

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
AFRICAN POLITICS THROUGH LITERATURE AND FILM.
WEDNESDAYS, 6:30—9:30.
FALL, 2014.

Professor Herb Howe

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“African Politics Through Literature and Film” will use fiction, non-fiction, and documentary films to explore major questions about sub-Saharan Africa. These questions include

1. What political-social-religious systems existed in pre-colonial Africa?
2. How did a handful of European countries gain control of most of sub-Saharan Africa and has the “(neo) colonial legacy” proven a mixed blessing or an unmitigated disaster?
3. Why did personal rule (“neo-patrimonialism”) become the dominant form of rule following independence and what have been its ramifications?
4. Why has sub-Saharan Africa suffered so many coups and conflicts and what are some suggested solutions?
5. How do critics and supporters view Africa’s post-1990 democratization? Could democracy be “premature,” given the political- social divisions and lack of economic development in many countries?
6. What is “African literature” and how has it changed since the 1960s? What is a “hero” and which of the readings’ fictional characters do you feel are “heroic?”

The required non-fiction textbook is Alex Thomson’s *An Introduction to African Politics* (3rd edition).

The **novels** are:

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*

Mariama Ba, *So Long a Letter*

Okey Ndibe, *Arrows of Rain*

NoViolet Bulawayo, *We Need New Names*

Nguigi wa Thiong’o, *Devil on the Cross* (short sections: no need to purchase).

Andre Brink, *A Dry White Season* (short sections: no need to purchase)

Chinua Achebe, *Man of the People* (short sections: no need to purchase).

Autobiography:

Ishmael Beah, *A Long Way Home*

Films:

“King Leopold’s Ghost,”

“Monday’s Girls,”

“This Is Nollywood.”

“A Dry White Season.”

(No need to purchase the films)

Weekly reading usually will average between 100-250 pages, much of which is fiction. Each of the four films lasts about an hour. Journal and newspaper articles will provide updates on African politics. Strongly recommended for contemporary news: “Media Review,” from the Africa Center For Security Studies.

Two classes in November will examine topics of special interest to class members.

“African Politics...” demands significant student participation. The course also requires a midterm paper of fifteen pages and several short quizzes near the course’s conclusion. Class participation (including attendance) counts for 40 percent of the class grade; the paper (*both* the draft and final versions) for 40 percent, and the quizzes for 20 percent.

Know and follow Georgetown’s Honor Code concerning academic integrity. See SCS.georgetown.edu/academic-affairs/honor-code.

I will be available before and after each class and *via* e-mail for individual discussions.

WEEK-BY-WEEK SCHEDULE

1. WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 27. INTRODUCTIONS .

Discussion of key terms, including “Africa,” “politics,” “tribes/ethnic groups” “nations,” “states,” “nation-states,” “charismatic” vs. “institutionalized rule,” “corruption,” and “democracy.”

Discussion of African literature.

Readings:

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story,” TEDGlobal, July 2009.

2. MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8. OVERVIEW OF AFRICAN HISTORY

Readings:

Dorothy Blair, “Foreward,” to Birago Diop, *Tales of Amadou Koumba*, pp. ix—xvii.

Ngugi wa Thiongo, “Quest For Relevance,” *Decolonizing the Mind*, pp 87-109

Anealie Safdar, “African Fiction Boom Sparks Identity Debate,” *Aljazeera*, undated.

Felicia R. Lee, “New Wave of African Writers With An Internationalist Bent,” *The New York Times*, June 30, 2014.

Thomas O’Toole, “The Historical Context,” *Understanding Contemporary Africa* (third edition), April and Donald Gordon, eds. pp. 23-54.

April and Donald Gordon, “Nationalism and the Politics of Independence,” *Understanding Contemporary Africa*, April Gordon and Donald Gordon, eds. pp. 55-80.

John Ruskin, “Imperial Destiny.”

Optional: Wangari Maathai, “Culture: The Missing Link? *The Challenge For Africa*, pp. 160-183.

3. MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15. IMPERIALISM AND “THE PACIFICATION OF THE PRIMITIVE TRIBES...”.

