

CPO 3204: African Politics
Spring Semester 2025
T Period 2-3: 8:30-10:25 (LEI0207)
R Period 3: 9:35-10:25 (LEI0207)

Instructor: Nicholas Kerr, Ph.D.

Office: 319 Anderson

Virtual Office Hours: Tuesday: 1-4:30p

Email: nicholaskerr@ufl.edu

Schedule Virtual Office Hours: <https://calendly.com/nicholaskerr/15min>

Zoom Link: <https://ufl.zoom.us/j/95412277667?pwd=ZGEvUi8zVGZ2YU5UdmQ0REpvVIMvUT09>

Course Description:

This course introduces students to the politics of contemporary Africa. It challenges the dominant representations of the continent as conflict prone, economically underdeveloped, and political unstable. Instead, the course presents Africa as a dynamic region comprised of 54 independent states with diverse political and economic realities. Students will explore core themes such as the politics of the state, politics of identity, economic and political development, the politics of conflict and cooperation, and the role of Africa in global affairs. These themes are examined through a variety of learning materials and collaborative-learning methods that expose students to dominant theoretical approaches and political science methodologies. **It is important to note that this class is designated a “WR” (or Gordon Rules) which means “writing must be evaluated on the content, organization and coherence, effectiveness, style, grammar and punctuation.”**

Student Learning Objectives

At the end of the course, students should be able to

- identify common depictions of Africa in popular media
- apply dominant comparative politics theories and methodologies to the study of African politics
- assess the perspectives of leading scholars and policy experts on African affairs through essays and collaborative assignments
- conduct research on an important issue challenging Africa’s political, economic or social development and present findings in both oral and written form
- demonstrate higher-level critical thinking skills, such as analysis and synthesis
- demonstrate an ability to write coherent, logical and carefully written prose at a level expected of upper-division students.

Required Texts:

- Keim, Curtis and Carolyn Somerville. 2021. *Mistaking Africa: Curiosities and Inventions of the African Mind*. Westview Press. (Fifth Edition)
- Thomson, Alex. 2022. *An Introduction to African Politics*. Routledge. (Fifth Edition)

Instructional Requirements:

- Students will be required to have access and use a personal computer with the access to the Internet.

- You may access Canvas from UF's e-Learning webpage: <https://elearning.ufl.edu/>. Please contact the UF Help Desk, <https://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>, if you have any technical difficulties with Canvas.

Course Requirements and Assignments:

- Class Participation (15%):
 - Attendance for this course is mandatory and an attendance record will be taken for every class. Students are expected to come to class having done the reading and ready to contribute to class discussions. If students are routinely absent—or attend without doing the proper preparation—they will not receive full credit for participation. Students who miss more than three classes without a formal excuse may receive additional reductions to their overall grade.
 - If a student does not participate in at least one of the first two class meetings of the course and they have not contacted the department or the instructor to indicate their intent, the student can be dropped from the course. Students must not assume that they will be dropped, however. The department will notify students if they have been dropped from a course.
 - Your participation grade also includes class activities including Documentary Reviews, Map Quiz and Pop Quizzes.
- 2 Review Essays (20% each: 40% total): Students are required to write two (at least 6 page double-spaced) review essays. The first essay is a review of a selected chapter from *Mistaking Africa* by Keim and is due on **Thursday, Feb 6 @ 6 AM**. The second essay is a review of *three* course readings selected from Section 4: Economic Development or Section 5: Democracy and Political Reform due on **Tuesday, April 29 @ 11:59 PM (During the Exam period)**. Detailed information about the review essay requirements will be provided. **Essays are to be submitted through TURNITIN on Canvas.**
- Midterm I (20%) and Midterm II (25%): Both Midterms will be held in-class during the course period. **Midterm I** will be held on **Tuesday, March 11, 8:30-10:25A**. A review for the Midterm will be held during the course period on **Thursday, March 6**. Midterm II will be held on **Tuesday, April 22, 8:30-10:25A**. A review for the Midterm will be held during the course period on **Thursday, April 17**.

