In addition, anyone who cannot meet me during this time should contact me via email to schedule an appointment. I am also fairly available by email and will respond to your emails within one working day. I do not check voicemail in my office so please only call during office hours if you need to speak to me.

**III. Assignment and Grades**
"A" paper—provides an original, insightful, and well argued thesis which is defended systematically using significant citation; demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the course material; is elegantly written and thoroughly proofread.

"B" paper—proves a coherent thesis which is defended; uses sufficient citations; demonstrates an understanding of the course material; is well written.

"C" paper—provides a more-or-less coherent thesis; uses adequate citations; demonstrates a basic understanding of the course material; is readable.

"D" paper—provides a basic argument; uses minimal or no citations; demonstrates minimal understanding of the course material; is poorly written

"F" paper—Paper is turned in but does not meet basic requirements (too short, does not answer the question, etc.). Not turning in a paper results in a zero.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Scale</th>
<th>100-93 = A</th>
<th>80-82 = B-</th>
<th>66-69 = D+</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-92 = A-</td>
<td>76-79 = C+</td>
<td>63-65 = D</td>
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<tr>
<td>86-89 = B+</td>
<td>73-75 = C</td>
<td>60-85 = D-</td>
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<tr>
<td>83-85 = B</td>
<td>70-72 = C-</td>
<td>0-59 = F</td>
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Course Objectives

It is important to me to encourage you to maintain an exploratory mind and create your own active learning environment—not solely interacting with me, but with each other as well. I will facilitate student discussions by creating a safe context that allows you to speak up freely. But I do not accept the equation of subjective experience with "truth." You must be able to confront the questions I ask, regardless of your own preferences. Most of all, I am interested in preparing you for independent research which requires a tolerant, reflective mind, best summarized by Immanuel Kant's dictum: "sapere aude"—"Have the courage to use your own understanding!"

The course readings, assignments, and videos have been carefully selected to generate broad in-class discussions and oral presentations, ultimately guiding students to write informed essays. Responsible participation in class discussions will be based on weekly assignments.

In the third section half of the course, students (2 per group) will be responsible for a 30 min. in-class presentation on the readings (including leading class in the ensuing 45 min. discussion). Please clarify suitable topics with me beforehand during my office hours. Please use supportive materials for your presentation (handouts, video clips, overhead, computer technology, etc.). Sign up for your presentation in the first three weeks of classes.

Moreover, you are required to write three (3) interpretive essays (five to seven double-spaced, typed pages in length). Each paper should address one well-formulated theme or problem taken from a) weeks 1-5 (due Feb. 16); b) weeks 6-10 (due March 30); and, c) weeks 10-15 (due May 10). Graduate students may choose to select a topic of their choice for a research paper (25 double-spaced, typed pages, plus bibliography; topics must be clarified with me and approved by me in advance.

For the interpretive papers, you will pick your own theme/problem from the relevant readings of that particular section. In the paper, you should carefully explore the meaning of the theme/problem, and, with as much sophistication as possible, you should indicate how that theme/problem reveals something of political significance about the larger context from which it is taken.

No book reports or plot summaries please! These short essays represent exercises in critical political thinking. No late papers will be accepted.

Research essay proposals (1-2 page abstract plus bibliography containing primary and secondary sources), will be due during the 13th week (April 20th). I will supervise each student's progress, as well
as encourage you to consult with me during office hours to discuss one draft of your paper(s). The graduate research paper is due on Wednesday, May 11th, 10:00 a.m.

A Note on Grading

You must complete all assigned written and oral work in order to pass the course. Any student found guilty of plagiarism will fail the course.

Your in-class presentation will count for 15%, your four interpretive essays (or research paper) 70% (17.5% each), your attendance and participation 15%. Thus, your course grade will reflect your presentation, your willingness to participate in discussions, class attendance, and the overall quality of your written work. You are required to sign the circulating attendance sheet at the beginning of each class. You are allowed a total of 1 absence (no documentation necessary); each additional absence will result in a penalty of 5% (up to the total of 15%). Students who distinguish themselves during our class discussions will receive extra credit—meaning that if you find yourself between two grades at the end of the semester, you will receive the higher grade.