Things Fall Apart depicts a pre-colonial, acephalous, society and, subsequently, how how British imperialism gained control . Okonkwo, a leading citizen of Umuofia, resists the foreigners and meets a tragic end . *Things Fall Apart* became the first African novel to attract the world’s attention: it has sold ten million copies and been turned into several film versions.

We will review Igbo phrases during our September 8th class.

Readings:

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*.

--, "Chinua Achebe," Bill Moyers, *A World of Ideas*. Television interview.

Optional:

Robert Wren, "Chapter Two: The 'Pacification of Umuofia,'" *Achebe's World*, pp. 23-59.

Peter Gomes, "Foreword," in Peter Gibbon, *A Call To Heroism*, pp. xi-xix.

4. MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22. THE IMPERIAL ("COLONIAL") IMPACT .

Readings:

Wangari Maathai, "A Legacy of Woes," *The Challenge For Africa*, pp. 25-47.

Crawford Young, "The Heritage of Colonialism," *Africa In World Politics*, John Harbeson and Donald Rothchild, eds. pp. 23-42.

DVDS:

"King Leopold's Ghosts" relates how Belgium's King Leopold devastated Congolese society.

"Monday's Girls" documents a coming-of-age ceremony in southern Nigeria that resisted British imperialism and that has adapted to modern realities.

5. MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 29. THE LIVES OF TWO WOMEN.

Readings:

Mariama Ba, *So Long A Letter*. Aissatou, a middle-aged woman, reflects on the position of women in the newly-independent West African state of Senegal.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Devil On the Cross*, pp. 76-90 and 242-254. Neo-colonialism ensnarls Kenyans, but Jacinta Wariinga fights her personal war against racism and sexism.

6. MONDAY, OCTOBER 6. POST-1960 POLITICS AND THE RISE OF PERSONAL RULE.

Readings:

Okey Ndibe, *Arrows of Rain*. *Arrows of Rain* is a modern murder-and-romance story set in a thinly-disguised Nigeria. It helps to answer the "why don't good people fight against injustice" question.

Chinua Achebe, *Man Of the People*, pp. 109-120.

Alex Thomson, "Legitimacy: Neo-Patrimonialism, Personal Rule, and the Centralisation of the African State" and "Coercion: Military Intervention in African Politics," *An Introduction to African Politics*, pp. 109--151.

Stephanie Hanson, "Corruption in Sub-Saharan Africa," Council on Foreign Relations, August 6, 2009.

Recommended: George Orwell, *Animal Farm*.

Thomas Hobbes, "Of the Natural Condition of Mankind..." chapter 12, *Leviathan*, pp. 183-188.

7. MONDAY, OCTOBER 20. PERSONAL DIFFICULTIES OF RESISTANCE .

Readings:

Class handout on South African *apartheid*.

—"The Kairos Document," 1985.

Nelson Mandela, section from "Rivonia," *Long Walk to Freedom*, pp. 351-378.

Andre Brink, *A Dry White Season*, pp.294-316.

DVD: *A Dry White Season*.

8. **MONDAY, OCTOBER 27. MILITARY CONFLICT: SIERRA LEONE. A LONG WAY GONE**

Readings:

Ishmael Beah, *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*.

John Hirsch, "Origins of the Crisis," *Sierra Leone: Diamonds and the Struggle For Democracy*, pp. 21-32.

Herb Howe, "The Roots and Results of African Military Unprofessionalism," *Ambiguous Order: Military Forces in African States*, pp. 27-71.

9. **MONDAY, NOVEMBER 3. CASE STUDIES**

This syllabus unavoidably excludes important topics and countries. The next two class sessions will examine subjects of particular interest to the students. Inform me about your proposed paper topic.

Readings: determined by student interest in specific countries.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10. STUDENT PRESENTATIONS OF FIRST DRAFTS. The final paper will be between 12-18 pages and will be due by noon, *Tuesday, November 18*. Students will lead class discussions on their papers during the Monday, November 10th class. The draft, which should be at least seven pages, will be due *via email* by noon *Sunday, November 9*. Please clear your topics with me by *November 3*.

