

Winter 2022
Wednesdays and Fridays; 4:05 to 5:25 pm (EST)

In-person
TBD
Patrick Wight, Dr.
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This is an interdisciplinary research seminar on the politics of contemporary African societies. Important themes include: language and decolonizing knowledge; the urban-rural divide; competitions for land and resources, such as the legacies of colonial land systems, foreign land investments and diverging conceptions of indigenous land rights; labour, trade unions and collective action in urban Africa; identity and citizenships as it pertains to national and sub-national identities; the significance of formal and informal institutions; democracy, civil society and social movements; competing conceptions of gender and sexuality; intractable conflicts in the Horn of Africa; self-determination, borders and secession and; Africa's foreign relations with the West and China.

The overarching theme that unites these topics involves an exploration of the legacies of colonialism and the effects of neo-colonialism since African independence. Africa continues to grapple with the reverberations of the colonial dislocation, a time when political communities were organized around the extractive needs of European powers. In the 21st century, globalization—in the form of neo-liberalism promoted by western states and new partnerships with China—has influenced local livelihoods, along with the processes of regional, continental and global integration. Given the structural nature of the continent's development problems, African peoples and states are not fully in control of their capital accumulation, internal markets or dependency on external forces.

Dynamics of class, race, nationality, ethnicity, gender and sexuality in Africa nonetheless also reflect pre-colonial modes of governance and operate according to their own logics.

As a graduate-style research seminar, this course is driven by student participation. Students must complete the assigned readings before seminar sessions and use them to engage in an informed discussion about the week's theme. The instructor's role is to facilitate and direct the discussion when necessary, rather than to lecture. The reading, writing and participation requirements are designed for advanced undergraduate students interested in a survey of important themes in contemporary African politics and society. Weekly themes should be analyzed from a range of disciplinary perspectives, including political science, development studies, history, economics, sociology and anthropology. An important outcome involves students preparing a research paper under supervision.

Presenters should circulate one relevant academic background reading to students at least one week before they are due to present. The presentation itself should be 15-20 minutes in length. It will be followed by a discussion based on the presentation and the circulated readings. Presence and participation is required for all other presentations.

- Students will submit a 20-25 page essay based on their research project. It should be submitted to the instructor via *MyCourses*

Legacies of colonial land systems

Readings:

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Collective action in South Africa

Readings:

- Karin

Africa's shadow states

Readings:

- Michael Bratton, "Formal Versus Informal Institutions in Africa," *Journal of Democracy* 18, no 3 (2007), 96-110
- William Reno, "Clandestine Economies: Violence and States in Africa," *Journal of International Affairs* 53, no 2 (2000), 433-459.

Additional Materials:

- Nic Cheeseman, "Institutions and Democracy in Africa," *Anotida Chikumbu*, September 29, 2020; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGeudCRlrMc>
- Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (Longman, 1993).

The informal economy

Readings:

- Janet L. Roitman, "The Politics of Informal Markets in Sub-Saharan Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 28, no 4 (1990), 671-696.
- Nick Bernhards, "Placing African Labour in Global Capitalism: The Politics of Irregular Work," *Review of African Political Economy* 46, no 160 (2019), 294-303.

Additional Materials:

- Brice Ngameni, "Coronavirus: Now is the Time to Build a Future for Africa's Informal Workers," *The Africa Report*, June 3, 2020; <https://www.theafricareport.com/29188/coronavirus-now-is-the-time-to-build-a-future-for-africas-informal-workers/>
- "The Impact of Covid-19 on the Informal Economy in Africa," *International Labour Organization*, May 6, 2020; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r3yoLomthrM>

Democracy and elections in Africa

Readings:

- Kennedy Ochieng Opalo, "African Elections: Two Divergent Trends," *Journal of Democracy* 23, no 3 (2012), 80-93.
- David Williams, "Making a Liberal State: 'Good Governance' in Ghana," *Review of African Political Economy* 37, no 126 (2010), 403-419.

Additional Materials:

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State-civil society relations

Readings:

- Usman A. Tar, *The Politics of Neoliberal Democracy in Africa: State and Civil Society in Nigeria* (Tauris Academic Studies, 2009), 1-53.
- Adam Habib, "State-Civil Society Relations in Post-Apartheid South Africa," *Social Research* 72, no 3 (2005), 671-692.

Additional Materials:

- Keketso Moeti, "South Africa: What Role for the Civil Society?" *Institut Français des Relations Internationales*, June 13, 2017; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VkdjR0RvFmA>

Femininity/masculinity and queer identities

Readings:

- Robert Morrell, Rachel Jewkes and Graham Lindegger, "Hegemonic Masculinity/Masculinities in South Africa: Culture, Power and Gender Politics," *Men and Masculinities* 15, no 1 (2021), 11-30.
- David Tonghou Ngong, "African Indigenous Religions and Queer Dignity," *Africa is a Country*, November 9, 2021; <https://africasacountry.com/2021/11/african-indigenous-religions-and-queer-dignity>

Additional Materials:

- "Is Homosexuality un-African?" *SABC News: The Big Debate*, March 3, 2013; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUBEq1c4sjc>

Gender, human rights and development

Readings:

- J. Oloka-Onyango and Sylvia Tamale, "The Personal is Political, or Why Women's Rights are Indeed Human Rights: An African Perspective on International Feminism," *Human Rights Quarterly* 17 (1995), 691-731.
- Catherine Scott, "The Gender of Dependency Theory: Women as Workers, From Neocolonialism in West Africa to the Implosion of Contemporary Capitalism," *Review of African Political Economy* 48, no 167 (2021), 66-81.

Additional Materials:

- Matshepo Msibi, "Gender Inequality in the Home," *TED Talks*, January 14, 2021; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqF5C0xU-f4>
- Reagan Adenyi, "African Roots of Gender Equality," *TED Talks*, December 18, 2017; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zgW8CZENm7c>

Additional Materials:

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Additional Materials:

- Milton Allimadi, "Patrice Lumumba and Thomas Sankara's Fight Against Colonialism and Debt," *TMBS*, November 29, 2019;

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJtF9_GHMAY

- Tat'yana Deych, "China in Africa: A Case of Neo-Colonialism or a Win-Win Strategy?" *Outlines of Global Transformations* (2019), 63-82.

Students present their research