The world thinks of African countries as in desperate condition, weak states characterized by vulnerability to outside pressures, instability and violence, authoritarian rule, military or civilian, and, finally, inability to realize their goals, particularly those of economic development. Yet there are countervailing tendencies. There is, for instance, a strong movement to reintroduce on the continent multi-party, pluralist democracy. The goal of the course will be to examine African developments, and to come to some conclusions, however tentative, both on what is happening politically in Africa, and on the causes of these developments. We will do this in five stages. First we will do a broad overview of the African experience in general, and the legacies of colonialism in particular. We will follow this with a look at some of the debates about how best to understand African politics. Next, we will focus on a series of crucial topics: the role of the state, democratization, Africa’s political economy, ethnicity and class in politics, the role of the military and, finally the nature of Africa’s position in the world. Then we will examine in some depth the politics of two African countries. Interspersed during the semester will be a set of debates. Every student will participate in one of these.

Books to Buy

Frederick Cooper, Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present, 2002
Tony Hodges, Angola: Anatomy of an Oil State, 2004
Peter D. Little, Somalia: Economy Without State, 2003
Richard Joseph, State, Conflict and Democracy in Africa, 1999
Peter Schraeder, African Politics and Society, 2004
Writing Assignments: Debate paper, due a week subsequent to the debate, and a take home final, due on the assigned exam date.

Class Assignments

Pre-Colonial and Early Colonial History

Aug. 27    - Introduction
Aug. 30    - Schraeder, Chs. 2 and 3

Late Colonialism: The Nationalist Movements and Independence

Sept. 1    - Schraeder, Ch. 4; Cooper, Chs. 1-3
Sept. 3    - NO CLASS

Making Sense of African Politics and Economics

Sept. 6    - Cooper, Chs. 4 and 6
Sept. 8    - Schraeder, Chs. 1, 13 and 14
Sept. 10   - Callaghy et al, Chs. 1-3
Sept. 13   - Callaghy et al, Chs. 4-5

The State of the State

Sept. 15   - Schraeder, Ch. 8; Joseph, Chs. 9-10
Sept. 17   - Callaghy, Chs. 6-8
Sept. 20   - The State of the State: Cooper, Ch. 7 and articles to be distributed
Sept. 22   - 1st Debate: State Collapse is Rare and Likely to Become More So

Democratization as an African Project

Sept. 24   - Joseph, Chs. 1-3
Sept. 27   - Joseph, Ch. 4
Sept. 29   - Joseph, Chs. 5-7
Oct.  1    - Joseph, Ch. 8
Oct.  4  - Joseph, Chs. 9-12
Oct.  6  - Joseph, Chs. 13-15
Oct.  8  - NO CLASS
Oct. 11  - Joseph, Chs. 20-22
Oct. 13  - Schraeder, Ch. 10
Oct. 15  - 2nd Debate- Democracy in Africa is Real and will

Fall Break

Ethnicity in Politics

Oct. 25  - Joseph, Chs. 16-19
Oct. 27  - Schraeder, Ch. 5
Oct. 29  - 3rd Debate - Politicians manipulating ethnic differences are the primary source of ethnic conflict in Africa

Political Economy: the Development Project

Nov.  1  - Schraeder, Ch. 6; Cooper, Ch. 5
Nov.  3  - Leonard, Chs. 1-3
Nov.  5  - Leonard, Chs. 4-6
Nov.  8  - Callaghy, Chs. 9-10
Nov. 10  - Callaghy, Chs. 11-12
Nov. 12  - 4th Debate - Neo-colonialism/globalism dominate African political economy

The Military in Politics

Nov. 15  - Schraeder, Ch. 9
Nov. 17  - Other readings to be distributed
Nov. 19  - 5th Debate - The military will henceforth stay out of politics

Africa and the World

Nov. 22  - Schraeder, Chs. 11 and 12

Case Studies

Nov. 24  - Hodges, Chs. 1-3
Nov. 29  - Hodges, Chs. 4-5
Dec.   1  - Hodges, Chs. 6-8
Dec.   3  - NO CLASS