Grading Scale:

Each grade that you earn for assignments will be based on the weightings indicated above. Your final grade will be converted based on the following scale:

A: 93-100		A-: 90-92
B+: 87-89	B: 83-86	B-: 80-82
C+: 77-79	C: 73-76	C-: 70-72
D+: 67-69	D: 63-66	D-: 60-62
F: 59 and below		

Policies on Course Readings, Attendance, Cell Phones & Computers

- All readings should be completed by the assigned class period. The reading load varies throughout the semester, but you should expect to read at least one source for each class. For some class sessions, I have assigned multiple readings. Please do not be alarmed. I will provide instructions on how to prepare for these class sessions. **Importantly, I reserve the right to change the course readings or course structure during the semester as I see fit. Any changes will be updated on the syllabus and uploaded to Canvas.**
- Cell phones should be placed on silent during class sessions and activities such as browsing and texting should be kept to an absolute minimum.
- Students are allowed to use computers for course-related purposes, including taking notes, reviewing assigned readings, and completing class assignments.
- Canvas will serve as a repository for course materials, this includes:
 - Updated copies of the syllabus;
 - Assigned readings not contained in required texts;
 - Additional reading list;
 - Internet and electronic resources on Africa;
 - Review papers, midterm and final exam review materials.

Policies on Cheating and Plagiarism

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Policies on Late Assignments, Make-up Exams, & Contact

- Assignment extensions will only be offered under extenuating circumstances. Late assignments submitted without a valid extension will be penalized as per my discretion.
- Make-up exams will only be arranged for *university-accepted excuses*.
- When contacting me by email please utilize standard grammar and punctuation. In most instances, I will do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours.

Policies for Persons with Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

A student with an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19, as determined by the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/), can register with the Disability Resource Center to request a temporary course modification and/or academic accommodation. The student will need to provide medical documentation that identifies

their diagnosis and their medical provider's concerns related to possible COVID-19 exposure. Students should be mindful that remote course access is not always a feasible modification for every course. The DRC will work in partnership with the student's instructor to determine a reasonable modification that meets the course requirements while considering the student's concerns for exposure. Students can begin the process to register with the DRC by completing the form located on the [DRC website](#). For questions, please contact the DRC at 352-392-8565 or drc@ufsa.ufl.edu

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

Policies on In-Class Recordings

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. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session. Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040.

Campus Resources

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 -392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS): Student Health Care Center, 392-1161. University Police Department: 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies). <http://www.police.ufl.edu/>

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support: 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu. <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.

Career Resource Center: Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <http://www.crc.ufl.edu/>

Library Support: <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>. Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>

Writing Studio: 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

Student Complaints Campus: https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF_Complaints_policy.pdf

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION & POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION

WEEK 1

Tuesday, Jan 14: Course Introduction

- Thomson: Chapter 1 (Canvas)
- Pierre Englebert and Kevin Dunn, "Why Study African Politics?" Chapter 1 in *Inside African Politics* (2013), pp. 1-15 (Canvas)
- Nic Cheeseman, Carl Death and Lindsay Whitfield, "Notes on Researching Africa" *African Affairs* (2017): 1-5.
- Subscribe to the following:
 - [This Week in Africa](#) by Jeffery Paller and Philip Dube
 - [Ufahamu Podcast](#) by Rachel Riedl and Kim Dionne
- Visit the following websites:
 - [Allafrica](#)
 - [AfricaIsACountry](#)
 - [African Arguments](#)
 - [Democracy in Africa](#)
- Make sure to purchase *An Introduction to African Politics* by Thompson and *Mistaking Africa* by Keim and Somerville

Thursday, Jan 16: Misrepresenting Africa I

- Keim and Somerville: Chapter 1 - 3 (Canvas)
- Binyavanga Wainaina, "[How to Write about Africa](#)" in *Granta*, 19 January 2006. (Canvas)

WEEK 2

Tuesday, Jan 21: Misrepresenting Africa II

- Keim and Somerville: Chapter 5 – 6
- Scott, Martin. "The myth of representations of Africa: A comprehensive scoping review of the literature." *Journalism Studies* 18, no. 2 (2017): 191-210 (Canvas)
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2015.1044557>

Thursday, Jan 23: Misrepresenting Africa III

- Keim and Somerville: Chapter 8 - 9
- Nothias, Toussaint. "How Western journalists actually write about Africa: Re-assessing the myth of representations of Africa." *Journalism Studies* 19, no. 8 (2018): 1138-1159.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1262748>

WEEK 3

Tuesday, Jan 28: Misrepresenting Africa IV

- Keim and Somerville: Chapter 10
- Tutorial on Review Essay #1

Thursday, Jan 30: Misrepresenting Africa V

- Keim and Somerville: Chapter 11 & 12

SECTION 1: OPTIONAL READINGS

Binyavanga Wainaina, ["How to Write about Africa"](#) in Granta, 19 January 2006.

