POLI-3313 FA: African Politics
Fall 2014

Time: Wednesdays & Fridays: 8:30-10:00 a.m.
Place: UC 2011

Instructor: Zubairu Wai
Office: RB 2041
Hours: Wednesdays 12:30-2:30 p.m. (or by appointment)
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Course Description
In mainstream discourses, ‘Africa’ is a disaster story; a homogenised and undifferentiated state inhabited by primitive tribes where a tragic human history stands revealed. A land of crisis and failure, this ‘Africa’ is constantly depicted as a moral challenge to the West, and a basket-case needing the redemptive power of Western modernist intervention. Do these broadstroke stereotypical generalisations represent the African reality, or do they obscure the historical realities of political and social life on the continent? What kind of place is Africa? How do we understand its social and political formations? Does Africa have any meaningful political life? How do we explain the continent’s social and political realities? The aim of this course is to move beyond these problematic stereotypical representations and crass journalistic accounts by providing a broad and critical introduction to African political life. It seeks to explore African politics from a broader socio-historical perspective focusing on the processes out of which the continent’s present day reality emerged. Seeking to understand ‘Africa’ differently away from the problematic discourses which tend to obscure the epistemological, power/political and material processes that have historically defined the continent’s experience in a world characterised by unequal power relations, this course interrogates the dominant ways we have come to understand ‘Africa’ and raises important questions about power and politics, war and violence, epistemology and ethics, identity and subjectivities from a postcolonial and critical political economy perspectives. At the heart of the course is a simple but fundamental question: What is Africa and what is its place in the world?

Required Texts:
Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart; a novel (London: Heinemann, 1958)

POLI-3313 Course Kit

Course Requirements and Evaluation
The method of instruction will be lectures and class discussions. Students are required to regularly attend classes; do the assigned readings before coming to class; take part in class discussions; and complete the required assignments for the course.
The final grade will be weighted as follows:

- Attendance & Participation: 20%
- Map Quiz: 20%
- Book Review: 25%
- Final Essay: 35%

1. **Attendance & Participation (worth 20% of the final grade):**
   Attendance and participation are crucial for the success of the course. Students are required to regularly attend classes, do the assigned readings before coming to class and take part in class discussions. A register of attendance will be kept throughout the duration of the course.

2. **Map Quiz (worth 20% of the final grade):**
   The map quiz is intended to test your map literacy and knowledge on Africa’s political geography. It will mainly involve correctly identifying the countries of the continent, their capitals and general demographic features. The quiz will take place in class on 17 October.

3. **Book Review (worth 25% of the final grade):**
   The focus of the book review is to critically review one African novel (from the list provided below), bringing out its political significance and demonstrating how it helps us in understanding contemporary African political life. It is an opportunity for linking the fictionalised rendition of African political life in novels with the realities of contemporary African politics. It is also a way of getting students to acquire the skills of undertaking academic reviews of texts. The review should be 5 double-spaced pages long, on one of the following novels:


   If you are interested in reviewing a novel that is not listed, you must first clear it with me otherwise you will be penalised.
4. Final Paper (worth 35% of the final grade):
The final paper is a research essay intended to test your knowledge on African politics. It can be on any topic in African politics. The paper provides an opportunity for students to research an issue in African politics that is topical and important to them. The essay should be between 10 and 12 double-spaced pages (not including the title page and bibliography of works cited). It should be handed in class on Wednesday December 1, that is, the last day of lectures for the course.

Note: All essays should have a title page indicating name, student number, course numbers, and the name of the instructor, the department and the university. The essays should be doubled-spaced, Times New Roman 12 point fonts, 1 inch margin and should be handed in on the due date in class. Barring any extenuating circumstance, all written assignments must be submitted on time, otherwise a 2 per cent per day penalty will apply each day the essay is late. Please refer to and use the Chicago-Style of citation for all written work.

Students with Special Needs
Students with special needs can request accommodations in accordance with the Senate Policy on Students with Disabilities. Please endeavour, at the earliest opportunity, to advice the Student Accessibility Services (formerly the Learning Assistance Centre) and the course instructor of your special needs so that appropriate arrangements can be made to accommodate such needs. Those who encounter extenuating circumstances which may interfere with the successful completion of the course should, as soon as possible, discuss these circumstances with the course instructor and the Student Accessibility Services.

Lakehead Policy on Academic Dishonesty
As academic integrity is crucial to the pursuit of university education, students are expected to uphold the academic honour code at all times and are advised to familiarise themselves with the university’s policy on academic dishonesty, especially in relation, but not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, impersonation etc. In order to make sure that a degree awarded by Lakehead University is a reflection of the honest efforts and individual academic achievement of each student, Lakehead University treats cases of academic dishonesty very seriously and severely penalises those caught in violation of the university’s policy on academic dishonesty.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (Sept. 10 & 12): Introduction to the Course: Thinking about African Politics

Readings:
Mahmood Mamdani, ‘Is African Studies to be turned into a New Home for Bantu Education at UCT?’ Remarks at the Seminar on Teaching Africa in Post-Apartheid South Africa, University of Cape Town, April 22, 1998.

Binyavanga Wainaina, ‘How to Write about Africa,’ Granta 92, (2005):
http://www.granta.com/Archive/92/How-to-Write-about-Africa/Page-1

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: ‘The Danger of a Single Story’ (TED Video):
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg

Week 2 (Sept. 17 & 19): Africanism and the Knowledge Question
Readings:


[Note: 19 September is the Final Date of Registration]

Week 3 (Sept. 24 & 26): The Legacies of Colonialism
Required Readings:


**Week 4 (Oct. 1 & 3): The State in Africa**

**Required Readings:**


Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, ‘Whither the State’, Chapter 1 in their Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument (Oxford and Bloomington & Indianapolis: James Currey and Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 3-16


**Week 5 (Oct. 8 & 10): The Political Economy of Development and Developmentalism**

**Required Readings:**


**Week 6 (Oct. 15 & 17): Democracy and Democratisation**

**Readings:**


[Note: Map Quiz on Friday 17 October in class]

**Week 7 (Oct. 22 & 24): Interrogating Gender**

**Required Readings:**


Oyeronke Oyewumi, ‘Visualizing the Body: Western Theories and African Subjects’ Chapter 1 in her *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (University of Minnesota Press, 1997)


**Week 8 (October 29 & 31): The Politics of Ethnicity**

**Required Readings:**


[Note: Book Review due in class on Friday October 31. Also note that November 4 is the Final Date for Withdrawal from the course without Academic Penalty]
Week 9 (Nov. 5 & 7): Discourse of Violence, Armed Conflicts and Civil Wars
Readings:


Week 10 (Nov. 12 & 14): Social Movements and Political Change
Readings:


Week 11 (Nov. 19 & 21): Land Grabbing and the New Scramble for Africa
Readings:


**Week 12 (Nov. 26 & 28): Africa and the World**

Required Readings:


[Note: Final paper due at the end of class on 28 November 2014]
(Examination Period: 4–17 December, 2014. There will be no exam for this course).