

**THE POLITICS OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICA**  
**Political Science 453**

**Wednesdays 2pm to 5pm**

William Reno, Fall 2010  
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This syllabus is available at: [www.willreno.org](http://www.willreno.org)

**Objectives:** This is an advanced political science graduate seminar in contemporary African politics. It covers the major debates concerning the political, economic, and security challenges that African societies have faced in the last two decades and are likely to face in the coming decade. This course assumes some familiarity with African politics and history. It is likely that some of the students will not be political scientists. Such students are absolutely welcome in this course. This class is designed to accommodate students from across a range of disciplines. The class will provide information and approaches that political science graduate students will find to be useful to prepare for the comparative politics comprehensive exam. Anthropologists and historians will find that some of the readings are written by scholars in their disciplines. These students also will see how political scientists approach some of the questions that are central concerns in their disciplines. Students from Sociology, Journalism, the Business School, and elsewhere are welcome and will profit from this course too.

The reading assignments are chosen with a view to linking the study of Africa to broader currents of the study of comparative politics and international relations. This approach will equip advanced graduate students with scholarship that they can use to reflect upon broad political prospects and to generate important research questions. Developments in Africa also shed light on basic issues of wider interest such as how political leaders constitute legitimate authority amidst insecurity and disorder. What is the relationship between ethnicity and poverty? Why is corruption compatible with economic growth in some circumstances but not in others? Does democratization increase or decrease the risks of internal warfare? Why is African civil society more vigorous in terms of the density of organizing, yet apparently less effective at promoting change than post-Soviet varieties, contrary to general expectations in 1989? What exactly *is* “civil society” in this context, and is it found where international donors and activists think it appears? Will states as currently constituted in Africa survive? Are Africans inventing new forms of political organizations—states and non-states—that are compatible with global society and are able to manage global economic pressures? What are the prospects for closer regional cooperation? Is the era of military rule finished or just in abeyance?

**Course Requirements and Grading:** Each student will be asked to complete readings, actively participate in seminar meetings, and write a term paper. (There will be modified requirements for undergraduates who take this course.) Students will also submit written commentaries on readings at the beginning of each class, starting with the second week class meeting. These commentaries are intended to provide students with easily accessible notes that will help serve as preparation for those who plan to take political science field exams.

Students will turn in summaries of weekly readings at the start of each class. These summaries may be a condensed version of your regular reading notes. Students will submit five of these commentaries for formal evaluation. These will take the form of one to two page double space essays that reflect basic issues and questions raised in each week's readings. These issues and questions may also reflect earlier reading especially where prior weeks' assignments address related topics. The five essays will receive evaluations of excellent, good, fair, or poor.

Students will pick one class in which to give a five minute oral presentation to initiate discussion. Presenters will refrain from summarizing readings. A good strategy is to explain how and why that week's readings contrast / reinforce approaches to other topics encountered in the term. Put readings into a broader context, either in reference to the study of Africa, or in the wider terms of political science.

Each student will compose a paper based on readings or topics addressed in the course. Political scientists searching for a second year paper topic may use this assignment to explore related ideas. This paper should be about 12-15 pages long. A hard copy of this paper will be due on Wednesday, November 24th<sup>th</sup> (the last day of WCAS classes).

Classroom presentations, commentaries on readings, and general participation will count toward fifty percent of the evaluation for the course grade. The paper will constitute the remaining fifty percent of the course grade evaluation.

**Required Textbooks:** Two books are required for this class. All students should purchase the Bates book. Students should purchase either the Bayart book or the Clapham book (or both if desired). The former finds a distinctive African trajectory of politics rooted in local political cultures and practices. The latter stresses international influences on the shape of politics in African states. The aim of this choice is to set up a debate about external – internal influences during the 29 September class.

Robert Bates. 2008. *When Things Fell Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa*, (NY: Cambridge). **Required of all.**

Jean-François Bayart, 2009. *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (Cambridge: Polity). [This book is available as *L'État en Afrique: La politique du ventre* (Paris: Fayard, in editions of 1989 and 2006)]

~ or ~

Christopher Clapham, 1996. *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival* (NY: Cambridge).

Confused as to which to choose? Read Clapham's [review](#) of Bayart's book in *African Affairs* [if you have an NU password]. You can find Chris Brown's [review](#) of Clapham's book in *Canadian Journal of African Studies*. Most other readings are contained in a hefty reading packet available via Blackboard, a password protected site accessible to all who are registered for this course.

