Strategic Survey of Africa
DSS 5311
Summer 2018
Online course

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Course overview
Reading the daily news, one might observe that the African continent is drawing increased interest in matters of U.S. national security. And yet, in order to properly address issues such as security and development, a deeper understanding of the region is critical. To this end, this graduate course employs a theoretical framework that offers a strategic overview of socio-economic issues, political contexts, and security challenges facing African states.

Given the rich diversity on the continent, a seven-week course cannot begin to address all of the differences therein. Rather, this structural framework offers students the rudimentary tools required to continue a personal exploration of the possibilities and challenges confronting African societies. To that effect, the selected readings in this course demonstrate different currents of thought with regard to political structures and cultural contexts, how and why rulers might choose various methods of control, the challenges of creating and preserving order, and the security context with which African regimes are confronted.

While we explore, on the one hand, the diversity that exists between and within states, one can also discern certain commonalities in the challenges with which they are confronted. However, drawing parallels must be done prudently in order to avoid the trap of addressing the continent as a single entity (i.e. essentialism, ‘all of Africa is the same’). While commonalities may exist in, say, certain political structures, a great deal of diversity is likewise evident once one looks beneath the surface. Simultaneously, students must bypass the tendency to consider the African continent as ‘different’ (i.e. exceptionalism, or ‘Africa is a unique case’). Rather, commonalities may be revealed between existing African political and socio-economic structures and those found throughout the globe (e.g. ‘corruption’, as it is commonly termed, may be found in multiple settings – to include our own country). Thus, students are encouraged to explore the rich diversity to be found throughout the African continent, both between and within countries, while understanding one may also draw comparisons with other countries, regions, and locations around the world.

Course objectives
1. Introduce students to important theoretical approaches in a strategic survey of the continent, to include but not limited to:
   a. Critical approach to the Westphalian state system
   b. Neo-patrimonialism
   c. Anthropological approaches
2. Critically explore state-centered approaches to control and security
3. Critically examine state sovereignty as it relates to security in African states
Course requirements and grading
Reading the assigned texts each week provides a starting point toward an understanding of course subject material. Students are expected to reflect upon these texts through active participation in weekly discussion boards as well as comments on the posts of others in the course.

Students will also compose a final paper leveraging course readings and discussions to examine a significant related topic. While the span of acceptable topics is generally broad, students are encouraged to write on a more specific topic of their choosing (e.g. how decentralization influenced country Y’s political strategies of control; or, how might security best be strengthened – for whom or what? – in country Z) in order to keep their paper focused. Students will propose their topic to the instructor prior to beginning detailed work on the paper. Your paper should present an argument demonstrating original thought with a consistent structure, leveraging additional scholarly resources while drawing upon course material.

Total course points: 500 points

Quiz and Discussion Board Grading – 275 points
NOTE: All assignment due times are based on Mountain Time (UTEP time)
Students must complete all listed requirements to successfully pass this course, to include:

- Weekly Quizzes (7 total: 10 points/quiz for 70 pts, Final Quiz 30 points) – 100 points
  • Students will complete the Weekly Quiz not later than Saturday at 1 PM. The Final Quiz will be due Friday of the last week at 1 PM.
  • Quiz answers will be graded on content, grammar, and presentation (i.e. logical introduction, synthesis, and conclusion). Answers should not simply repeat what you read, but should show insight (and an argument, where applicable) into the readings.
  • NOTE: Course materials may be used for reference during all online quizzes, but answers should reflect original thought, and will be graded as such.

- Weekly online discussion board (DB) post, and comments/replies to at least two classmates each week (7 weeks total, 25 points each week) – 175 points
  • Weekly posts are due not later than Friday at 7 PM. Postings after 7 PM on Friday will automatically receive a letter grade deduction.
  • Weekly posts will be essays, between 400 and 700 words, which reflect basic issues and questions raised in each week's readings.
  • The posted questions in the DB are suggestions only – students are free to raise other issues in their posts.
  • Outside readings may be used, but should be minimal – base posts on assigned readings.
  • Replies to classmates are due not later than Saturday afternoon at 3 PM each week.
  • DB posts/replies will be graded on content, grammar, and presentation (i.e. logical introduction, synthesis, and conclusion)
  • See Discussion Board Grading Rubric for further guidance.
Participation – 50 points

- Students are expected to participate in weekly discussions throughout the course – not simply during the graded postings/replies noted above – participation scores are based on active online engagement.

Research Paper, to include Summary Question/Response – 175 points

The final class assignment is to research an issue or problem that is of particular interest to you in the region. Detailed guidance is provided in the Final Paper Guidelines on Blackboard. There is one intermediate deadline; however, students should begin to plan the paper even earlier.

July 23: Research Paper Proposal: Two-paragraph description of the problem or issue to be studied is due by this date, to include 10 citations of books/articles specific to the topic.

August 10: Research Paper Due. The research paper should discuss the question of interest and why it is a significant problem (briefly), and describe/analyze the issue you have identified in the literature. **Do not devote space in the paper to summarizing assigned course readings on your topic.** The research paper is an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to synthesize the material presented in the relevant literature to a practical question of interest.

