**CONTEMPORARY AFRICA (SISU 381-001)**

**American University, School of International Service**

Spring 2016 Dr. Carl LeVan

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Course TA: http://carllevan.com

**COURSE OUTLINE**

This course explores critical issues and trends in the social, political and economic landscape of Africa today. It alternates between broad thematic coverage that utilizes comparative concepts and principals of global politics, and more focused analyses of country case studies that either illustrate core themes or perhaps deviate from them. Some weeks are focused on a single country that is representative of broader questions or challenges facing the continent, while other weeks are focused on a core idea that is examined through relevant case studies. Students should thus approach readings on specific countries with broader learning objectives and the possibilities for comparison in mind. What does conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo tell us about the causes of African wars and resolutions to them? Is the Niger Delta characteristic of ethnic rebellions, environmental crisis, or the behavior of foreign investors? Similarly, students should strive to develop a comfort level with concepts and theories which can be applied to situations or cases. How would you characterize the drivers of democratization in recent decades, and where would you consider democracy particularly strong or weak? How do transnational influences, indigenous cultures, and contemporary politics intersect (or clash) on sexual minority rights?

The readings presume some prior knowledge of Africa from a course such as “Civilizations of Africa”, “Precolonial Africa” or “Modern Africa.” This course will not therefore explicitly cover fundamentals such as colonialism, nationalism, or decolonization in depth though such historical factors and forces are often discussed in the readings. The assignments presume some experience with research from a course such as “Introduction to International Relations Research.”

**Learning Outcomes:**

Apply course concepts to empirical information.

Practice techniques for effective case study research and comparative analysis.

Develop informed positions and defend ideas through both written materials and class discussion.

Identify different *types* of causal explanations and situate them within complex causal processes.

**REQUIRED MATERIALS**

These books are available at the bookstore on campus and on reserve in the library:

* Diamond, Larry and Marc Plattner. 2010. *Democratization in Africa: Progress and Retreat* (2nd edition). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Henceforth “**D&P**.”
* Cheeseman, Nicolas. 2015. *Democracy in Africa: Successes, Failures, and the Struggle for Political Reform.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
* Burgis, Tom. 2015. *The Looting Machine.* New York: Public Affairs.
* Adunbi, Omolade. 2015. *Oil Wealth and Insurgency in Nigeria.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Required readings posted on Blackboard are marked with an **\*asterisk below**; other required readings are available via the internet link provided in the syllabus. If the link fails, inform the TA and then search for the item yourself. Additional materials may be distributed in class or via Blackboard. Note that the required materials are listed in a recommended order for reading them, rather than chronologically. For example, this could give you background on the topic before exposing you to more complex issues, or it might start with a classic piece followed by a critic.

**Recommended introductory materials:**

* Thomson, Alex. 2016. *An Introduction to African Politics* (4th edition). London: Routledge.
* Meredith, Martin. 2011. *The Fate of Africa: a History of Fifty Years of Independence*. (Revised updated edition). New York: Public Affairs.
* Englebert, Pierre and Kevin Dunn. 2013. *Inside African Politics*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
* Professor Cheeseman has a list on his website with additional readings that go into depth on the themes covered in *Democracy in Africa*: <http://democracyinafrica.org/dia-reading-list/>

