

University of Toronto,  
Faculty of Arts and Science,  
Department of Political Science,

Academic Year 2023-2024

## Contemporary African Politics: Dynamics and Challenges POL 309H1 S, LEC0101

**Instructor:** Prof. Ato Kwamena Onoma

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**Class time:** Wednesday 1-3pm

**Office Hours:** By appointment

**THEMES:** This course explores the main drivers of political organization and change in contemporary Africa, focusing on how national, regional, and international factors shape institutions, patterns of participation and political change. It considers major scholarly debates in the study of African politics and political economy and develops analytical skills for comparative study of this diverse continent.

**FORMAT AND REQUIREMENTS:** This is a lecture with a significant discussion segment. This course will be in-person.

**PREREQUISITES:** 1.0 credit in POL/ JPA/ JPF/ JPI/ JPR/ JPS/ JRA courses

### ASSESSMENT

- *Class participation (15%):* Informed and sustained participation informed by course readings during the entire semester;
- *Africa map quiz (15%):* A closed-book Africa map quiz administered in class on week 3;
- *Analysis of work by an African writer (Chigozie Obioma, **An orchestra of minorities**) (20%):* Carefully read the novel and analyze it with one or two of the themes of this course in mind. Be explicit in relating the novel to the political economic theme(s) treated in class. This is not supposed to be a summary or general review of the novel. You should build on a *very short* summary of the novel to show the ways in which the work engages creatively with facets of contemporary African political economy. You should demonstrate mastery

of the theme(s) chosen through your writing. Reference specific aspects of the novel and relevant literature treated in class. The paper should be 3 pages long (New Times Roman, Font 12, double-spaced). Submit papers by class time on 9am in **March 15, 2024** through **Ouriginal**. This is a hard deadline. A 2% penalty will be assessed each day, including weekends on all unauthorized late submissions. Keep a copy of your paper until the corrected assignment is returned to you.

- *Mid-term take home, open book test (25%):* You will have one week to submit your response (4 double-spaced pages each, Times New Roman, font 12: around 1200 words) to one out of two questions posed by the instructor. All papers must be submitted online by 9am on **February 15, 2024** through **Ouriginal**. This is a hard deadline. A 2% penalty will be assessed each day, including weekends on all unauthorized late submissions.
- *Final take home, open book test (25%):* You will have two weeks to submit your response (4 double-spaced pages each, Times New Roman, font 12: around 1200 words) to one out of two questions posed by the instructor. You will receive the questions no later than March 22, 2023. All papers must be submitted online by 9am on **April 11, 2024** through **Ouriginal**. This is a hard deadline. A 2% penalty will be assessed each day, including weekends on all unauthorized late submissions.

**ABSENCE:** Students who absent themselves from class should complete the Absence Declaration form available to them directly on ACORN. Students should also inform the instructor of their absence.

**EXTENSIONS:** The deadlines for submission of assignments are hard deadlines. Extensions will only be granted in extraordinary circumstances.

**PLAGIARISM and submission of examination papers:** “Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and will be dealt with accordingly. For further clarification and information on plagiarism please see Writing at the University of Toronto <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources>”.

“Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University’s plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool’s reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).”

**ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS:** The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/> as soon as possible.

**COURSE MATERIALS:** The materials below are required readings that must be completed *before class*. Almost all are available electronically through the University of Toronto library website. Those not available through the library website can be found in electronic format on the Quercus site for this class. Readings that are not available electronically can be found on short term loan – Course Reserve at Robarts Library.

**Week 1 (January 10): Decolonization and self-determination**

- Adom Getachew. 2019. *Worldmaking after empire: The rise and fall of self-determination* Princeton: Princeton University Press (Ch: 1, 3, 4) [Online]

**Week 2 (January 17): The African state**

- Thandika Mkandawire. 2001. Thinking about Developmental States in Africa. *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 25 (3): 289–313.

**Week 3 (January 24): Neoliberal economic reform and democratic governance**

- Thandika Mkandawire. 1999. Crisis management and the making of “choiceless democracies”, in Richard Joseph ed. *State, conflict, and democracy in Africa* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner)
- Adebayor Olukoshi. 2003. The Elusive Prince of Denmark: Structural Adjustment and the Crisis of Governance in Africa, in Thandika Mkandawire and Charles Soludo eds. *African voices on structural adjustment* (Dakar: CODESRIA).

**Week 4 (January 31): Aid(s)**

- Adia Benton. 2015. *HIV exceptionalism: Development through disease in Sierra Leone*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (Ch: 1, 2, 5) [Online]

**Week 5 (February 7): Social policy in Africa**

- Katja Hujo. 2021. Rethinking social policy in Africa- A transformative approach, in Jimi Adesina ed. *Social policy in the African context* (Dakar: CODESRIA)
- Ndangwa Noyoo and Emmanuel Boon. 2021. Nation-building and the nationalist discourse: Revisiting social policy in Ghana and Zambia in the first decade of Independence, in Jimi Adesina ed. *Social policy in the African context* (Dakar: CODESRIA)
- Jimi Adesina. 2021. Social policy in the African context: An introduction, in Jimi Adesina ed. *Social policy in the African context* (Dakar: CODESRIA)

**Week 6 (February 14): Youth**

- Alcinda Honwana. 2012. *The time of youth: Work, social change, and politics in Africa*. Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press. (Ch: 1, 2, 3, 4) [Excerpts]

**Week 7 (February 28): Migration**

- Caroline Melly. 2011. Titanic tales of missing men: Reconfigurations of national identity and gendered presence in Dakar, Senegal, *American Ethnologist* 38 (2): 361-76.

- Ato Onoma. 2021. The allure of scapegoating return migrants during a pandemic, *Medical Anthropology* 40 (7): 653-66.

#### **Week 8 (March 6): Gender**

- Awino Okech. 2021. Gender and state-building conversations: the discursive production of gender identity in Kenya and Rwanda, *Conflict, Security & Development* 21 (4): 501-515
- Ann Whitehead and Dzodzi Tsikata. 2003. Policy discourses on women's land rights in Sub-Saharan Africa: The implications of the re-turn to the Customary. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 3 (1-2): 67-112.

#### **Week 9 (March 13): Sexuality**

- Aminata Mbaye. 2018. Queer political subjectivities in Senegal: Gaining a voice within new religious landscapes of belonging. *Critical African Studies* 10 (3): 301-14.
- Thabo Msibi. 2011. The Lies We Have Been Told: On (Homo) Sexuality in Africa. *Africa Today* 58 (1): 55-77.

#### **Week 10 (March 20): ethnicity**

- Peter Ekeh. 1975. Colonialism and the two publics in Africa. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17 (1): 91-112.
- Kanchan Chandra. 2006. What is ethnic identity and does it matter?. *Annual Review of Political Science* 9: 397-424.

#### **Week 11 (March 27): Wars and violence**

- Zubairu Wai. 2012. *Epistemologies of African conflicts: Violence, evolutionism and the war in Sierra Leone*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan (Ch: 1, 2, 4) [Online]

#### **Week 12 (April 3): Radicalization and (counter)terrorism**

- Roland Marchal and Zekeria Ould Ahmed Salem. 2018. What is the concept of “radicalization” good for?, *Politique africaine*, 149 (1): 5-20.
- Rahmane Idrissa. 2021. The Sahel: A cognitive mapping. *New Left Review* 132 (Nov/Dec): 5-39