## CLASS CALENDAR

### **22 September: Introduction to the Course**

We will discuss the course and organize students for subsequent class meetings

### **29 September: Patronage Politics (“Neo-Patrimonialism”)**

Why is patronage politics so pervasive in Africa? Why is patronage politics in Africa so much more injurious to economic and political stability in Africa, compared to similar levels of what is variously called “corruption” and “crony politics” as found in East Asia and elsewhere? Several of these articles take an institutional perspective toward understanding the operation of patronage-based politics in Africa. Can this aspect of politics be understood within the general institutional paradigm, as it is applied to politics in other societies? This concerns comparability, as some of the other articles point to cultural features of African societies that those scholars believe imparts distinctive features to patronage politics in Africa.

Max Weber. 1957. “Traditional Authority,” in his *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, (Glencoe, IL: Free Press), 341-58.

Peter Evans. 1995. “States,” in his *Embedded Autonomy: States & Industrial Transformation*. (Princeton), 43-54.

Peter Evans, James Rauch. 1999. “Bureaucracy and Growth: A Cross-National Analysis of the Effects of ‘Weberian’ State Structures on Economic Growth,” *American Sociological Review*, 64:5, 748-66.

J-P Olivier de Sardan. 1999. “A Moral Economy of Corruption in Africa?” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37:1, 25-52.

Christian von Soest, 2007. “How Does Neopatrimonialism Affect the African State’s Revenues? The Case of Tax Collection in Zambia,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 45:4, 621-45.

Michael Schatzberg. 2001. “Matrix I—The Father-Chief,” in his *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 145-73.

William Reno. 2002. “Mafiya Troubles, Warlord Crises,” in Mark Beissinger & Crawford Young, *Beyond State Crisis? Postcolonial Africa and Post-Soviet Eurasia in Comparative Perspective*, (Baltimore & Washington, DC: JHU & Brookings), 105-27.

### **6 October: Making Sense of Patronage and Its Role in Shaping the Nature of Politics—Views from Global and Local Practices of Politics.**

Are African states distinctive in ways that are not shared by states elsewhere? Consider the nature of state formation in Africa. How did Cold War era competition affect the formation of

African states? How do local cultural dynamics mark the development of a distinctive state / regime politics? The influence of the global political economy and the global system of states on the domestic politics of African states features differently in each book.

Jean-Francois Bayart, 2009. *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (Cambridge: Polity) or Christopher Clapham, 1996. *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival* (NY: Cambridge).

### **13 October: Regime Strategies—General Responses to Instability and Political Threats**

Does external assistance hinder or promote positive economic performance? What is the relation between domestic politics and poor economic performance? This week's reading considers the possibility of moral hazard; that economic assistance provides reluctant reformers with incentives to avoid making difficult decisions. The book also makes controversial claims about the ideologies of African technocratic elites and their views about the causes of economic failure.

Robert Bates. 2008. *When Things Fell Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa*, (NY: Cambridge). [You should have purchased this short book some time ago.]

See also Macartan Humphreys & Robert Bates. 2005. "Political Institutions and Economic Policies: Lessons from Africa," *British Journal of Political Science*, 35, 403-26.

### **20 October: Regime Strategies that Failed--Coups d'Etats and other Non-Constitutional Changes of Government**

Is state politics and succession in Africa becoming more institutionalized along the lines of evolving global norms? Put in terms of a *longue durée*, can we look at the turmoil of the post-colonial African as a passing phase, somewhat like the tumultuous first fifty years of independence in Latin America? How does patronage politics shape military coups d'états? Are contemporary attempts to seize power by force more prone to failure, compared to the coups of the 1960s to 1980s? What causes this (apparent) shift: external sanctions or aspects of domestic politics? Is a new regional architecture of security developing in Africa's state system? For who is this security intended and who does it serve—regimes or citizens?

Patrick McGowan. 2003. "African Military Coups d'Etat, 1956-2001: Frequency, Trends and Distribution," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41:3 (Sept), 339-70. (Wikipedia keeps a reasonable updated [list](#) as well.)

Maj. Gen. Chris Alli. 2001. "Military Interventions and *coups d'états*," in his *Federal Republic of Nigeria Army*, (Lagos: Malthouse Press), 208-47.

Adigun Agbaje. 2002. "Personal Rule and Regional Politics in Ibadan under Military Regimes, 1986-1996," in J Guyer, L Denzer, A Agbaje, eds. *Money Struggles and City Life*, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann), 3-26.

Herbert Howe. 2001. "Roots and Results of African Military Unprofessionalism," in his *Ambiguous Order: Military Forces in African States*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner), 27-71.

Paul Williams. 2007. "From Non-intervention to Non-indifference: The Origins and Development of the African Union's Security Culture," *African Affairs*, 106: 423 (April), 253-79.