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

* **Case studies:** compare and contrast the state of democracy in two countries we have studied. In about four double-spaced pages (about 1000 words, plus bibliography), briefly analyze the most important contextual drivers of current political conditions, and offer your assessment for any future democratization. This essay will be evaluated primarily based on your command of course materials. Upload via Blackboard at 5 pm on Saturday, February 6 (15%)
* **In-class test** on February 25 (25%)
* **Talking points** on gender: Is homosexuality a “western” cultural import? Are gay rights human rights? Should rights for sexual minorities be linked to foreign aid conditionalities? Prepare a short memo of approximately two single-spaced pages outlining talking points on the politics of gender in Africa. Prepare for a broad ranging class discussion. You are welcome to take a position that does *not* necessarily reflect your actual personal opinion by critiquing the readings. Outside research is permitted but is not necessary. A good memo will succinctly summarize useful information from the readings, integrate relevant ideas or data into a logical organization, and facilitate persuasive and informed class participation. Bullet points and headings are encouraged. If you turn in a paper structured as a standard essay, you will be marked down. Hardcopy due in class on March 3 (10%).
* **Short research paper**: Can well-designed political institutions help advance democratic consolidation in Africa? Drawing upon course readings and other materials, write a 6-8 page paper analyzing either (a) the importance and efficacy of term limits or (b) the advantages and disadvantages of representation through power sharing institutions. In addition to providing a conceptual comparative analysis, be sure to focus on one case study in greater detail, incorporating some outside research. Due March 31 via Blackboard upload (20%)
* Take home **final essay** on the last three classes discussing oil, development, and democracy. Hardcopy due in my office on April 28 by 5:15 pm (25%)
* Class participation, including Blackboard participation (5%)

Emailed assignments will not be accepted without the prior permission of the instructor. Consult the link <http://carllevan.com/teaching/student-resources/> for information about style guides, formatting, and some note taking tips. AU’s Academic Integrity Code will be strictly enforced. Papers are graded on the following scale: 100 to 94 is an A, 93 to 90 is an A-; 89 to 87 is a B+, 86 to 83 is a B, 82 to 80 is a B-, etc. If you anticipate missing an assignment deadline due to a medical or other emergency, please notify the instructor before the due date. You are expected to be an active participant in class discussions. You are encouraged to constructively reply to other students’ online postings. The instructor may also ask students to post a message following some class discussions.

**CLASS MEETINGS AND TOPICS**

1. **Introduction (January 14)**

**Countries in focus: DRC, Tanzania, Nigeria, Botswana**

Cheeseman, Nic. Introduction, “Democratization against the Odds” and Chapter 1, “Fragments

of Democracy: Participation and Control in Authoritarian Africa,” (pages 1-56)

Burgis, Tom. Introduction, “A Curse of Riches” (pages 1-8)

1. **Varieties of Democratization (January 21)**

**Countries in focus: Kenya, Zambia, Uganda, South Africa, Senegal**

Cheeseman, Nic. Chapter 2 “Cultures of Resistance: Civil Society and the Limits of power” and

Chapter 3, “The Second Liberation: Economic Decline, the End of the Cold War, and the Struggle for Democracy” (pages 57-113)

Diamond, Larry. Chapter 4, “The Rule of Law versus the Big Man,” in D&P.

Clark, John. Chapter 6, “The Decline of the African Military Coup,” in D&P.

Recommended Reading:

Kandeh, Jimmy D. 2004. *Coups from Below: Armed Subalterns and State Power in West Africa*. New York and Houndmills, England: Palgrave Macmillan.

Powell, Jonathan. 2012. “Determinants of the Attempting and Outcome of Coups d’état,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (56, 6):1017-40.

Mazrui, Ali A. 1976. “Soldiers as Traditionalizers: Military Rule and the Re-Africanization of Africa,” *World Politics* 28:246-72.

1. **Importing Democracy (January 28)**

**Countries in Focus: Ghana and Uganda**

Cheeseman, Nic. Chapter 4, “Exporting Elections” (pages 114-142)

Gyimah-Boadi, E. Chapter 10, “Another Step Forward for Ghana,” in D&P.

Mwenda, Andrew. Chapter 17, “Personalizing Power in Uganda,” in D&P.

\* Izama, Angelo. 2015. “The Battle for Uganda’s ‘Museveni Babies,’” *Foreign Policy,*

November 17.

 <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/11/17/uganda-museveni-babies-election-violence/>

Recommended:

Suberu, Rotimi, Chapter 9, “Nigeria’s Muddled Elections,” in D&P.

1. **Ongoing Democratic Struggles (February 4)**

**Countries in focus: Zimbabwe and Kenya**

Cheeseman, Nic. Chapter 5, “Subverting Democracy: The Advantages of Incumbency and the Politics of Violence” (pages 143-170)

Burgis, Tom. Chapter 10, “The New Money Kings” (pages 219-244)

Bratton and Masunungure, Chapter 24, “Zimbabwe’s Long Agony,” in D&P.

