

## **Political Systems of Africa**

PSC 23800

BLST 23800

Fall 2024

Mondays 2:00-3:15; Occasional Wednesdays 2:00-3:15

NAC 6/310

Nicholas Rush Smith

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Office Hours

Mondays 3:30-4:30

NAC 4/146

Other Times By Appointment

This course provides a broad overview of African politics with a focus on state formation and resistance to state formation. The course focuses largely on states because patterns of state formation profoundly shape a country's politics and the life course of its citizens. To teach about the long history of state formation on the African continent, the course uses a mixture of academic, literary, and primary source readings.

**Class Organization:** The course is divided into two sections. The first half of the course will provide a broad overview of the history of state formation on the African continent through the end of colonialism. The second half of the course will introduce students to politics on the continent since the end of colonialism. The course will blend lecture and discussion. Students will be able to watch a weekly pre-recorded lecture through BlackBoard weekly to reserve our class time for discussion of weekly readings.

**Class Meetings:** This course is held in a **hybrid format** with class meetings being held primarily on Mondays (with a few exceptions for Wednesday meetings due to the CUNY schedule) and lectures, quizzes, and writing assignments to be completed throughout the week outside of class time.

**Learning Outcomes:** The primary goal of this course is for students to be able to read and critically evaluate academic and journalistic work on contemporary African politics and on African history.

**Course Assignments:** The primary assignments for the course are two take home exams, weekly blog posts, and participation in class discussions.

**Books:** We will read the following books in total during the semester. They are available for purchase from the course page for the CCNY online bookstore: <https://ccny.textbookx.com/institutional/index.php>

- Yaa Gyasi. 2016. *Homegoing*. New York: Vintage.
- Jonny Steinberg. 2014. *A Man of Good Hope*. New York: Knopf.

**Grading and Evaluation:** The course will be graded on a 100-point scale with the following breakdown:

- Essay Exams: 30 points
  - 2 exams x 15 points per exam
    - Exam 1: October 21
    - Exam 2: December 9
- Weekly discussion board posts: 30 points
  - 10 discussion board posts x 3 points each
    - Based upon timely completion of discussion board posts
    - Posts should respond to the weekly prompt and should be a thoughtful paragraph or two of approximately 250 words
    - Due on Mondays by 2:00pm
    - Late posts will receive a penalty of 1 point
- Weekly quizzes: 30 points
  - Average score from 12 weekly quizzes
    - Based upon questions about lectures, videos, and readings
    - Due on Mondays by 2:00pm
    - Late quizzes result in score of zero
- Participation: 10 points
  - See attendance policy for details

**Attendance Policy:** Participation in class discussions is crucial to the success of the course, so participation is an important component of students' final grades. Because weekly participation in the course material is so important for student's learning, **students will lose 2.5 points from the participation portion of their grade for each class missed (i.e. 2.5% off the final course grade for each discussion missed up to a maximum of 10% off the final grade)**. I will allow one unexcused absence without penalty. However, each subsequent unexcused absence will incur this penalty. Should a student run into a health or personal challenge which means they will have difficulty participating in an in-class discussion, I will excuse the absence. However, students should contact me *before* the discussion that will be missed explaining the absence and I will excuse it. **To encourage active participation in the in-person discussions, some weeks will have unannounced extra credit opportunities.**

**Course Content and Comportment:** Many of the themes we will discuss in the course deal with sensitive or potentially controversial topics including discussions of colonialism, slavery, race, class, various forms of violence, and a variety of other topics. Similarly, the literature that we will read includes events or topics that may be difficult for some students to read about. If there are concerns, I would encourage students to come talk to me during my office hours so that we can discuss the content of the works and plan, if necessary, for alternative assignments if students would prefer to avoid reading certain works or themes. More generally, I expect a respectful tone during class discussions given the sensitive nature of some of the topics that we will discuss.

**Accessibility & Campus Resources:** At City College, we strive to make all our classes accessible to every student, regardless of any disability (visible or non-visible; physical, cognitive, emotional,

or learning) or any other special circumstances (such as a medical, personal, or housing emergency; family responsibilities; financial difficulties; legal difficulties; or immigration status) that may affect your ability to attend class and complete the coursework. Please speak to me (and your other professors) in office hours or via email early in the semester or as soon as you're aware that you may need accommodations, so that we can work together to make sure that you receive the support you need.