Julian Ku & Jide Nzelibe. 2006. "Do International Criminal Tribunals Deter or Exacerbate Humanitarian Atrocities?" *Washington University Law Review*, 84:4, 777-834.

## **27 October: The Elusive Quest for Economic Growth**

What role does Africa's position in the world's political economy play in explaining poor economic performance? Why does the exploitation of natural resources appear to be linked to political and economic turmoil in some countries in Africa but not in others? These articles look at the relationship between Africa's position in global society and the organization of external economic links in ways that recall Clapham's & Bayart's work. That helps to frame the consideration of the articles further down on this week's list that analyze the seemingly tight links between the exploitation of natural resources and the development of a predatory style of politics.

Arthur Goldsmith. 2001. "Foreign Aid and Statehood in Africa," *International Organization*, 55:1 (Winter), 123-48.

Randall Stone. 2004. "The Political Economy of IMF Lending in Africa," *American Political Science Review*, 98:4 (Nov), 577-91.

Thomas Callaghy. 2001. "Networks and Governance in Africa: Innovation in the Debt Regime," and William Reno, "How Sovereignty Matters: International Markets and the Political Economy of Local Politics in Weak States," in T Callaghy, R Kassimir, R Latham, eds. *Intervention & Transnationalism in Africa*, (NY: Cambridge University Press), 115-48 & 197-215.

Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler. 2001. "Greed and Grievance in Civil Wars," (World Bank).

Nathan Jensen & Leonard Wantchekon. 2004. "Resource Wealth and Political Regimes in Africa," *Comparative Political Studies*, 37:7 (Sept), 816-40.

Una Okonkwo. 2002. "Igbo Emigrants in Chicago Invest at Home, 1986-1996," in J Guyer, L Denzer, A Agbaje, eds. *Money Struggles and City Life*, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann), 239-55.

Sandra Joireman. 2007. "Enforcing New Property Rights in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Ugandan Constitution and the 1998 Land Act." *Comparative Politics*, 39:4 (July),

## **3 November: Approaches to the Study of Ethnic Politics.**

Is Ethnic Identity Essential or Contingent? What Is the Impact of Violence and Uncertainty on Ethnic Politics? The first article examines the impact of rapid social change on group identities.

The second considers that impact of formal institutional structures on the formation of these identities. The rest of the readings analyze the role of conflict in shaping ethnic and other group identities.

Robert Melson & Howard Wolpe. 1970. "Modernization and the Politics of Communalism: A Theoretical Perspective," *American Political Science Review*, 64:4, 112-30.

Rui de Figueiredo, Jr and Barry Weingast. 1999. "The Rationality of Fear: Political Opportunism and Ethnic Conflict," Barbara Walter, Jack Snyder, eds. *Civil Wars, Insecurity, and Intervention*, (NY: Columbia), 261-302.

Daniel Posner. 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 (Nov), 529-45.

Crawford Young. 2002. "Deciphering Disorder in Africa: Is Identity the Key?" *World Politics*, 54:4 (July), 532-57.

Donald Rothchild. 2001. "Ethnic Fears and Security Dilemmas: Managing Uncertainty in Africa," Miroslav Nincic, Joseph Lepgold, eds. *Being Useful: Policy Relevance and International Relations Theory*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan), 237-66.

Peter Mwangi Kagwanja. 2003. "Facing Mount Kenya or Facing Mecca? The *Mungiki*, Ethnic Violence and the Politics of the Moi Succession in Kenya, 1987-2002," *African Affairs*, 102: 406, 25-49.

## **10 November: Civil Society and Africa's Experience with Democracy.**

Under what conditions are elections stabilizing or destabilizing events? When and how is 'civil society' likely to coalesce around liberal ideas and when is it likely to espouse ill-liberal ideas? To what extent is democratic reform a result of popular anger and mass mobilization, a program of a reform-minded elite, or a response to international pressure? What happens when political reform is undertaken in the context of instability and uncertainty?

Richard Joseph. 1987. "The Problem of Democracy," in his *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria*, (NY: Cambridge & Ibadan: Spectrum), 15-68.

Catherine Boone. 2009. "Electoral Populism Where Property Rights are Weak: Land Politics in Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa," *Comparative Politics*, 41:2 (Jan), 183-201.

Staffan Lindberg Minion K.C. Morrison. 2008. "Are African Voters Really Ethnic or Clientelistic? Survey Evidence from Ghana," *Political Science Quarterly*, 123:1, 95-122.

Nicolas van de Walle. 2003. "Presidentialism and Clientelism in Africa's Emerging Party Systems," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41:2 (June), 297-321.

Augustine Ikelegbe. 2001. "The Perverse Manifestation of Civil Society: Evidence from Nigeria," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 39:1, 1-24.