Chege, Michael. Chapter 14, “Kenya: Back from the Brink” in D&P.

Kiai, Maina. Chapter 15, “The Crisis in Kenya,” in D&P.

Recommended:

Bratton, Michael. 2014. *Power Politics in Zimbabwe.* Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

1. **Regional Politics, Natural Resource Development, and War in the DRC (February 11)**

**GUEST LECTURE: Aaron Sampson, SIS Visiting Fellow**

Okeowo, Alexis. “Handel in Kinshasa,” *The New Yorker.* 9 November 2015. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/11/09/handel-in-kinshasa>

Weiss, Herbert. Chapter 22, “Voting for Change in the DRC,” in D&P.

Burgis, Tom. Chapter 2, “It is Forbidden to Piss in the Park” (pages 29-60)

\* Kabamba, Patience. 2012. “External Economic Exploitation in the DRC: 1990–2005,” *African Studies Review,* 55, 1 (2012): 123-130

Recommended:

Ascherson, Neal. “How Millions Have Been Dying in the Congo,” *New York Review of Books*, 5 April 2012. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2012/apr/05/how-millions-have-been-dying-congo>

Autesserre, Severine. 2011. *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International*

*Peacebuilding*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Council on Foreign Relations. 2015. *Info Guide on the Eastern Congo.*Hochschild, Adam. 1998. *King Lopold’s Ghost*. New York: Mariner.

Stearns, Jason. 2011. *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters.* New York: Public Affairs

1. **Africa Rising? The Political Economy of Good Governance (February 18)**

**Countries in focus: Ghana, Senegal, South Africa**

Burgis, Tom. Chapter 3, “Incubators of Poverty” (pages 61-79)

Lewis, Peter. Chapter 7, “Growth without Prosperity in Africa,” in D&P.

Cheeseman, Nic. Chapter 6, “The Democratic Dividend: Political Competition, Populism, and Public Policy” (pages 171-202)

\* Carbone, Giovanni Marco, Vincenzo Memoli, and Lia Quartapelle. 2016. “Are Lions Democrats? The Impact of Democratization on Economic Growth in Africa, 1980–2010,” *Democratization* 23 (1):27-48.

Recommended:

*Africa: Still Rising?* (2015) <http://www.ispionline.it/en/articles/article/africa-still-rising-ispi-report-14062>

Jerven, Morton. 2013. *Poor Numbers: How we are Misled by African Development Statistics and What to do About It.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Olopade, Dayo. 2015. *The Bright Continent: Breaking Rules and Making Change in Modern Africa*. New York: Mariner Books.

Roque, Paula Christina. 2010. “Angola’s Façade Democracy,” in D&P.

Reyntjens, Filip. 2015. *Political Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda*. Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press.

1. **IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM (February 25)**
2. **Gender (March 3)**

\* Tamale, Sylvia. 2013. “Confronting the Politics of Nonconforming Sexualities in Africa,”

*African Studies Review* 56, 2 (September), 31-45.

\* Ireland, Patrick. 2013. “A Macro-Level Analysis of the Scope, Causes and Consequences of

Homophobia in Africa,” *African Studies Review* 56, 2 (September), 47-66.

\* Encarnación, Omar. 2014. “Gay Rights: Why Democracy Matters,” *Journal of Democracy* 25,

3 (July): 90-104.

Craddock, Josh. “The New Cultural Imperialism,” *The National Review*, April 28, 2015.

<http://www.nationalreview.com/article/417556/new-cultural-imperialism-josh-craddock>

**Video in Class:** Chimamanda Adichie Ngozi, “We should all be Feminists” (30 minutes)

Recommended:

Adebanwi, Wale. 2014. “The Writer as Social Thinker,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 32 (4):405-20.

Berger, Iris. 2014. “African Women’s Movements in the Twentieth Century: A Hidden History,” *African Studies Review* 54, 3 (December), 1-19.

Mamah, Emeka, Clifford Ndujihe et al. “CAN, ACF, others condemn US criticisms of anti-gay

marriage law,” *Vanguard,* January 15, 2014.