City College offers resources to students in a wide range of circumstances. Please share this information with your friends and classmates at CCNY! We want all students to succeed and to take advantage of all the support the college has to offer.

Please let your other professors know if you have registered with the AccessAbility Center/Student Disability Services (AAC/SDS) or have any **special needs, learning differences, or medical conditions** that may affect your coursework so that we can make the appropriate accommodations. If you believe you may need an accommodation, please do get in touch with the AAC/SDS. You can reach the AccessAbility office via email ([disabilityservices@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@ccny.cuny.edu)) or through their Zoom virtual front desk (<https://ccny.zoom.us/j/116151245>).

If you need a **computer, tablet, or wi-fi**, you can request them through an online form ([https://portal.ccny.cuny.edu/depts/oit/cuny\\_loaner/login.php](https://portal.ccny.cuny.edu/depts/oit/cuny_loaner/login.php)). You can also contact the iMedia Center via email ([imedia@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:imedia@ccny.cuny.edu)) or via their Zoom virtual front desk, Monday-Thursday, 11am-3pm (<https://ccny.zoom.us/j/2126505480>).

If you have any questions or concerns about your **immigration status** or that of your family members, please consult the CCNY Immigration Center for free and confidential advice via phone (212-650-6620) or email ([meetu.dhar@cuny.edu](mailto:meetu.dhar@cuny.edu)).

If, for any reason, you are struggling with **personal issues, anxiety, depression, or stress**, there are a number of resources on campus.

The Student Counseling Center in the Health and Wellness Center provides remote counseling that is free and confidential to students. You can contact them via phone (212-650-8222), email ([counseling@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:counseling@ccny.cuny.edu)), or their Zoom virtual front desk, Monday-Thursday 10am-4pm (<http://ccny.zoom.us/j/2126508222>). They also have links to a number of resources on their website (<https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/counseling>).

The Colin Powell School offers free, confidential peer mentoring with trained graduate students on issues of stress management and self-care. To sign up, simply send an email ([peernavigationccny@gmail.com](mailto:peernavigationccny@gmail.com)) or sign up online (<https://calendly.com/peernavigation/calendar?month=2020-10>).

If you are dealing with **food insecurity**, please visit Benny's Food Pantry in the Hoffman Lounge on the first floor of the NAC. The pantry is open even during the pandemic. To gain access on weekdays, just make an appointment online

(<https://calendly.com/bennysfoodpantry/benny-s-food-pantry-appointment-system?month=2021-08>).

If you are facing an **emergency shortage of funds**, please email Ms. Charlene Darbassie ([cdarbassie@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:cdarbassie@ccny.cuny.edu)) or Dean Andy Rich ([arich@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:arich@ccny.cuny.edu)) in the Colin Powell School Dean's Office. They will tell you how to apply for an emergency grant. Applying is quick and easy.

If you are experiencing or have experienced **domestic violence** or **violence that is sex-based, gender-based, or sexuality-based**; or if you are experiencing or have experienced **discrimination because of gender, sex, sexuality, race, ethnicity, language, religion, disability, or other reasons**, please report it to Diana Cuozzo in the Office of Affirmative Action, Compliance, and Diversity via email ([dcuozzo@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:dcuozzo@ccny.cuny.edu)) or phone (212-650-7330). For a confidential discussion of these and related issues, please contact Sophie English via email ([senglish@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:senglish@ccny.cuny.edu)) or phone (212-650-8905).

If you are struggling in any of your classes, don't hesitate to get extra **academic support**. Just make an appointment with the Academic Resource Center ([www.ccny.cuny.edu/sssp/tutoring-arc](http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/sssp/tutoring-arc)) or email Charlene Darbassie ([cdarbassie@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:cdarbassie@ccny.cuny.edu)) in the Colin Powell School office of Academic Support Services.

The CCNY Writing Center ([www.ccny.cuny.edu/writing](http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/writing)) offers individualized **writing support** to all students.

To receive information and support about securing **internships** and planning for your **post-college career**, please contact Debbie Cheng ([dcheng@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:dcheng@ccny.cuny.edu)) and Ashif Hassan ([ahassan@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:ahassan@ccny.cuny.edu)) in the Colin Powell School Dean's Office. Also, take a look at the new Career Handbook that their office has created to help you start thinking about career and professional development (<https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/colinpowellschool/career-and-professional-development>).

