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  
**Office:** 3079 Sydney Smith Hall  
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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](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](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/](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

Week 2 (January 17): The African state

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

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

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


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


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


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


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