<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/01/can-acf-others-condemn-us-criticisms-anti-gay-marriage-law/>

Sharlet, Jeff. 2010. “Straight Man’s Burden: the American roots of Uganda’s Anti-Gay Persecutions,” *Harper’s,*

September. <http://harpers.org/archive/2010/09/straight-mans-burden/>

White House. 2011. Presidential Memorandum -- International Initiatives to Advance the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons,” <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/12/06/presidential-memorandum-international-initiatives-advance-human-rights-l>

Thornberry, Elizabeth. 2015. “Virginity Testing, History, and the Nostalgia for Custom in

Contemporary South Africa,” *African Studies Review* 58, 3 (December), 128-48.

**🡪 SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS MARCH 10**

1. **Managing Diversity (March 17)**

Cheeseman, Nic. Conclusion, “Designing Democracy to Manage Diversity and Distrust” (pages

203-232)

\* LeVan, A. Carl. 2015. “Parallel Institutionalism and the Future of Representation in Nigeria,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 32, 3 (December), 1-21.

\* Bunte, Jonas B, and Laura Thaut Vinson. 2015. “Local power-sharing Institutions and Interreligious Violence in Nigeria,” *Journal of Peace Research*.

1. **Restraining Rulers (March 24)**

**GUEST SPEAKER: Aaron Sampson, Visiting SIS Fellow**

**Countries in Focus: Malawi, Kenya**

Posner and Young, Chapter 5, “The Institutionalization of Political Power in Africa,” in D&P.

Prempeh, Kwasi. Chapter 2, “Presidents Untamed,” in D&P

Bratton, Michael. Chapter 8, “Formal versus Informal Institutions in Africa,” in D&P.

\* Dionne, Kim Yi, and Boniface Dulani. 2013. “Constitutional provisions and executive

succession: Malawi's 2012 transition in comparative perspective,” *African Affairs* 112 (446):

111-37.

Also take a look at the Brookings Institution’s “African Leadership Transitions Tracker”

<http://www.brookings.edu/research/interactives/2015/africa-leadership-transitions>

Recommended reading:

Ginsburg, Melton and Zacahary Elkins. 2011. “On the Evasion of Executive Term Limits,” *William and Mary Law Review* 52 (6): 1807-72.

Guiatin, Jean-Baptiste and Carl LeVan. 2015. “Burkina Faso: How to Get the Transition Back on Track,” *AllAfrica.com,* September 24, 2015.

Maltz, Gideon. 2007. “The Case for Presidential Term Limits,” *Journal of Democracy* 18, (1): 128-42.

Siegle, Joseph. 2015. “Why Term Limits Matter for Africa,” International Relations and Security Network (July).

<http://isnblog.ethz.ch/politics/african-leaders-who-wont-go>

1. **Essay due (March 31)**

Class discussion about your research.

1. **China in Africa (April 7)**

**Countries in focus: Niger, Nigeria, Angola**

Burgis, Tom. Chapter 4, “Guanxi” and Chapter 6, “A Bridge to Beijing” (pages 81-102; 131-50)

\* Bradsher, Keith and Adam Nossiter. “In Nigeria, Chinese Investment Comes with a

Downside,” *New York Times,* December 5, 2015.

\* Mohan, Giles, and Ben Lampert. 2013. “Negotiating China: Reinserting African agency into

China–Africa relations,” *African Affairs* 112 (446): 92-110.

Recommended:

Brautigam, Deborah. 2011. *The Dragon’s Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

1. **Environmental Politics and Neoliberalism in the Niger Delta (April 14)**

Burgis, Tom. Chapter 8, “God has nothing to do with it” (pages 175-208)

Adunbi, Omolade. Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2 (pages 1-93)

1. **Rebellion for Rights and “Resource Control” (April 21)**

Adunbi, Omolade. Chapters 4 – conclusion (pages 124-246)

 **TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM DUE APRIL 28**

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease), American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community.  Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students.  These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods.  Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency.  Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness.  Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies.   In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site ([www. prepared. american.edu](http://www.american.edu)) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean’s office for course and school/ college-specific information.