For a continually updated list of **other pandemic-related resources throughout New York City**, please see this online document: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sg5wJgKU9dUqmt62IGqxtWVccHSRUCCHUrBBm3upvH8/edit?ts=5e792358#>

For **advising**, contact the Colin Powell School Advising Office (<https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/colinpowellschool/office-academic-advisors>). At their website, you can make a virtual appointment with one of the advisors or you can find their email addresses so you can send them a message.

## Course Outline

### SECTION 1: African Politics Before Independence

#### Week 1 Introduction (August 28)

**NOTE: WEDNESDAY CLASS FOR INTRO DISCUSSION**

**Read:**

Syllabus

#### Week 2 The Gatekeeper State, Its Opponents, and Its Opposites (September 4)

**NOTE: WEDNESDAY CLASS DUE TO CUNY CANCELATION ON MONDAY**

Lecture – The Gatekeeper State, Its Opponents, and Its Opposites (In Class Lecture)

**Read:**

Frederick Cooper. 2014. *Africa in the World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: Chapter 1.

Achille Mbembe. 2018. “The Idea of a Borderless World.” *AfricasACountry*. November 11:

<https://africasacountry.com/2018/11/the-idea-of-a-borderless-world>

#### Week 3 An Introduction to Pre-Colonial State Making (September 9)

**Watch/Listen:**

Week 3 Lecture – An Introduction to Pre-Colonial State Making

“Mansa Musa, One of the Wealthiest People Who Ever Lived.” Ted-ed:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3YJMaL55TM>

**Read:**

Jeffrey Herbst. 2000. *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: Chapter 2.

Linda M. Heywood. 2017. *Njinga of Angola: Africa's Warrior Queen*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: Chapters 2 and 3.

**Assignment:**

Week 3 Quiz

Discussion Board Post #1

#### Week 4 Slavery, State Making, and State Breaking (September 16)

**Watch/Listen:**

Week 4 Lecture - Slavery, State Making, and State Breaking

“What Was the Transatlantic Slave Trade?” Royal Holloway University History Hub:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TsRDYwlqCzI>

**Read:**

Yaa Gyasi. 2016. *Homegoing*. New York: Vintage: Part 1.

**Assignment:**

Week 4 Quiz

Discussion Board Post #2

**Optional:**

Nathan Nunn. 2008. “The Long-Term Effects of Africa’s Slave Trades.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 123 (1): 139-176.

Nathan Nunn and Leonard Wantchekon. 2011. “The Slave Trade and the Origins of Mistrust in Africa.” *American Economic Review* 101 (7): 3221-3252.

**Week 5 Colonial State Making (September 23)**

**Watch:**

Week 5 Lecture – Colonial State Making

Hugh Masekela. “Vasco De Gama”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mrRR9fZvn4>

**Read:**

Jeffrey Herbst. 2000. *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: Chapter 3.

Oginga Odinga. 1967. *Not Yet Uhuru*. London: Heinemann: Chapters 3 and 6.

**Assignment:**

Week 5 Quiz

Discussion Board Post #3

**Week 6 Colonial Rule (September 30)**

**Watch:**

Week 6 Lecture – Colonial Rule

Hugh Masekela. “Stimela (Coal Train)”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0POkk7LZYwc>

“Gumboot Dancers in South Africa.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0Q51WVrR40>

**Read:**

Mahmood Mamdani. 1996. *Citizen and Subject, Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: Chapter 4.

Frederick Lugard. 2013. *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*. Hard Press Publishing: Chapters 10 and 12.

**Assignment:**

Week 6 Quiz

Discussion Board Post #4

**Week 7 Crises of Colonialism (October 7)**

**Watch/Listen:**

Week 7 Lecture – Crises of Colonialism

Leon Bukasa. “Penepene”:

<https://youtu.be/YIOkrLliU3k?feature=shared>

**Read:**

Frederick Cooper. 2014. *Africa in the World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: Chapter 3.

Aimé Césaire. 2000. *Discourse on Colonialism*. New York: Monthly Review Press: Selections.

Kwame Nkrumah. 1953. “Motion of Destiny Speech.” July 10.

