

Sebastian Elischer, Ph.D, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, selischer@ufl.edu

**Class Meeting Time:**  
**1:55-2:45pm T**  
**1.55-3:50pm R**  
**Computer Science and Engineering E222**

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## Course Overview

Sub-Saharan Africa is an evolving, diverse, young, and frequently misrepresented part of the world. Over the last two decades the continent has undergone far reaching political, social, and economic upheavals challenging its conventional image as a failed continent. The course is designed as a survey class exploring the changing dynamics of African politics since independence from European colonial domination. Key topics include the long-term legacies of European colonialism; the emergence and the modus operandi of autocratic rule; the struggle for democratization and the outcome of that struggle; the origins, causes, and manifestations of violent conflict; the impact of ethnic identities on political contestation; and the different forms of political engagement shaping contemporary Africa. The course combines in-depth regional knowledge with comparative theory thereby addressing central questions about the notion of African exceptionalism, democracy, and political culture.

During Week 1 - 4, we analyze the rationale behind European colonialism, discuss their implications for post-colonial period, debate the historical processes of state formation in Africa, and critically examine why African states are considered so-called "weak states". The first four weeks thus provide the historical foundation on which contemporary African politics is unfolding. During Week 5 - 9 we discern the causes behind the formation of one-party states and military dictatorships in the 1960s and 1970s, take a close look at African democratization attempts from the early 1990s onward, and discuss the evolution of different political regimes (democratic/autocratic/hybrid) thereafter. We also discuss the nature of public service delivery and why so many African governments fail to live up to the aspirations of their citizens. During Week 10 - 14 we debate a variety of pertinent and timely themes in African politics including ethnic relations, violence and conflict, the role of women in African politics, and the recent surge of military coups on the continent.

## Goals

Differentiate between the myths and the realities of African politics

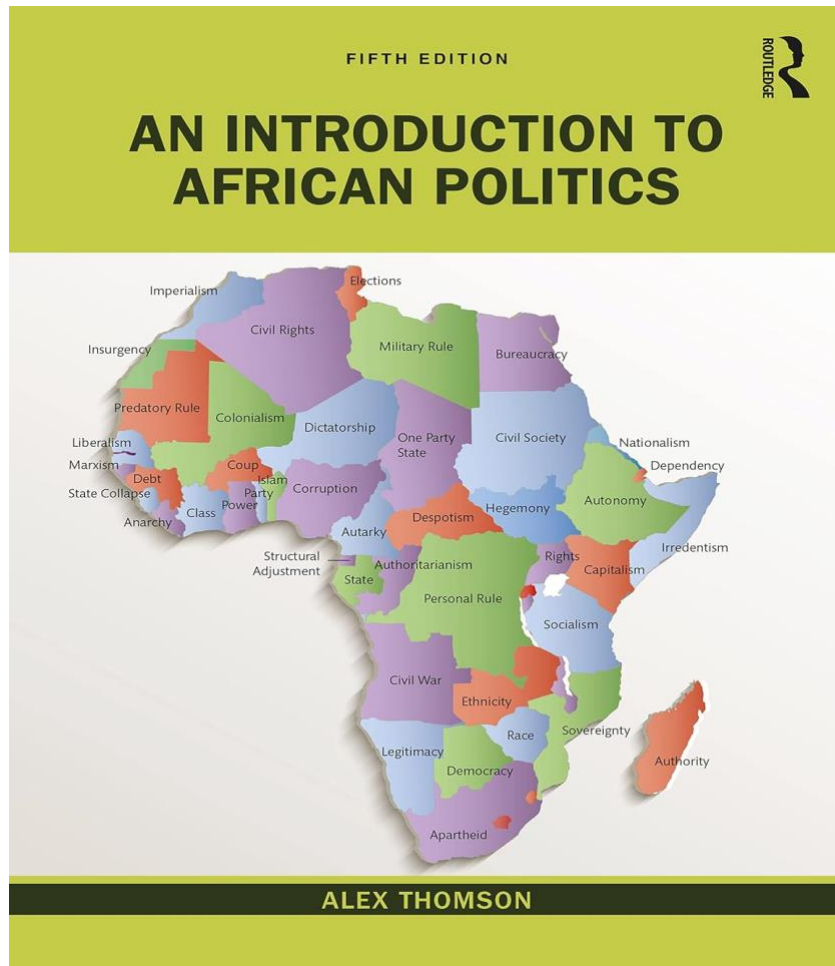
Understand the key drivers and challenges in culturally diverse post-colonial societies