Judd Devermont, "The US Intelligence Community's Biases During the Nigerian Civil War" *African Affairs* 116 (2017), pp. 705-716.

Pierre Englebert and Kevin Dunn, "Why Study African Politics?" Chapter 1 in *Inside African Politics* (2013), pp. 1-15

Achille Mbembe, "Time on the Move" in *On the Postcolony* (2001), pp. 1-18.

Nic Cheeseman, Carl Death and Lindsay Whitfield, "Notes on Researching Africa" *African Affairs* (2017): 1-5.

SECTION 2: POLITICS OF THE STATE

WEEK 4

Tuesday, Feb 4: Colonial State, Independence & the Legacy of Colonialism I

- Thomson: Chapter 2
- Meredith, Martin. 2005. "Heart of Darkness" in *The Fate of Africa*. New York. Public Affairs. (Canvas)
- Young, Crawford. 2012. "The African Postcolonial State: Concluding Reflections" in *The Post-Colonial State in Africa: Fifty Years of Independence, 1960-2010*. Wisconsin. University of Wisconsin Press. (Canvas)

Thursday, Feb 6: Colonial State, Independence & the Legacy of Colonialism II

- ****DUE DATE: Review Essay #1 on Keim (Deadline 6 AM)**

WEEK 5

Tuesday, Feb 11: Neopatrimonialism: Corruption, Clientelism, and Big Man Rule

- Documentary Review (In-Class)
- Thompson: Chapter 6

Thursday, Feb 13: Liberal States/Weak States

- Thomson: Chapter 10

- Please visit the Fragile States Index (<https://fragilestatesindex.org/>)

SECTION 3: POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT

WEEK 6

Tuesday, Feb 18: Development and Underdevelopment

- Thomson: Chapter 3

Thursday, Feb 20: Structural Adjustment Policies

- Thomson: Chapter 9
- Lopes, Carlos. 2013. "Structural Adjustment Policies and Africa- A reply to Shantayanan Devarajan." *Think Africa Press*
- Devarajan, Shantayanan. 2013. "This is How Structural Adjustment Policies Worked in Africa — a Rejoinder to Carlos Lopes" *Think Africa Press*

WEEK 7

Tuesday, Feb 25: Foreign Aid, Debt Relief and Globalization

- Moss, Todd. 2011. "The International Aid System" in African Development. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Moyo, Dambisa. 2009. "Why Foreign Aid is Hurting Africa." *Wall Street Journal*, March 21. (Canvas)
- Sachs, Jeffrey. 2014. "The Case for Aid." *Foreign Policy* (Canvas)
- Kabwe, Zitto. 2013. "Foreign aid is not the only African story worth hearing" *The Guardian*. (Canvas)

Thursday, Feb 27: Africa's Economic Prospects: Is Africa Rising?

- Frankema, E., & Van Waijenburg, M. 2018. Africa rising? A historical perspective. *African Affairs*, 117(469), 543-568
- Radelet, Steven. 2010. "Success Stories from 'Emerging Africa'." *Journal of Democracy*, 21 (4): 87-101. (Canvas)
- Jerven, Morten. 2014. "Why saying 'seven out of ten fastest growing economies are in Africa' carries no real meaning" *African Arguments*. (Canvas)
- Nossiter, Adam. 2013. "Behind those Fast Growth Rates, Rising Inequality." *New York Times* (Canvas).
- Lewis, Peter. 2008. "Growth without prosperity in Africa." *Journal of Democracy* 19 (4): 95-109. (Canvas)
- "Africa Rising: A hopeful continent". *Economist*. March 2nd 2013 (Canvas)
- Logan and Dulani. 2013. "After a decade of growth in Africa, little change in poverty at the grassroots" *Afrobarometer* (Canvas)

WEEK 8

Tuesday, March 4: Africa's Response to Global Pandemics/Climate Change I

- Serdeczny, O., Adams, S., Baarsch, F., Coumou, D., Robinson, A., Hare, W., ... & Reinhardt, J. 2017. Climate change impacts in Sub-Saharan Africa: from physical changes to their social repercussions. *Regional Environmental Change*, 17, 1585-1600.