Please be advised that overparticipation and the monopolization of class discussion at the expense of your peers may count against you, especially if such actions consistently derail the course agenda. I reserve the right to cut off discussion at any point in order keep us on track and help all students to understand the relevant material. A significant element in the study of political theory is the ability to learn to listen to other voices.

For the purposes of this seminar, you should interpret the grades you receive in the following terms:

1) In-Class Presentations:
An “A” will only be given to presentations that are clearly superior in form as well as content. Typically, such presentations are coherent, well-organized, and adhere to the given time frame. “A” students show their thorough and careful reading of the text(s), bring in outside materials for reference, and generate genuine interest and excitement for their topic. They lead discussions effortlessly, distribute speaking time fairly, and stay focused on their theme. Use Hand-outs which help students follow along and suggest further readings (reference list to books and journal articles that you used).

If this grade is to mean something, just doing a “good job” is not good enough for an “A.” You must demonstrate your ability to go beyond the expected.

2) Interpretive Essays and Research Paper:
Much of the above pertains to essays/papers as well. In addition to treating the subject in a sophisticated and creative manner, “A” papers exhibit elegant and clear prose. Such papers draw connections between nonobvious points; they are well organized and furnish adequate citations of primary and secondary sources without losing their own unique and distinct “voice.” An “A” term paper in an advanced undergraduate course should add a “new wrinkle” to the existing body of literature on this topic.

3) Reaction Papers
The above applies here as well. However, these are meant to provide me with further evidence of your thinking and to reward you for watching the movies and thinking about them in a more sophisticated manner. They will be graded on a simple check, check plus, or check minus scale and will be included as part of your class participation grade.

Late paper policy

Papers will be marked down one third of a grade every (business) day they are late (i.e. 24 hours late turns a B+ into a B). If you do not turn in a paper you get zero points. If a paper is late two weeks or more you will automatically receive an F (59%). It is in your interest to turn all assignments in, even if they are late, since failing to turn in even one paper makes it almost mathematically impossible to pass the class.

NOTE: This fairly lenient late policy will be compensated for by the fact that there will be NO extensions given, except in case of an extreme emergency. If an emergency arises, documentation is required (police reports, obituaries, etc.) and I should be notified as soon as possible.

Turing in papers

I prefer papers via email, but you are responsible for making sure I can open your document. *Late papers will receive grades only, no comments.*

Academic Dishonesty

The UT Tyler community regards cheating as an extremely serious matter and deals severely with those who violate the standards of academic integrity.

Examples of academic dishonesty include (but are not limited to):

- Copying from another person's test paper
- During a test, possession of materials not authorized by the person administering the test
- Discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination or the divulging of examination contents to another when an instructor has allowed the exam to be kept by the student
- Working with others in taking tests or preparing academic assignments when not authorized by the course instructor
- Obtaining by any means another person's work and submitting that work as one's own. This included the downloading of academic papers or the purchase of papers written by others.

If a student is suspected of academic dishonesty, the classroom instructor may ask the student to meet with him or her to discuss the incident. A student may admit to allegations of academic dishonesty, waive the right to a hearing and accept penalties imposed by the instructor. The student may also deny all allegations and ask to see the Dean of Student Affairs. An accused student may accept the decision of the Dean of Student Affairs or ask for a hearing before an impartial hearing officer appointed by the university. Witnesses may be called and evidence presented. The hearing officer will consider all evidence and make a decision. The decision of the hearing officer may be appealed to the President by either the student or the Dean of Student Affairs. For a discussion of possible penalties, please see [http://www.uttyler.edu/mainsite/conduct.html](http://www.uttyler.edu/mainsite/conduct.html).

University Policies

Students Rights and Responsibilities

To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link: [http://www2.TTYLER.EDU/Wellness/RightsResponsibilities.php](http://www2.TTYLER.EDU/Wellness/RightsResponsibilities.php)

Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies

Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at
http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar. Each semester’s Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar. Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract. The Census Date is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions that students need to be aware of. These include:

- Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
- Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)
- Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a "W" grade)
- Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment
- Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid

State-Mandated Course Drop Policy
Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date). Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

Disability Services
In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychiatric disabilities. If you have a disability, including non-visible disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, head injury, PTSD or ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment you are encouraged to contact the Student Accessibility and Resources office and schedule an interview with the Accessibility Case Manager/ADA Coordinator, Cynthia Lowery Staples. If you are unsure if the above criteria applies to you, but have questions or concerns please contact the SAR office. For more information or to set up an appointment please visit the SAR office located in the University Center, Room 3150 or call 903.566.7079. You may also send an email to cstaples@uttyler.edu

Student Absence due to Religious Observance
Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester.

Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities
If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

Social Security and FERPA Statement:
It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

Emergency Exits and Evacuation:
Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor’s directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services

Important Dates
Classes begin: January 10
Census Date: January 24
Spring Break: March 11-16
Final day to drop/withdraw: March 25
Final Exams: May 7-11

READINGS

Key:

♀️ = Recommended (Graduate students may want to read these in particular)
➢ = Assignment
♀️ = Required

Jan 16th: African Politics or the Politics of Africa?
➢ Map Quiz <http://www.ilike2learn.com/ilike2learn/africa.html>

I. Representations of Colonial Africa

Jan 23rd: The Past and Future of Colonial Africa
♀️ Adam Hochschild, King Leopard’s Ghost, pp. 1-5, 21-46, 115-139, 150-166

Jan 30th: Colonial Representations of Africa
♀️ Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness, (read the entire story).

Feb 6th: Critiques of Representing Africa as “Darkness”
♀️ James Ferguson, Global Shadows, pp. 1-23.
♀️ Achebe, “An Image of Africa: Racism is Conrad’s Heart of Darkness” (online and this can be found in your copy of “Heart of Darkness”).

II. The Colonial State/The Colonial Economy

Feb 13th: The State, Colonialism, and Challenges to the Colonial State
➢ First Interpretive Essay Due
♀️ Battle of Algiers
♀️ Read: Franz Fanon, Wretched of the Earth, 1-96
♀️ Recommended: Mamdani, Citizen and Subject, pp. 3-137, 183-203, 285-301

Feb 20th: Challenges to the Colonial State I
♀️ Franz Fanon, Wretched of the Earth, 97-180
➢ Reaction paper due (2-5 pages on Battle of Algiers) explaining the different representations of the French colonizers and the Algerian colonized.

Feb 27th: Underdevelopment
III. Decolonization and National Liberation

March 6th: Movie: *Lumumba*

- Read: Kevin Dunn, *Imagining the Congo*, pp. 1-16 & 61-103 [pp. 16-59 optional but recommended], 105-170

March 11-15th: Spring Break!

March 20th: Western Representations of National Liberation

- Discuss: Kevin Dunn, *Imagining the Congo*, pp. 1-16 & 61-103 [pp. 16-59 optional but recommended], 105-170
  - Reaction paper due (2-5 pages on *Lumumba*): contrast the “voices” of the colonized and the colonizers.

March 27th: Black Consciousness and Afro-Marxism

- Interpretive Essay #2 Due in class.

Black Consciousness and Afro-Marxism II

  - Short pieces from Jomo Kenyatta and Léopold Senghor, TBA.

IV. The Postcolony and the “New World Order”

April 3rd: Afro-Pessimism and the New World Order

  - First in-class presentation (sign-up)
    1)
    2)
    3)

Neoliberalization

- James Ferguson, *Global Shadows*, pp. 50-68, 155-175, 194-210

April 10th: Post-development: Movie: *Darwin’s Nightmare*

- James Ferguson, *Global Shadows*, pp. 176-193

The Post-colonial State

April 17th: Development and Genocide


- Reaction paper due (2-5 pages on *Darwin's Nightmare*): discuss the linkages between political economy and violence. Note: if you are presenting today, then you may turn in your reaction paper next week.

- **Second in-class presentation (sign-up)**
  1)
  2)
  3)

Representations of Genocide


V. The Politics of Re-imagining Africa

April 24th: African Self-Writing?


- **Third in-class presentation (sign-up)**
  1)
  2)
  3)

African Renaissance?


May 1st: Digitizing the African Archive

- Premesh Lalu, “The virtual stampede for Africa: digitisation, postcoloniality and archives of the liberation struggles in Southern Africa”

- **Fourth in-class presentation (sign-up)**
  1)
  2)
  3)

- Final Interpretative Essay Due Via Email.