The draft will count for one-half of your paper's grade. Choose a topic of your own choice and I'll be happy to discuss it with you.

Readings: Student drafts.

10. **MONDAY, NOVEMBER 17. POPULAR MUSIC AND FILM.**

Readings:

--, "Music Is Vital Political Struggle Across Africa—Not Just In Mali," *The Observer*, January 26, 2013.

Neil Spencer, "A Tornado of a Man, but He Loved Humanity," *The Observer*, October 30, 2010.

--, "Angolan Rap. When Money Stops Talking," *Economist*, March 31, 2012.

DVD: "This Is Nollywood."

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18. FINAL PAPERS DUE BY NOONTIME.

11. MONDAY NOVEMBER 24. DESPOTISM, DEMOCRATIZATION, AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA..

Readings:

NoViolet Bulawayo, *We Need New Names*. "Darling" and her fellow street urchins witness a dystopian contemporary Zimbabwe during the book's first half. Darling subsequently travels to America and becomes part of the African diaspora.

John Lee Anderson, "Letter From Zimbabwe: The Destroyer," *New Yorker*, October 27, 2008.

Knox Chityo, "Zimbabwe's Inconvenient Truth," *Guardian*, August 5, 2013.

William Easterly and Yaw Nyarko, "Is the Brain Drain Good For Africa?" *Brookings Global Economy and Development*, Working Paper 19, March 2008, pp. 1-4.

12. MONDAY, DECEMBER 1. THE FUTURE OF AFRICA. WRAPUP AND FINAL QUIZ.

Readings:

Alex Thomson, "Democracy: Re-Legitimising the African State?" *An Introduction to African Politics*, pp. 243-274.

Scott Straus, "Wars Do End! Changing Patterns of Political Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa," *African Affairs* (111, 443). Afrax.oxfordjournals.org..

---, "Collecting Tax in Africa: Above the Table," *Economist*, April 26, 2014.

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Introduction," and Steven Radelet," *Emerging Africa*," and "Challenges and Opportunities on the Road Ahead," *Emerging Africa*, pp. 1-25, 141-159.

Readings on Rwanda, unless we have already covered it on November 3rd or November 10th..

“value tensions. Law s ethics, private vs. common wealth, freedom vs. equality, unity vs. diversity (Hartoonian, Van Scotter and White.

13. Chuck Larson and AU panelists. Which language. “Role” of the writer, relship to pol. Power. Economics and ethnicity.

14. Equal Partners

15. Ensure that all of your work complies with Georgetown’s Honor Code and do feel free to ask my and other professors about the Code and the Honor Council. You will need to submit your papers to Turnitin.com or another sanctioned search engine. By do so, you agree that the instructor has the right to subject submissions to a “textual similarity review” and that you agree to the terms and conditions posted on the engine’s website

16. SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 2. INTRODUCTION. What is “Africa” and what are “politics,” “nations,” “states,” and “tribes/ethnic groups?”

17. THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 6. STUDYING AT GEORGETOWN.

Sophomores, juniors, and seniors will provide perspectives about studying, writing papers, taking exams and grading.

Reading: “Nine Steps to Paper-Writing Bliss” (attached to syllabus)

18. SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 9. FIRST PAPER: THREE LESSONS ABOUT ACADEMICS AT GEORGETOWN.

Evaluate three major points presented by the speakers in our Thursday class. Consult the “Nine Steps” when writing your three page paper and email me a one-page outline by Saturday at noon. Sign up to meet with me individually to discuss your draft. Several of you will present your findings in class

19. THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 13. “WHERE IN THE WORLD IS...?”

Students will give short presentations on the following countries: South Africa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Mali, and Senegal. They will meet individually with me on Sunday or Monday.

20. SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 16. PRE-COLONIAL AFRICA.

READINGS:

Thomson, chapters 1-2, pp. 1-31.

21. THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20. ACHEBE'S THINGS FALL APART (pp. 1- --).

TFA became the first African novel to attract the world's attention: it has sold ten million copies and been turned into several film versions. It may start slowly for you, but don't worry much about the Igbo phrases and words: we'll review them in class.

Did the Igbos in the Umuofia area have a political system; if so, do you regard it as "democratic?" What are the meanings of "institutionalized rule," "meritocracy" "acephalous," and "ascriptive?"

Reading: *Things Fall Apart*, pp.

22. SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 23. THINGS FALL APART (CONCLUSION).

Reading: *Things Fall Apart*, pp.

How do you define a "hero?"

How comparatively important are a person's intent, methods, vs. results when judging the heroism?

23. Was Okonkwo a hero throughout the book or did he become a traitor by the book's end.

24. THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25. SECOND PAPER: WAS OKONKWO A HERO?

Use only the textbook and class notes as your information sources. Sign up to meet with me and mail me the first page by Monday noon.

25. SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 30. IMPERIALISM: GOOD, BAD, OR MIXED RECORD FOR AFRICA?

Europe has had about six hundred years of contact with sub-Saharan Africa. It started the Atlantic slave trade, created state boundaries, introduced Christianity and technology (including languages and western medicine), and brought Africa into the world's economy.

Consider the events and changes that occurred in *Things Fall Apart* when exploring the "good, bad, or mixed" question. Also think about intended vs. unintended consequences.

Readings:

Martin Meredith, "Heart of Darkness," Martin Meredith's *The Fate of Africa*, pp. 93-115.

John Ruskin, "Imperial Destiny,"

Mariama Ba, "A Legacy of Woes," *The Challenge For Africa*, pp. 25-47.

26. THURSDAY, OCTOBER 4. MARIAMA BA, SO LONG A LETTER.

Aissatou, a middle-aged woman, reflects on the position of women in the newly-independent state of Senegal.

Is this novel "political," or just the retelling of a personal life?

Is this an anti-colonial and an anti-Western story

Reading: So Long a Letter.

27. SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7. THIRD PAPER: DID IMPERIALISM BENEFIT AFRICA AT ALL?

Email me a first-page draft by Wednesday at 5pm.

28. THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11. RISE OF AFRICAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENTS.

Sub-Sahara's drive for political independence gained speed after Ghana's statehood in 1957. The 1960s became known as "Africa's decade of independence." Independence movements were usually non-violent, although significant fighting occurred in the settler colonies of Kenya, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Angola, Mozambique, and South Africa. Most of Africa was self-ruled by the mid-1980s. Issues during and after the independence movement included self-determination and secession, extent of the central government's power (unitary, federal, confederal), the authority of a charismatic ruler vs. institutions (constitution, parliament, judiciary, and private groups).

29. Reading:

Thomson, "Ideology: Nationalism, Socialism, Populism and State Capitalism, Introduction, pp. 32-59.

30. SUNDAY, OCTOBER 14. NON-INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND THE RISE OF PERSONAL RULE. Reading:

"Legitimacy, Neo-Patrimonialism, Personal Rule, the Centralization of the African State," Thomson, pp. 109-123.

31. THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18. MAN OF THE PEOPLE.

Reading: Man of the People, pp.

MOTP contrasts with *Things Fall Apart*, especially in regard to law-obeying Okonkwo and self-serving Chief Nanga (the "Man of the People").

Note the patronage and "wastra" capabilities of Nanga. Could these prove necessary to increase the legitimacy of a new state?

32. SUNDAY, OCTOBER 21. MAN OF THE PEOPLE.

Reading:

Man of the People, pp--.

"Coercion: Military Intervention in African Politics, Thomson, pp. 132-153.

Nanga argues that he should run unopposed: do you agree with his arguments?

Could elections encourage political violence?

What was the role of the people in ridding the country of despotism?

33. THURSDAY, OCTOBER 25. REVIEW OF THE CLASS AND INTRODUCTION TO ANIMAL FARM AND ARROWS OF RAIN.

34. EID AL-ADHA BREAK

35. SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 4. ANIMAL FARM.

This is one of the most famous and influential books of the twenty-first (along with Orwell's *1984*). *Animal Farm* never mentions Africa (and rarely even mentions humans!), but billions of people have wrestled with the same questions as did Orwell's animals. The book often contrasts idealism and Realism.