Thursday, March 6: Africa's Response to Global Pandemics/Climate Change II

- **Midterm I Review**

WEEK 9

Tuesday, March 11: *MIDTERM I EXAM: 8:30-10:25 (IN-CLASS)**

SECTION 4: DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL REFORM

Thursday, March 13: Democratization, Autocratization, and Regime Change I

- Thomson: Chapter 11
- Gyimah-Boadi, E., 2015. Africa's Waning Democratic Commitment. *Journal of Democracy*, 26(1), pp.101-113.
- Devermont, J & Temin, J .2019. Africa's Democratic Moment: The Five Leaders Who Could Transform the Region. *Foreign Aff.*, 98, 131.
- Olewe, D. 2019. Is Africa going backwards on democracy?
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-46971250>

March 18-20: ***ENJOY SPRING BREAK**

WEEK 10

Tuesday, March 25: Thursday, March 13: Democratization, Autocratization, and Regime Change II

- Thomson: Chapter 11
- Gyimah-Boadi, E., 2015. Africa's Waning Democratic Commitment. *Journal of Democracy*, 26(1), pp.101-113.
- Devermont, J & Temin, J .2019. Africa's Democratic Moment: The Five Leaders Who Could Transform the Region. *Foreign Aff.*, 98, 131.
- Olewe, D. 2019. Is Africa going backwards on democracy?
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-46971250>

Thursday, March 27: Free, Fair and Peaceful Elections

- Thomson: Chapter 11
- Lindberg, Staffan. 2006. "The Surprising Significance of African Elections," *Journal of Democracy* 17 (1): 139-151. (Canvas)
- Bratton, Michael. 2013. "Where do elections lead?" in *Voting and Democratic Citizenship in Africa*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner. (Canvas)

- Bogaards, Matthijs. 2013. Reexamining African Elections. *Journal of Democracy*, 24(4), 151-160. (Canvas)

Examples of Recent Elections

- Arriola, L.R. and Lyons, T., 2016. (Ethiopia) The 100% election. *Journal of Democracy*, 27(1), pp.76-88.
- Kora, S. and Darboe, M.N., 2017. The Gambia's Electoral Earthquake. *Journal of Democracy*, 28(2), pp.147-156.
- Cheeseman, N., Lynch, G. and Willis, J., 2017. Ghana: The Ebbing Power of Incumbency. *Journal of Democracy*, 28(2), pp.92-104.
- Menkhaus, K., 2017. Elections in the Hardest Places: The Case of Somalia. *Journal of Democracy*, 28(4), pp.132-146.

WEEK 11

Tuesday, April 1: Political Institutions I

- Posner, Daniel N. and Daniel J. Young. 2008. "The Institutionalization of Political Power in Africa," *Journal of Democracy*, 18(3): 126-140. (Canvas)
- Kwasi, Prempeh, H. 2008. "Presidents Untamed," *Journal of Democracy* 19(2): 109-123. (Canvas)

Thursday, April 3: Political Institutions II

- Barkan, Joel D. 2008. "Legislatures on the Rise?" *Journal of Democracy*, 19(2): 124-137. (Canvas)
- VonDoepp, P. (2018). The Judiciary Courts, Judges and the Rule of Law. In N. Cheeseman (Eds.) *Institutions and Democracy in Africa: How the Rules of the Game Shape Political Developments*. Cambridge University Press (Canvas)

SECTION 5: POLITICS OF IDENTITY

WEEK 12

Tuesday, April 8: Politics of Ethnicity

- Thomson: Chapter 4
- Posner, Daniel. 2004. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi," *American Political Science Review*, 98 (4): 529-545. (Canvas)

Thursday, April 10: Politics of Religion

- Thomson: Chapter 4
- McCauley, J. F. (2012). Africa's new big man rule? Pentecostalism and patronage in Ghana. *African Affairs*, 112(446), 1-21. (Canvas)

WEEK 13

Tuesday, April 15: Politics of Gender and Sexuality

- Afrobarometer. 2014. "Support for Africans Women's Equality Rises." (Canvas)
- Izama, Melina. 2015. "The rise of morality politics in Africa: Talk is cheap and dangerous, but wins votes" *Washington Post: Monkey Cage*. (Canvas)
- Dionne, Kim, Boniface Dulani, Joseph Chunga. 2014. "Attitudes toward homosexuality in sub-Saharan Africa". *Working Paper*. (Canvas)

Thursday, April 17: Midterm II Review

- Tutorial on Review Essay #2

WEEK 14

Tuesday, April 22: ***MIDTERM II EXAM: 8:30-10:25 (IN-CLASS)

Thursday, April 24: Reading Days

WEEK 15

Tuesday, April 29: Due Date for Review Essay II (11:59 PM)

GOOD LUCK ON YOUR EXAMS, FINAL PAPERS AND ENJOY THE SUMMER!



Political Map of Africa 2018