Introduce, understand, and apply key social science concepts

Contextualize and analyze key events in African politics

Engage with empirical data in a constructive and problem-oriented manner

Prepare for advanced academic studies, careers in government, international organizations, and advocacy



## Weekly Pattern

This course includes lectures on Tuesdays and Thursdays that will introduce material, and discussion sections on Thursdays that provide opportunities for students to engage synchronously in scholarly debates and the ability to synthesize information.

The Tuesday meetings will consist of the introduction of new material. The longer Thursday meetings will feature student discussion sections, various forms of interactive learning, and student presentations. **Please prepare the required readings by the time we meet on Tuesday.**

I encourage thoughtful participation in lectures. We will use the iClicker technology, available free to UF students, to enable snap polling, stimulate discussion, and track lecture participation and attendance. I also make time for additional free-form discussion about contemporary political events on the African continent.

Students should be prepared to read, evaluate, and discuss different points of view in discussion sections and in their research papers.

**GO to class.** Lectures explain important concepts, theories, and events that go way beyond the required reading. Discussion sections provide opportunities to debate related topics. **I will share my PowerPoints slides on Canvas and I encourage students to use them as a study guide for the assignments. However, slides do not replace notetaking and critical thinking.**

In addition to the required textbook, we will read academic articles and blogs. I will upload the readings on Canvas. **Students need to purchase the required reading (4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> edition) by Thompson.**

**Visit me** during office hours if necessary.

Students must complete all assignments on time. **There is no extra credit in this class.**



# Assignments and Dates

*The details of each assignment may be subject to change.*

**Attendance and Participation:** Attendance is mandatory and is taken on Canvas/iClicker every time we meet in class. I expect students to actively participate in class. During Week 2 all students will pick a country of choice. Each week students have the opportunity to discuss contemporary political events in that country. This is a great chance to boost your participation grade. You are allowed to miss two classes without a reasonable excuse. **UF policies apply.**

**Map Quiz:** The quiz will test student's ability to locate all African countries on a map. **The map quiz takes place on September 17 in class.**

**Oral Presentation:** The presentation (in a group of up to three people) covers the topic that we are discussing that week. I expect the presenters to do considerable research going beyond the required reading. **I encourage all presenters to discuss their group presentation with me during office hours.**

**Midterm Research Paper:** A 3 000-3 500-word memo summarizing the political, economic, and security challenges of two neighboring African countries of your choice. **The paper outline (500-word summary) is due on September 13 at 5pm ET. All students need to discuss their midterm research paper with me during the first week of October during additional office hours. The memo is due on October 20 at 5pm ET.** Format: Microsoft Word, Times New Roman 12, single-spaced, excluding bibliography.

**Final Exam:** A multiple choice exam on Canvas covering the content of the course including all student presentations. **The final exam takes place on December 11 at 9am ET.**

**We will discuss the details of all assignments in class. A full understanding of the requirements of the assignments requires regular class attendance.**

## Grade Composition

Attendance: 10%

Participation: 10%

Map Quiz: 10%

Midterm Paper: 25% (5% outline; 20% memo)

Oral presentation: 20%

Final Exam: 25%

## GRADING SCALE

A	93.0 -100%
A-	90.0-92.9%
B+	87.0-89.9%
B	83.0-86.9%
B-	80.0-82.9%
C+	77.0-79.9%
C	73.0-76.9%
C-	70.0-72.9%
D+	67.0-69.9%
D	63.0-66.9%
D-	60.0-62.9%
F	below 60.0%

## Course Schedule

To follow the lectures and the discussions, you need to do the required reading prior to our meeting on Tuesday. At the end of each week, students can access my slides on Canvas. **The required reading and the course schedule may be subject to change.** Please ensure that you follow the course page on Canvas. I will post announcements should I make any changes to the required reading. With the exception of the textbook by Thompson, I will post the required readings on Canvas.