What is “ideology” and did it continuously play a major role in *Animal Farm*?

What was the major philosophical force of Napoleon, if not ideology?

What are several of the most famous commandments and how did they change?

36. THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 8. NEO-COLONIALISM OR GENUINE PARTNERSHIP?

Reading:

“Sovereignty I: External Influences on African Politics, Thomson, pp. 154-187.

37. SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11. *ARROWS OF RAIN*.

Students often nominate *AoR* as their favorite African novel. **Reading:**

Arrows of Rain

38. THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15. AFRICAN STATE CRISIS AND CONFLICT.

By the early 1990s many countries faced declining political legitimacy and rising political violence. Africa’s colonial legacy, personal/military rule, and neo-colonialism received much of the blame. Democratization, the process leading to democracy, gained inroads as a possible solution.

39. What were the major political, economic, and social causes that caused Africa’s state crisis? How did some of Africa’s rulers deal with the increased threats?

Readings:

“Authority: The Crisis of Accumulations, Governance, and State Collapse,”

Thomson, pp--.

Anne Pitcher, “Lions, Tigers, and Emerging Markets,” *Current History* (74,5), May 2012, pp. 163-168.

40. SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 18. FORTH PAPER DUE: TOPIC OF YOUR CHOICE.

You need to email me your first page by Thursday at 10pm. Meeting with me individually is voluntary.

41. THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 22. AFRICAN CONFLICTS.

Readings:

Herb Howe. “Evolution of African Militaries Into the Twenty-First Century.”

William Reno, “The Regionalization of African Security,” *Current History* (74,5), May 2012, pp. 175-180)..

42. SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 25. DEMOCRATIZATION AND THE FUTURE OF AFRICA.

Reading:

Thomson,--

Leonardo Villalón, “Between Democracy and Islam: Islam in Africa, *Current History* 111.745), May 2012, pp. 17-193.

43. THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29. THE FUTURE OF AFRICA.

44. SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2. “JEOPARDY.”

45. THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6. STUDENT PRESENTATIONS OF MAJOR QUESTIONS

46. SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9. CLASS WRAP-UP

47.

48.

49.

50.

51.

52.

53. TERMINOLOGY Each student will receive several terms to research and report about to Sunday's class. Terms include "imperialism," "colonialism," "ethnicity/tribalism," "acephalous," "unitary," "federal," "confederal," institutional ("rational-legal") rule, personal (charismatic) rule, and theocracy.

OF AFRICAN POLITICS : NIGERIA, SOMALIA, RWANDA.

Readings: --,

--"Somalia—ak-Shabaab: It Will Be a Long War," International Crisis Group, June 26, 2014, pp. 1-21.

Freedom C. Onuoha, "Why Do Youth Join Boko Haram?" United States Institute of Peace Special Report 348, June 2014, pp. 1-10.

Jeffrey Gettleman, "The Global Elites' Favorite Strongman," *The New York Times*, September 4, 2013.

Shumley Bostead, "Paul Kagame of Rwanda and His Enemies," *Huffington Post*, April 28, 2014.
DVD: "The Ghosts of Rwanda."

Tom Lodge, "Neo-Patrimonial Politics in the ANC," *African Affairs* (113, 450), pp. 1-23.

Optional: Martin Meredith, "The Graves Are Not Yet Full," *The Fate of Africa*, pp. 485-523.

54. Howard French, "How Rwanda's President Exploits US Guilt," *Wall Street Journal*, April 19, 2014.

Gacaca

South Africa at 20

55.

MALS and DLS students are responsible for upholding the Georgetown University Honor System and adhering to the academic standards included in the Honor Code Pledge stated below:

Honor Code:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor; and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

Disabilities Statement: If you believe you have a disability, then you should contact the Academic Resource Center (arc@georgetown.edu) for further information. The Center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.