Course description

Despite a wave of democratization in the early 1990s, the democratic gains in many African countries have not been consolidated. Indeed, new authoritarian regimes have emerged, producing different degrees of success in terms of economics, political stability, and management of ethnic cleavages. This course focuses on how ethnic politics has interacted with the recent political and economic development of different African countries. We will grapple with foundational concepts of regime types and ethnicity, apply these to contemporary Africa, and examine ethnicity as both a cause and effect of patterns of economic and political development. We will particularly seek to understand how authoritarian regimes have been able to retain power, despite the democratizing push of international forces, and the internal challenge of ethnic representation. Throughout the semester, you will also develop and hone your ability to write effectively for the political science discipline.

Learning outcomes

As a result of completing this course, students will be able to:

- Apply foundational concepts related to regimes and ethnic politics to the African context
- Analyze the history of regime development and ethnic politics on the African continent
- Evaluate the challenges to stability and development faced by contemporary regimes in Africa
- Write effectively for the discipline of political science

Required texts


All other readings will be made available on the course Blackboard site.

All listed readings are required, unless otherwise stated in the details for a specific week.

Average minimum amount of out-of-class or independent learning expected per week

For this three credit class, there will be 110 minutes of class time per week and you will be expected to complete an additional 6-8 hours of independent work, on average, per week. Your independent work will include reading for class, undertaking research for your papers, writing reading response papers, and completing your final paper.

Assessment and grading

- 25% Attendance and participation
In order to effectively develop your writing skills, you will be permitted to submit a second version of the reading reaction papers and of the paper proposal. The second version should address my comments on your first version. It is not mandatory to submit a second version. However, it does provide an opportunity to respond to constructive comments on your written work. The final grade for each assignment will be the average of the two versions of that assignment. Second versions will be due one week after receiving the original comments.

Due dates and times for all assignments are written in this syllabus. Late assignments will be subject to a penalty of 1/3 of a letter grade deduction per day past the deadline. All written assignments should be submitted via email in a Word document.

Assignments

1. **Reading reaction papers:** You will produce three reaction papers, each based on the readings set for a single week (excluding the Baglione text). You must choose one week from each of the three sections of the course. These will be due at 8am on the day of the class for which the reading is assigned. The papers will be two pages, double spaced, 12 point font, with 1 inch margins. In the papers, you will be required to provide a brief summary of the readings to demonstrate your understanding. You will also engage critically with the content of the assigned readings in the context of the course. You are at liberty to choose the weeks for which you will write a reaction paper. However, it is advised that you plan your time to ensure you can complete one paper per section.

2. **Research paper:** You will produce a 20-to-25-page research paper based on your own question (approved by the professor) related to the content of the course. This should demonstrate your ability to propose a relevant and interesting research question, engage critically with key scholarship on the topic, propose and test hypotheses, conduct independent research, and reach a conclusion. All assignments for the research paper should adhere to the specified length, be double-spaced, use 12 point font, and have 1 inch margins.
   a. **Paper proposal:** This first assignment requires you to produce a 2-page paper that outlines your research proposal. This will include your research question, a justification for your topic and country/(ies) of focus, your hypotheses, and a list of five scholarly sources that you expect to use in your research. Your question must be approved by the professor prior to completing the subsequent components of the paper. *Due: Week 6 (February 20th)*
   b. **Literature review:** You will produce a 10-page literature review, which critically engages with the key scholarly work related to your chosen topic. *Due: Week 10 (March 27th)*
   c. **Draft paper:** You will produce a full draft of your paper, which will be shared by the professor with one or more of your peers. This will be used in a peer
review session, where you will receive and provide feedback to help improve the draft prior to submitting the final paper. You will also receive detailed feedback from the professor. Due: Week 14 (April 23rd at 5pm)

d. Final paper: The final paper should build upon feedback from your peers and the professor. Due: May 8th.

Policies

Accommodations: Accommodations for class absence or delayed submission of work can be made in the case of a family or medical emergency. However, documentation will be required.

Attendance and participation: Attendance is mandatory and absence will affect your grade (1/3). Your thoughtful and respectful participation is also required. The class will be discussion-based and there will be no lecture provided by the professor. As such, you will need to come to class prepared to discuss the readings. The small class-size requires that all students participate and it is everyone’s responsibility to create an environment in which all students feel comfortable to make their contributions. The participation grade will be partly based on quantity of participation (1/3) and partly on the quality (1/3) of that participation. As such, you will be expected to demonstrate that you have completed the weekly reading and that you can engage critically with the texts.

Communication: Developing good email habits is essential for college students. Please contact me via email with questions and to make appointments. Please check your email regularly for communications from me and your other professors. I will also use Blackboard during the semester to communicate with the class. Please allow up to 24 hours for a response from me to your emails and longer on weekends or during holidays.

Office hours: There will be two scheduled office hours per week. I will also schedule individual appointments at mutually convenient times. Please make use of office hours to discuss your papers. I am always happy to receive students during my office hours. However, be aware that office hours can be oversubscribed prior to deadlines. As such, please plan ahead and email me to confirm availability.