David Harris. 1999. "From 'Warlord' to 'Democratic' President: How Charles Taylor Won the 1997 Liberian Election," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37:3 (Sept), 431-55.

Filip Reyntjens. 2005. "The Privatisation and Criminalisation of Public Space in the Geopolitics of the Great Lakes Region," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 43:4 (Dec), 587-607.

Leonardo Villalón. 2010. "From Argument to Negotiation: Constituting Democracy in African Muslim Contexts," *Comparative Politics*, 42:2 (July),

### **17 November: Civil Society and Social Movements More Widely Considered:**

Why are there no revolutions in Africa? Why is it so difficult to form armed "social movements" based on a clear ideology and political program? Are women's movements really transforming Africa's political landscapes? To what extent are rights-based discourses rooted in local concerns, versus foreign transplants? Are there other, often overlooked venues where social movements are organizing?

Ibrahim Abdullah. 1998. "Bush Path to Destruction: The Origin and Character of the Revolutionary United Front / Sierra Leone," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 36:2, 203-35.

Thandika Mkandawire. 2002. "The Terrible Toll of Post-Colonial 'Rebel Movements' in Africa: Towards an Explanation of the Violence against the Peasantry," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 40:2, 181-215.

Aili Tripp, Isabel Casimiro, Joy Kwesiga, and Alice Mungwa (co-authors). 2009. *African Women's Movements: Transforming Political Landscapes*, (New York: Cambridge), 62-107

Aili Tripp. 2009. "In Pursuit of Authority: Civil Society and Rights-Based Discourses in Africa," In John Harbeson and Donald Rothchild. Eds., *Africa in World Politics*, 4th Ed. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press), 140-63.

Richard Fanthorpe & Roy Maconachie. 2010. "Beyond the 'Crisis of Youth'? Mining, Farming and Civil Society in Post-war Sierra Leone," *African Affairs*, 109:435 (April), 251-72.

### **24 November: Challenges of Constituting and Maintaining Political Order.**

Can Africa's weak(er) states survive? Why have they proven to be so durable, even after almost half a century of independence? These readings consider the dilemmas confronting proposals for redesigning Africa's political frameworks. Kamanu observes the surprising emergence of collective understandings among African leaders in their pursuits of personal security. Mazrui, Anonymous, and Anderson find surprising instances of international and internal self-regulation

to preserve order. These developments should be interesting to anyone who studies cooperation in the absence of strong formal institutions.

Jeffrey Herbst. 1996/97. "Responding to State Failure in Africa," *International Security*, 21:3 (Winter), 120-44, and Richard Joseph & Jeffrey Herbst. 1997. "Correspondence," *International Security*, 22:2 (Fall), 175-84.

Steve Brayton. 2002. "Outsourcing War: Mercenaries and the Privatization of Peacekeeping," *Journal of International Affairs*, 55:2 (Spring), 303-29.

Ali Mazrui. 1993. "Thoughts on Assassination in Africa," Martha Crenshaw, ed., *Terrorism in Africa*, (Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing Co.), 5-40.

Onyeonoro Kamanu. 1974. "Secession and the Right of Self-Determination: An OAU Dilemma," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 12:3, 355-76.

Anonymous. 2002. "Government Recognition in Somalia and Regional Political Stability in the Horn of Africa," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 40:2 (June), 247-72.

David Anderson. 2002. "Vigilantes, Violence, and the Politics of Public Order in Kenya," *African Affairs*, 101 (Oct), 531-55.

Deborah Brautigam. 2009. *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa* (NY: Oxford University Press), to be determined.

### **The future: Topics that We Did Not Have Time to Consider in Depth**

If we had more time at our disposal, this course would have focused more intensely on the politics of Africa's lagging economies. Of particular interest would have been some of the different paths of development found in some of Africa's fast-growing economies such as in Ethiopia and Angola. Is there a "Chinese model" of development that attracts some of Africa's more authoritarian regimes and which some have begun to master?

It would have been interesting to investigate in more depth the nature of multiparty electoral regime politics in Africa. The problems of violence that attend elections in many countries remind one of debates among political scientists in the 1960s and after concerning the sustainability of democratic regimes in poor countries (i.e. Samuel Huntington's 1968 classic, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (Yale) and in some of the works of Adam Przeworski). Do recent trends in some African countries debunk the democratization literature intended to explain the "Third Wave" of transitions?

Since I teach a graduate seminar on the politics of violence, we did not devote a great deal of attention in this course to the evolution of armed conflict in the domestic and inter-state realms. If we had done so, we would have spent more time considering basic questions concerning the nature of political order and its relation to violence in the African context and compared these considerations to the study of violence and order in other contexts.