August 10: Research Paper Summary posted on Blackboard: You will make a short summary of the key findings of your research paper. Post your summary by this date for the whole class to read. The class will be required to ask questions of other authors. Each student must ask at least one question to three (3) different authors, to which authors will respond. Questions are due **August 12.** Answers to questions are due **August 15.**

- Final paper will be 8-12 pages in length (12-pt Times New Roman font, double-spaced, using endnotes, which are **not included** in the page count – no footnotes permitted). **The paper is due not later than Friday, August 10 at 9 PM.** Each 24-hour period delay will result in a 10% reduction in the grade (e.g. receipt of the paper the following day at 8 AM results in maximum score of 90%).
- Final paper will be submitted to the instructor via email, in Microsoft Word format
- See Final Paper Guidelines on Blackboard for the rubric and further guidance

Discussion and Analysis Expectations

Throughout the class we will discuss issues and other literature about the region. Each analysis/discussion must demonstrate a mastery of the details as well as the literature on the topic. Each student writes up his/her own analysis/discussion. The grading will include the quality of the discussion, outside research, and the ability to participate in the discussion of the topic. Students are encouraged to question assumptions and theories in the readings or related issues and make pertinent comments that might encourage further comments/debates. Especially insightful comments will be scored higher. All posts are required to be written professionally; students should carefully proofread all entries before posting.
Books and resources (the following are required)


*Additional required readings may be found on Blackboard, or through UTEP library resources*

Additional resources (optional, for further exploration)

African geography is a generally weak subject in our own country. Though not required, students are encouraged to enhance their skills in this area. One resource that provides a brief overview of the topic may be found at [http://www.lizardpoint.com/fun/geoquiz/afrquiz.html](http://www.lizardpoint.com/fun/geoquiz/afrquiz.html).

A number of scholarly journals, focused on area studies, comparative politics, and international relations, will add richness to your knowledge base. These include, among others, African Affairs, African Studies Review, Journal of Modern African Studies, Comparative Politics, Comparative Political Studies, International Organization, and World Politics. Various internet resources for on-line news include, but are not limited to, allafrica.com, [www.africanews.org](http://www.africanews.org), [www.bbc.com/news/world/africa](http://www.bbc.com/news/world/africa), and [www.rfi.fr/afrique](http://www.rfi.fr/afrique).
SECTION I: Examining the African State

Week 1 – Reflections on the African State

What does it mean to be an ‘African State’? Where do these states fit within our international system of states?

Required readings:

Jeffrey Herbst. 2000. States and Power in Africa, Princeton UP: Chap 1-2 (pp. 11-57), Chap 5-6 (pp. 139-197), Conclusion (pp. 251-272).


*Complete DB posts and Quiz by deadlines each week*

For further exploration (Optional, not required):


Week 2 – Alternative Reflections on the State

Are there alternatives to control outside ‘Western’ conceptions of political authority? What conceptions (if any) underpin these bases for control?

Required readings:


For further exploration (Optional, not required):


Mahmood Mamdani. 1996. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism,* Princeton UP.


### Week 3 – Regime Strategies in African Politics

What are the motive forces for regimes in preserving political control? Are there alternatives to the state?

**Required readings:**


*NB: Research paper proposal due Monday, July 23*

**For further exploration (Optional, not required):**


**Week 4 – State Failure and Democratization in African States**

What impact did the end of the Cold War have on African regimes? How have countries on the continent managed democratization?

**Required readings:**


**For further exploration (Optional, not required):**


SECTION II: Conflict and Security in the African State

Week 5 – Sources of (In)stability and Security

What do we mean by security? What does it entail, and for whom?

Required readings:


For further exploration (Optional, not required):


Week 6 – Conflict and Challenges in Preserving Political Order

How has the nature of conflict evolved? What are the implications for regimes and for the maintenance of political order?

Required readings:


*NB:  Research paper and posted summary due Friday, August 10*

For further exploration (Optional, not required):


**Week 7 – Reflections on Governance and Security Paradigms**

Where does one go from here? What are the opportunities and potential challenges faced by African states in the future? How might these be addressed?

**Required readings:**


**For further exploration (Optional, not required):**


Additional thoughts

Respect for others in sharing ideas: Netiquette:
As is the case with many academic courses, students may be exposed to provocative thoughts or ideas, including those professed by the instructor. These thoughts may or may not reflect my own line of thinking, and indeed may well be intended to encourage students to either defend a particular point of view or to consider and/or counter alternative perspectives. As such, my role in this course is not to provide you with prescriptive answers; rather, it is intended to guide and encourage students to think more broadly about the subject matter. In all cases, discussion participants are expected to demonstrate respect for others in their exchanges.

Please realize that attempts at humor, and satire in particular, may be misconstrued online. Emoticons such as a smiley face :) may help communicate humor to your reader. Further tips on ‘Netiquette’ may be found at www.albion.com/netiquette.

Academic Integrity:
Academic Dishonesty is NEVER tolerated by UTEP. All cases are reported to the Dean of Students for Academic Sanctions. These sanctions may include expulsion. All work submitted must be original; students may not submit graded work from another course. Forms of academic dishonesty include:
Collusion—lending your work to another person to submit as his or her own;
Fabrication—deliberately creating false information on a works cited page, and
Plagiarism—the presentation of another person's work as your own, whether you mean to or not (e.g. copying parts of or whole papers off of the Internet).

Disability Services:
If you have a disability and require class accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 915-747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu, or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at www.sa.utep.edu/cass.

Individuals with disabilities have the right to equal access and opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor and CASS at The University of Texas at El Paso.

Disclaimer Statement
Course content may vary from the outline to meet specific objectives.