

AGSD SMPF 310
Politics in Francophone Africa
Instructor: Dr Douglas Yates

Credits: 3

# 1. Course Description

This course is an introduction to the political history of French-speaking countries in sub-Saharan Africa. It offers a background to the European colonization of Africa and a survey of 10 of the 17 francophone sub-Saharan African states, of which 14 had once been colonized by the French, and 3 by Belgium. There are four francophone countries in the Maghreb (Northern Africa) which will not be treated as they fit better in a study of North Africa and the Middle East due to cultural and strategic considerations both from their own perspectives and from external ones.

What makes this collection of countries unique, in addition to their adoption of French as an official language, is their continuous and deep cooperation with France. Described as a neocolonial system of domination by some, and a sphere of influence by others, francophone Africa is a region of the world that continues to exhibit signs of dependency and cultural imperialism vis-à-vis its former colonial power. While continuous exploitation of African natural resources by French companies is perceived as a regulated transition from one form of domination to another, in our attempt to create an impression of continuity we should not refer to the present and to its actors as simply shadow puppets of something or somebody else. "As far as Africa is concerned, colonialism is over," wrote Achille Mbembe. "Africans are now the free masters of their own destiny. But to say that colonialism is over does not mean to negate history or to erase memory. It simply means to be attentive to those signs of the times which signal the entry into other configurations of human experience. Modern times almost always carry with them bits and pieces, traces and fragments of the past. But these fragments are recycled and imbued with new meanings." 3

# 2. Learning Outcomes and / or Expected Student Competencies / Objectives

By the end of the semester students will be able to identify the francophone African countries on a map, know the names of their capital cities, their current rulers, and form a general opinion of their political position in the francophone sphere and/or in their relationship with France / Belgium. They will also be able to trace a chronological evolution of political and governmental structures from the colonial period to the post-colonial period. They will know the biographies of key leaders in these countries. They will be able

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The 14 French former colonies are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo (Brazzaville), Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon, Madagascar, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo. The 3 Belgian former colonies are: Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Rwanda has recently excluded French as official language. See the lecture on Rwanda.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Mbembe A., *On the Postcolony*, Berkeley and Los Angeles (U.S.A.), University of California Press, 2001, Studies on the History of Society and Culture.

to show both continuity and change in the relations with France / Belgium that have dominated analysis of the sub-region. They will be familiar with theories of neo-colonialism, cultural imperialism, and have a general knowledge of the French doctrines of *assimilation*, *cooperation*, *co-développement*, and *francophonie*.

# 3. Course Requirements

# 3.1. Required readings

Victor T. Le Vine, *Politics in Francophone Africa*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004 (<a href="http://www.rienner.com/uploads/47daa3d06f0be.pdf">http://www.rienner.com/uploads/47daa3d06f0be.pdf</a>). \$Also available on Google Books (<a href="http://books.google.com/">http://books.google.com/</a>).

John F. Clark & David Gardinier (eds.), *Political Reform in Francophone Africa*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1997 (<a href="http://www.westviewpress.com/book.php?isbn=9780813327860">http://www.westviewpress.com/book.php?isbn=9780813327860</a>). Also available on Google Books (<a href="http://books.google.com/">http://books.google.com/</a>).

# 3.2. Recommended readings

Douglas A. Yates, *The Rentier State in Africa: Oil-Rent Dependency and Neocolonialism in the Republic of Gabon*, Trenton/Asmara: Africa World Press, 1996. Available on Google Books (<a href="http://books.google.com/">http://books.google.com/</a>).

#### *3.3. Films*

# 4. Grading

# 4.1. Attendance and active class participation

Active participation is expected and will be evaluated for 10% of the final assessment. Various materials will be assigned for reading, presentation, and discussion. Students are encouraged to be critical about the reading materials, and to address the questions and the cases assigned in the oral discussions.

## 4.2. Individual assignments

35%

**10%** 

Each student will choose a current African leader from the francophone countries and write his political biography (3000 words), discussing the (1) origins, (2) education, (3) rise to power, (4) and evaluation of the individual leader. All papers must be typed, paginated, with paragraphs indented five spaces, following the rules of the Chicago Manual of Style. The paper will be submitted by email to the instructor by the last Friday before the final examination at 12:00 pm, at the latest.

#### 4.3. Mid-term examination

After seven weeks, the students will write a mid-term examination on material already covered in class. The exam will last two hours.

### 4.4. Final examination

35%

The students will write a two-hour final exam in the 15th week of the course.

### 5. Class Policies

## 5.1. Attendance & Participation

Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to actively participate in discussions. In case of illness or family emergency, please check in with me on making up missed material. As explained above, active participation means that the students read the materials, and engage in critical discussion during the class. Please respect everyone's view.

