Course Level

AXL2202F: African Political Thought Course Outline:
2018

Convenors: Associate Professor: H. Chitonge and Ms. Z. Msomi

This is a second-year undergraduate core course for a new African Studies major.

Course Description

This course explores African political systems and thought, from precolonial Africa through to postcolonial political systems. In so-doing, the course examines the forms of African political thought that emerged across three periods: the pre-colonial; the era of colonisation and political forms of resistance against it; and the postcolonial/neo-colonial period.

The course starts with an exploration of political formations and systems in precolonial Africa as an entry into the thoughts behind the systems. The first section of the course demonstrates that there were well-established political systems in various parts of Africa before the advent of colonialism, contrary to claims that politics and history in Africa are a product of the colonial period. In order to understand how the introduction of colonial rule affected African political thought and institutions, the course also examines the forms of political organisation and institutions introduced during colonialism in Africa. From here, it moves to the forms of political resistance to colonial rule that emerged within Africa, and examines some of the alternative political forms put forward by movements such as pan-Africanism, and various nationalists. In so doing, we demonstrate that colonialism was not an all-encompassing system, and that African agency and forms of African political thinking were able to continue. We also demonstrate that African political thought is not a single homogenous system, but instead encompasses multiple forms. Finally, the course looks at postcolonial political thought and institutions, demonstrating the tensions that emerge within local-global
nexuses of power. The course ends with current critiques of postcolonial governance, which argue that, in many important ways, decolonisation of our political systems has not yet occurred. **This is a paperless course. Ensure that you check VULA announcements and refer regularly to your emails. All readings and assignments will be uploaded onto VULA. Your student card will be loaded with Rx.**

**Motivation for the Course**

This course presents African political thought from the perspective of African political thinkers and African Studies analysts. Political institutions and forms of political thought are the means by which power is exerted and resisted. Current events in South Africa and Africa more broadly show the long-ranging effects of forms of political thinking. This course allows students to explore, through academic and literary texts, the complex interplays of forms of power within Africa, and between Africa and other parts of the world. It also allows for a nuanced understanding of the political histories of other parts of the continent which is important for South African students today. It is a core component of the new African Studies major; as such it presents political ideas from an African and interdisciplinary perspective. The course ends with a perspective which challenges students to think about what they themselves can do to contribute to a politics of decolonisation.

**Learning Outcomes.**

By the end of the course students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of:

1. The fact that politics and history in Africa existed before the colonial period

2. The effects of the colonial era on past and present African political thought and forms of governance

3. Current critiques of postcolonial governance, including ideas of decoloniality

4. The complexities and differences that exist within Africa, such that ‘African political thought’ encompasses a wide variety of political forms

**Readings**

Journals and some book chapters are available on VULA. Please consult the library SHORT LOAN for books and books chapters that could not be placed on VULA.
Structure of the Course

The weekly teaching structure consists of two lectures, an additional compulsory contact period in the form of a lab, and one tutorial. **Attendance to all teaching components is compulsory.**

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<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Venues</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Lecture</td>
<td>2pm</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Beattie 106</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Computer lab</td>
<td>2pm</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bessie Head Lab</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Tutorial</td>
<td>2pm</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>TBC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Lecture</td>
<td>2pm</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Beattie 106</td>
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The course is divided into three parts as above; within this, each week will have a theme and a set of readings related to the theme. There will be two sets of readings: the required readings are compulsory and should be read before the lecture, and the recommended reading which are not compulsory, but useful additional material relevant to the course.

The course also recommends a non-academic, literary text in the form of a novel/epic novel for the course. This is in keeping with the interdisciplinary focus of the new African Studies major and means that students are able to grasp the complexity of political ideas through non-academic language.

Assessment

Coursework will count for 60% of the mark. Students will be required to hand in four assignments over the course of the semester. **An electronic/soft copy of the assignment must be handed into turnitin, and a hard copy submitted into African studies department by 14:00.** The other 40% weighting will come from an examination at the end of the semester.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short Assignment I</td>
<td>Friday 9th March</td>
<td>2pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Assignment II</td>
<td>Friday 23rd March</td>
<td>2pm</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long Assignment I</td>
<td>Friday 20th April</td>
<td>2pm</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long Assignment II</td>
<td>Friday 1st June</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam</td>
<td>June</td>
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<td>40%</td>
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In addition to weekly course readings, students will be required to read the epic poem *Song of Lawino* over the course of the semester for their second long essay assignment, in which they use the epic poem as an example through which to explore concepts in African political thought.

Choice of Novels/Poems: *Song of Lawino* by Okot p’Bitek (1966) – exemplifies the precolonial and resistance to colonisation

**Tutorials and PLUS Tutorials**

1. ALL Tutorials take place Wednesday, 2pm. Please see VULA announcements for further details. Tutorial attendance is 80% *which includes the compulsory Exam Prep Tutorial (Tutorial 10).*

2. Tutorial Sign-Up takes place in the first week of lectures and closes on Monday, 26 February at 5pm. Thereafter, you will need to contact your head tutor, Tammy Wilks (WLKTAM001@myuct.ac.za) to manually add you to a tutorial group.

3. Each tutorial is assigned a reading that you must do before the tutorial. The *Tutorial Worksheet Pack* is available on VULA that you must bring to every tutorial.

**PLUS Tutorials**

PLUS Tutorials are for extended-degree students. Plus tutorials are on Wednesdays 2-3.30pm in the CAS Seminar Room with Tammy Wilks. **Please ensure that you are registered for both AXL2202F and AXL2203F.**

**Computer Labs**
1. ALL computer labs are compulsory. They build toward the tutorial and assignment submissions.

2. Computer labs takes place on Tuesdays, 2pm in the Bessie Head Lab (Basement of Beattie)
Part 1: Precolonial African Political Systems and Thought

Week 1: Foundations of African Political Systems and Thought

Required Readings


Recommended Readings


Week 2: Pre-colonial Political Formations in Africa

Required Readings


Recommended Readings


**Week 3: Case Studies of Precolonial Political Formations**

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


**Part Two: The Colonial Influence and Resistance to Colonisation**

Song of Lawino (1966) by Okot p’Bitek (epic poem translated into English from Luo). Start readings the epic poem set for the course if you have not done so already.

**Week 4: The Colonial Influence**

**Required Readings**


**Recommended**


**Week 5: Resistance to Colonisation: Nationalisms A**

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


**Week 6: Resistance to Colonisation: Nationalisms B – Africa’s Political Thinkers**

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


Nasser, G.A. 1967. ‘The Philosophy of the Revolution’ in Mutiso, Gideon-Cyrua and

**Part 3: The Politics of Postcolonialism and Decolonisation**

**Week 7: Postcolonial Political Systems**

**Required Readings**


**Recommended**


**Week 8: Postcolonial Political Systems continued**

**Required Readings**


**Recommended**


**Week 9: Traditional Political Institutions and the Postcolonial State**

**Required Readings**


**Recommended:**


**Week 10: Decolonisation and the Postcolonial State**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended:**

**Week 11: Decolonisation: The Every Day project.**

**Required readings:**


**Recommended**


**Week 12: The African State in Political Debates.**

**Required Readings**


**Recommended**