Week/Date	Topic	Required Reading
<b>Week 1: August 22</b>	Getting Started	Sit back, relax, and pay attention.
<b>Week 2: August 27 and 29</b>	European Colonialism Revisited	Thompson Chapter 1 and 2  Conklin, Alice (1998): Colonialism and Human Rights, A Contradiction in Terms? The Case of France and West Africa, 1895-1914. <i>The American Historical Review</i> 103 (2): 419-442
<b>Week 3: September 3 and 5</b>	The Legacies of Colonial State Making	Thompson Chapter 3  Mamdani (1996). Citizen and Subject. Introduction: Thinking Through Africa's Impasse. Available: <a href="https://ufl-flvc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01FALSC_UFL/175ga98/alma990375532270306597">https://ufl-flvc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01FALSC_UFL/175ga98/alma990375532270306597</a>
<b>Week 4: September 10 and 12</b>	Study time for the map quiz next week.  All students must send a short outline discussing their midterm research paper. The outline is due on September 13 at 5:00pm ET. Please submit to <a href="mailto:selischer@ufl.edu">selischer@ufl.edu</a>  <i>Further details provided in class</i>	None
<b>Week 5: September 17 and 19</b>	Map Quiz (September 17)  Governance and Rulership after Independence	Thompson Chapter 7.  Anyang'Nyong'o, Peter (1992). <i>Africa: The Failure of One-Party Rule</i> . <i>Journal of Democracy</i> 3(1): 90-96.  McGowan, Patrick (2005). Coups and Conflicts in West Africa, 1955-2004. Part I: Theoretical Perspectives. <i>Armed Forces &amp; Society</i> 32.

<b>Week 6: September 24 and 26</b>	Public Service Provision	Thompson Chapter 6.  Bratton, Michael (2007). Formal versus Informal Institutions in Africa. <i>Journal of Democracy</i> 18 (3): 96-110.  Ellis, Stephen, and Mark Shaw. "Does organized crime exist in Africa?" <i>African Affairs</i> 114, no. 457 (2015): 505-528.
<b>Week 7: October 1 and 3</b>	Additional office hours to discuss your midterm research papers with me in person. Attendance during additional office hours is mandatory.  <i>Further details provided in class.</i>	None
<b>Student presentations start on October 10</b>		
<b>Week 8: October 8 and 10</b>	Democratization: Africa's Second Liberation?	Thompson Chapter 11  Lynch, Gabrielle and Gordon Crawford (2011). Democratization in Africa 1990-2010: An Assessment. <i>Democratization</i> 18 (2): 275-310.
<b>Week 9: October 15 and 19</b>	Contemporary Regime Trajectories	Albaugh, Erika (2011). An autocrat's toolkit: adaptation and manipulation in 'democratic' Cameroon. <i>Democratization</i> 18 (2): 388-414.  Van de Walle, Nic (2002). Africa's Range of Regimes. <i>Journal of Democracy</i> 13(2): 66-80.  Riedl, Rachel (2022). Africa's Democratic Outliers; Success amid Challenges in Benin and South Africa, in: <i>Democracy in Hard Places</i> edited by Mainwaring and Masoud, p.94-127.
<b>The midterm research paper is due on October 20 at 5pm ET.</b>		
<b>Week 10: October 22 and 24</b>	Ethnicity and Political Contestation	Ake, Claude. "What is the Problem of Ethnicity in Africa?" <i>Transformation</i> 22 (1993).  Lindberg, Staffan and Minion Morrison (2008). Are African Voters Really Ethnic or Clientelistic? Survey Evidence from Ghana. <i>Political Science Quarterly</i> 123 (1): 95-122.

