PLS 950
Research Seminar in Comparative Politics:
African Politics
Fall 2007

Instructor: Michael Bratton
Class Hours: Tuesdays, 11.30 a.m. – 2.20 p.m., 104 South Kedzie Hall
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2.30 - 4.00 p.m., 323 South Kedzie Hall

Objectives
This course aims to help graduate students prepare for doctoral research in comparative politics, especially for fieldwork in Africa or the cross-national analysis of African data.

Through intense reading and group discussion, students will become familiar with major analytic frameworks and debates in the analysis of contemporary African politics. We will review the best current work on topics like the state, ethnic conflict, informal politics, civil society, regime transitions, political institutions, and public attitudes. We will seek to distinguish the universal aspects of African politics, which makes political life in Africa susceptible to analysis using general theories, from distinctive features that require deep understandings of particular African histories, cultures and material conditions.

Students will be given every opportunity to advance a personal research agenda by applying the course readings to their own dissertation topic.

Requirements
PLS 950 is a seminar, not a lecture course. It is based on reading, discussion and written research exercises. Students are expected to take responsibility for their own learning, in part through self-directed studies in the library and/or computer laboratory. Each participant must also consistently contribute to collective work of the seminar in a group setting. You will be rewarded for hard work and original thinking on the issues covered in the course. For grading purposes, the requirements are as follows:

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Class Presentations of required reading materials</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review Article on selected literature (approx 15pp.)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dissertation Assignment (research proposal or dissertation chapter) (approx. 20pp.)</td>
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Class Presentations. Required readings are indicated by asterisks on the attached reading list. A general reading for group discussion has a double asterisk (**). Selected readings that students will present in class have a single asterisk (*). Each class presenter will circulate a one-page written summary of the presentation to the seminar participants. Before coming to class, every student must have read all required items, and be prepared for discussion.

Review Article. Students will summarize, evaluate and compare three books on one of the course themes. Books should be selected from the recommended (not required) section of the
reading list. Students who wish to include items of their own choosing should justify these selections to the instructor in advance.

**Dissertation Assignment.** To meet this course requirement, students will submit a relevant component of their dissertation. If starting out, students will submit a research proposal; if well advanced, students will submit a dissertation chapter. The nature and scope of this requirement will be established with the instructor on the basis of individualized consultations during office hours.

**Schedule**

We will meet 13 times during the 15-week semester. To help your research and writing, the instructor will endeavor to give students a week off from class in the periods prior to assignment due dates.

Thursday, October 11: Review Article due

Thursday, November 15: First draft of Dissertation Assignment due

Thursday, December 6: Final Draft of Dissertation Assignment due

**Readings**

Please purchase the following books:


Michael Schatzberg, *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa*, (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2001)


All titles are available at the MSU and Student Bookstores. Other required readings are contained in a coursepack, which will be provided by the instructor.

Note: The reading list emphasizes book length studies, though it includes selected classic articles. To access the rest of the periodical literature, students are directed to the key area studies journals (*Journal of Modern African Studies, African Affairs, African Studies Review*) and to the leading journals of comparative politics (*World Politics, Comparative Politics, Comparative Political Studies, Comparative and Commonwealth Politics, The Journal of Democracy, Democratization, and World Development*).
READING LIST

1. State Formation

Required


Recommended


2. The Postcolonial State

Required


Recommended


Richard Joseph (ed), State, Conflict and Democracy in Africa (1999).


John Dunn, West African States: Failure and Promise (1978)

Thomas Callaghy, State and Society in Africa: Zaire in Comparative Perspective (1984)

Jeffrey Herbst, State Politics in Zimbabwe (1990)


3. Sociocultural Context

Required

** Michael Schatzberg, *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa*, (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2001), Chs. 1, 2 and 5.


Recommended


4. Ethnicity and Political Conflict

Required


Recommended


5. Informal Politics

Required

** Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as a Political Instrument* (Oxford, James Currey, 1999), Chs. 1, 6, 7, 8, 9.


Recommended


Samuel Decalo, *Coups and Army Rule in Africa* (1990)


6. Political Economy (Micro)

Required


Recommended


Catherine Boone, Merchant Capital and the Roots of State Power in Senegal (1992)


Bruce Berman and Colin Leys, African Capitalists and African Development (1994)

7. Political Economy (Macro)

**Required**


**Recommended**


Mushtaq H. Khan, “Markets, States and Democracy: Patron-Client Networks and the Case for democracy in Developing Countries”, *Democratization* (2005)
8. Regimes and Transitions

Required

** Bratton and van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa*, Introduction, Chs. 3 and 6

* E. Gyimah-Boadi, *Democratic Reform in Africa: The Quality of Progress* (Boulder, Co., Lynne Rienner, 2004), Ch. 1.


Recommended

Larry Diamond and Mark Plattner (eds.), *Democracy in Africa* (2002)


John Clark and David Gardiniers (eds) *Political Liberalization in Francophone Africa* (1997)


9. Formal Political Institutions

** Required


** Recommended


10. Elections and Participation

Required

** Staffan Lindberg, Democracy and Elections in Africa (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), Chs 1 and 4.


Recommended


Dieter Nohlen, Michael Krennerich and Bernard Thibaut (eds.), Elections in Africa: A Data Handbook (New York, Oxford University Press, 1999), Ch. 1


11. Civil Society

** Required


* Chabal and Daloz, “The Illusions of Civil Society,” *Africa Works*, Ch. 2


** Recommended


John Harbeson, Donald Rothchild and Naomi Chazan (eds.) *Civil Society and the State in Africa* (1994).


12. Public Attitudes and Values

Required


* James Gibson and Amanda Gouws, Overcoming Intolerance in South Africa: Experiments in Democratic Persuasion (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2003), Ch. 3


Recommended


Margaret Peil, Nigerian Politics: the People’s View (1976)