Technology: In order to support effective discussion and avoid distraction, computers, tablets, mobile phones, and other electronic devices are not to be used in the class. If there is an activity requiring use of technology, you will be told in advance.

Academic integrity

All members of the university community are expected to exhibit honesty and competence in their academic work. Students have a special responsibility to acquaint themselves with, and make use of, all proper procedures for doing research, writing papers, and taking exams. Members of the community will be presumed to be familiar with the proper academic procedures and will be held responsible for applying them. Failure to act in accordance with such procedures will be considered academic dishonesty.

Academic dishonesty is defined as “cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” Acts of academic dishonesty are a legal, moral, and intellectual offense against the community and will be prosecuted through the
proper university channels. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at https://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-student-conduct.

Safety and Security

In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.

Support for students outside the classroom

Disability Support Services (DSS)

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services Office at 202-994-8250 in the Rome Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information see: https://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu.

Mental Health Services 202-994-5300

The University’s Mental Health Services offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students’ personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations, confidential assessments, counselling services (individual and small group), and referrals. For additional information see: counsellingcenter.gwu.edu/

University policy on religious holidays

In accordance with University policy, students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. For details and policy, see: students.gwu.edu/accommodations-religious-holidays

SCHEDULE

Week 1 (January 16th): Introduction to the course – objectives and expectations

Guiding questions:

- Why study regime types and ethnicity in sub-Saharan Africa?
- What does writing in the discipline of political science mean?
- What are effective ways to read, understand, and take notes on academic work?

Part 1: Essential Concepts

Week 2 (January 23rd): Democracy

Guiding questions:

- What is ‘democracy’?
- Is there value in having one definition?
- Do you find a minimalist or substantive definition most useful?

Readings:
Schumpeter, Joseph. 1942. *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy.* ONLY pages 250-252 and 269-273


**Week 3 (January 30th): Authoritarianism**

Guiding questions:

- What are the core characteristics of an authoritarian state?
- Are African authoritarian regimes different from other regions?
- How have authoritarian regimes evolved in recent years and why?

Readings:

- Baglione, Chapter 1, “So You Have to Write a Research Paper.”

**Week 4 (February 6th): Ethnicity**

Guiding questions:

- What is ‘ethnicity’?
- Is ethnicity ‘real’?
- Where do ethnic identities come from?

Readings:

Part 2: Ethnicity in Africa. Cause and Effect

Week 5 (February 13th): History of Ethnicity in Africa

Guiding questions:
- Did ethnicity exist before Colonialism?
- Is ethnicity always salient in African countries?

Readings:
- Baglione, Chapter 3 “Learning Proper Citation Forms, Finding the Scholarly Debate, and Summarizing and Classifying Arguments.”

*Bring ideas for paper topics to discuss in class*

Week 6 (February 20th): Ethnicity and Africa’s Political Economy

Guiding questions:
- In what way is ethnicity important for economic outcomes?
- What are the other factors influencing economic development in African countries?

Readings:
- Baglione, Chapter 4, “Making Sense of the Scholarly Answers to Your Research Question: Writing the Literature Review.”

*Proposal on paper topic due before class*
Week 7 (February 27th): Ethnic Violence in Africa

Guiding questions:
- What drives ethnic violence?
- What are primordialist and constructivist explanations for violence?
- Why have some countries remained peaceful?

Readings:
  o Pp. 178-187. “Psychological Strength”

Week 8 (March 6th): Ethnicity and Democratic Politics

Guiding questions:
- Why/when is ethnicity relevant to political development?
- Do these systems allow for changes in identity over time?

Readings:
- Baglione, Chapter 6, “Revising and Editing Your Work”

***Spring Break 12th-17th March***

Part 3: New Regimes

Week 9 (March 20th): Transitions from Authoritarian to Democratic Regimes… and Back Again?

Guiding questions:
- How do regimes change in Africa?
- What are challenges to democratic consolidation?
- Why might a country revert to authoritarianism?

Readings:

- Baglione, Chapter 7, “Making Your Plan and Protecting Yourself from Criticism: The Research Design”

**Week 10 (March 27th): Maintaining Authoritarian Regimes. Part 1: Elite Dynamics and International Influence**

Guiding questions:

- *How have authoritarian regimes adapted to the modern period?*
- *What challenges do they face, internally and externally?*

Readings:


*Literature review due before class*


Guiding questions:

- *Are there benefits of authoritarianism?*
- *Are Lipset’s predictions playing out in African countries?*

Readings:


Baglione, Chapter 8, “Evaluating the Argument: The Analysis and Assessment Section.”

**Week 12 (April 10th): How Democratic are Africa’s Democracies?**

Guiding questions:

- What has enabled African democracies to survive? How have they dealt with the question of identity?
- How does clientelism affect democracy?

Readings:


**Week 13 (April 17th): Individual meetings on papers**

**Week 14 (April 24th): Peer review**

*Full draft of your paper due—April 23rd (i.e. day before peer review session) at 5pm*

*Final paper due on May 8th 5pm*