		Green, Elliott. "Ethnicity, national identity and the state: Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa." <i>British Journal of Political Science</i> 50, no. 2 (2020): 757-779.
<b>Week 11: October 29 and 31</b>	Violence and Conflict	Thomson Chapter 10  Ismail, Olawale, and 'Funmi Olonisakin. "Why do youth participate in violence in Africa? A review of evidence." <i>Conflict, Security &amp; Development</i> 21, no. 3 (2021): 371-399.  Reyntjens, Filip (2011). <i>Constructing the Truth, Dealing with Dissent, Domesticating the World: Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda. African Affairs</i> 110 (438): 1-34.
<b>Week 12: November 5 and 7</b>	Development and Foreign Aid	Lancaster, Carol. "Sixty Years of Foreign Aid: What Have We Learned?" <i>International Journal</i> 64, no. 3 (2009): 799-810.  Nic Cheeseman, Haley J. Swedlund, Cleo O'Brien-Udry, Foreign aid withdrawals and suspensions: Why, when and are they effective?, <i>World Development</i> , Volume 178, 2024.  Easterly, William (2013). <i>The Tyranny of Experts</i> . Chapter 1 and 2.
<b>Week 13: November 12 and 14</b>	Women and Power	Tripp, Aili (2015). <i>Women and Power in Postconflict Africa</i> . Introduction.  Tøraasen, Marianne and Tøraasen, Marianne, <i>Gender Parity in Senegal - A Continuing Struggle</i> (2017). Available at SSRN: <a href="https://ssrn.com/abstract=3648097">https://ssrn.com/abstract=3648097</a> or <a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3648097">http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3648097</a>  Alozie, Nicholas O., and Patience Akpan-Obong. "The digital gender divide: Confronting obstacles to women's development in

		Africa." <i>Development Policy Review</i> 35, no. 2 (2017): 137-160.
<b>Week 14: November 29 and 21</b>	The Coup Surge: Back to the Past?	<p>Elischer, Sebastian, and Benjamin N. Lawrance. "Reassessing Africa's new post-coup landscape." <i>African Studies Review</i> 65, no. 1 (2022): 1-7.</p> <p>Singh, Naunihal. "The myth of the coup contagion." <i>Journal of Democracy</i> 33, no. 4 (2022): 74-88.</p> <p>Ochieng'Opalo, Ken. "The Truth About Africa's Coups." <i>Journal of Democracy</i> 35, no. 2 (2024): 93-107.</p>
<b>Week 15: November 26 and 28</b>	Thanksgiving Break	None
<b>Week 16: December 3</b>	Review of everything we covered	Notes and Slides
<p><b>The final exam takes place on 12/11/2024 @ 9:00am.</b></p> <p><i>Further details provided in class</i></p>		

## Contacting Prof. Elischer

Please contact me if you need to discuss matters related to class. To protect your federal privacy rights, we cannot discuss your grade(s) over the phone, in front of the class or via non-official email. *Always email from Canvas or your UFL email.*

### Prof. Sebastian Elischer

212 Anderson Hall  
selischer@ufl.edu  
Regular Office Hours:  
T 3:00-4:00pm  
R 12:00-1:00pm.

## The Fine Print: Course, Department, and University Policy in Brief

**Attendance:** Attendance is required. Students failing to attend class during the first week may be dropped from the course; excessive absences could result in a failing grade. Requirements for class attendance, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>). Please contact me if you will miss lecture. Documentation for excused absences must be received within one week of absence.

**COVID-19 (and other illnesses):** If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit [one.ufl.edu](https://one.ufl.edu/vaccination) for vaccination opportunities.

**Late Work/Make up Exams:** If you have an emergency on exam day, please email me immediately. Makeup assignments are allowed with documentation, within seven calendar days. **No one will be permitted to take any exam/assignment early.**

**Course Evaluations:** Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback is available at [gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/](https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals or via Canvas. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at [gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/](https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/).

**Disability Services:** Students who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. Please share your accommodation letter (and discuss your needs) with Dr. Robbins as early as possible.

**Plagiarism/Cheating:** Cheating/plagiarism will result in zero for the assignment and will be reported to the SCCR. Students are bound by the UF Honor Pledge: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>. AI (e.g., ChatGPT) is not permitted in this course.

**Current UF Grading Policies/Grade Points:** Information on current UF grading policies for assigning grade points is here: [catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/](https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/).

**Recording lectures/discussion:** Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

**Extra-Credit:** I do not offer extra credit.