Nelson Mandela. 2013 [1964]. “Speech from the Dock.” In Clifton Crais and Thomas V. McClendon, eds. *The South Africa Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Steve Biko. “Black Souls in White Skins?” In *I Write What I Like*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**Assignment:**

Week 7 Quiz

Discussion Board Post #5

**Week 8 Confronting Colonialism (October 16)**

**NOTE: CLASS ON WEDNESDAY BECAUSE OF CUNY CANCELLATION ON MONDAY**

**Watch:**

Week 8 Lecture – Confronting Colonialism

*Lumumba* [Film]:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56oKpJVlX8E>

**Read:**

Adam Branch and Zachariah Mampilly. 2015. *Africa Uprising: Popular Protest and Political Change*. London: Zed Books: Chapter 2.

**Assignment:**

Week 8 Quiz

Discussion Board Post #6

**Week 9 Midterm Exam (October 21)**

**MIDTERM EXAM (In Class)**

**SECTION 2: STATE MAKING IN POST-COLONIAL AFRICA**

**Week 10 Building Postcolonial States (October 28)**

**Watch:**

Week 10 Lecture – Building Postcolonial States

Fela Kuti. 1976. “Zombie”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qj5x6pbJMyU>

**Read:**

Jeffrey Herbst. 2000. *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: Chapter 4.

Yaa Gyasi. 2016. *Homegoing*. New York: Vintage: Part 2.

**Assignment:**

Week 10 Quiz

**Week 11 Challenges of the Post-Colonial Economy (November 4)**

**Watch:**

Week 11 Lecture – Challenges of the Post-Colonial Economy

“Urban Pantsula – African Rhythm” High Voltage Films SA:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XakaJ232cIQ>

**Read:**

Adom Getachew. 2019. *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination*. Princeton: Princeton University Press: Chapter 5.

Julius Nyerere. 1968. “The Arusha Declaration.” In *Freedom and Socialism (Uhuru na Ujama): A Selection from Writings & Speeches, 1965–1967*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968.

Julius Nyerere. 1968. “The Varied Paths to Socialism.” In *Freedom and Socialism (Uhuru na Ujama): A Selection from Writings & Speeches, 1965–1967*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968.

Thomas Sankara. 1988. “What is the Nonaligned Movement Doing?” In *Thomas Sankara Speaks*. Cape Town: Pathfinder Press.

**Assignment:**

Week 11 Quiz

Discussion Board Post #7

**Week 12 Crises of Post-Colonial Statehood (November 11)**

**Watch:**

Week 12 Lecture – Crises of Post-Colonial Statehood

**Read:**

Adam Branch and Zachariah Mampilly. 2015. *Africa Uprising: Popular Protest and Political Change*. London: Zed Books: Chapter 3.

Jonny Steinberg, *A Man of Good Hope*. New York: Vintage: Part 1.

**Assignment:**

Week 12 Quiz

Discussion Board Post #8

**Week 13 Navigating Crisis (November 18)**

**Watch:**

Week 13 Lecture – Navigating Crisis

**Read:**

Jonny Steinberg. 2016. "The Vertiginous Power of Decisions: Working Through a Paradox About Forced Migration." *Public Culture* 28 (1): 139-160.

Jonny Steinberg, *A Man of Good Hope*. New York: Vintage: Part 2.

**Assignment:**

Week 13 Quiz

Discussion Board Post #9

**Week 14 A Peaceful, Democratic Future? (November 25)**

**Watch:**

Lecture - A Peaceful Democratic Future?

**Read:**

Scott Straus. 2012. "Wars Do End! Changing Patterns of Political Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa." *African Affairs* 111 (443): 179-201.

Jonny Steinberg, *A Man of Good Hope*. New York: Vintage: Part 3.

Salimah Valiana. 2024. "Clock Counterclock" In *IGoli eGoli*. Johannesburg: Botsotso Publishing.

**Assignment:**

Week 14 Quiz

Discussion Board Post #10

**Week 15 Complications of Democracy (December 2)**

**Watch:**

Lecture – Complications of Democracy

Burna Boy. "20 10 20":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68rvZWARzew>

**Read:**

Akin Iwilade. 2014. "Networks of Violence and Becoming: Youth and the Politics of Patronage in Nigeria's Oil-Rich Delta." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 52 (4): 571-595.

Jonny Steinberg, *A Man of Good Hope*. New York: Vintage: Part 4.

**Assignment:**

Week 15 Quiz

**Week 16 Final Exam (December 9)**

**FINAL EXAM (In Class)**