## 5.2. Late Paper Policy

Research Papers are due on the last day of the course (last Friday before final examination). Your paper is considered submitted when it is in my inbox (send it with receipt acknowledgement). Papers submitted after the deadline will be penalized 2% per day (e.g. Paper submitted 1 day late will be assessed on 13% instead of 15%). Any paper submitted more than a week (7 days) late will be graded a ZERO.

### 5.3. Academic Honesty

As a matter of principle, Arcadia University does not tolerate academic dishonesty in its students. Cases of cheating on exams, free-riding on group assignments, or plagiarizing papers will result in a ZERO for the assignment, which will automatically result in a failing grade for the course. While preparing your paper, you are most welcome to discuss its development as needed.

### 5.4. Disability Services

Persons with documented disabilities requiring accommodations to meet the expectations of this course should contact their Arcadia College of Global Studies Program Manager while enrolling in the programme, and before coming to Paris, so that appropriate arrangements are in place.

### 6. Outline

All class sessions are for three hours.

Country synopses below are essentially extracted from the *CIA World Factbook* (2010) (<a href="https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/">https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/</a>). Students are expected to attend all sessions and do all of the assigned readings (provided below) before the session in which they are discussed. In addition students are expected to follow current events in francophone Africa as they unfold over the semester.

# PART ONE. INTRODUCTION TO FRANCOPHONE AFRICA / FRANCAFRIQUE

#### Session 1. The Scramble for Africa

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the major European powers began a policy of territorial conquest in sub-Saharan Africa, the rules of which were formalized in the Berlin Conference (1884-5). Within three decades almost the entire continent had been divided between England, France, Belgium, Germany, Portugal, and Spain. This historical event created the territorial boundaries of modern Africa, and shaped the international politics of the region.

**Reading**: David Gardinier, "The Historical Origins of Francophone Africa," in *Political Reform in Francophone Africa*, Westview Press, 1997, pp. 9-22.

### Session 2. Assimilation: The Model of French Colonialism

Unlike the British model of association, the French model of assimilation was based on the idea of expanding French culture to the colonies outside of France in the 19th and 20th century. Natives of these colonies were considered French citizens as long as the culture and customs were adopted. This also meant they would have the rights and duties of French citizens. The long-term legacy of cultural imperialism continues to have a profound impact.

**Reading**: Le Vine, "The Colonial Context," in *Politics in Francophone Africa*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004, pp. 29-60.

### Session 3. Black Africa and the Second World War

Strategically the African colonies and possessions of France proved to be an important asset for the French in their two global struggles against the Germans. Black Africa provided a southern flank by which France was able to defend itself from German occupation. Black African soldiers, known as "tirailleurs sénégalais," also provided hundreds of thousands of armed troops for the Liberation of France at the end of the Second World War, which opened the way for decolonization in the post-war era.

**Reading**: Le Vine, "Political Life and Institutions, 1944-1960," in *Politics in Francophone Africa*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004, pp. 61-86.

## PART TWO. FRENCH EQUATORIAL AFRICA

#### Session 4. Gabon

Until recently, only two autocratic presidents had ruled Gabon since its independence from France in 1960. The first, Léon Mba, father of independence, and the second, El Hadj Omar Bongo - one of the longest-serving heads of state in the world – who dominated the country's political scene for four decades. President Bongo introduced a nominal multiparty system and a new constitution in the early 1990s. However, allegations of electoral fraud during local elections in 2002 and the presidential elections in 2005 exposed the weaknesses of formal political structures in Gabon. President Bongo died in June 2009. New elections in August 2009 brought Ali Ben Bongo, son of the former president, to power, despite some allegations of electoral fraud.

**Reading**: Douglas Yates, "The History of the Gabonese State and the Bongo Regime," in *The Rentier State in Africa: Oil-Rent Dependency and Neocolonialism in the Republic of Gabon*, Trenton/Asmara: Africa World Press, 1996, pp. 85-142.

# Session 5. Congo-Brazzaville

Upon independence in 1960, the former French region of Middle Congo became the Republic of the Congo. A quarter century of experimentation with Marxism was abandoned in 1990 and a democratically elected government took office in 1992. A brief civil war in 1997 restored former Marxist President Denis Sassou Nguesso, and ushered in a period of ethnic and political unrest. Southern-based rebel groups agreed to a final peace accord in 2003, but the calm is tenuous and refugees continue to present a humanitarian crisis. Congo was once one of Africa's largest petroleum producers, but with declining production it will need new offshore oil finds to sustain its oil earnings over the long term.

**Reading**: John F. Clark, "Congo: Transition & the Struggle to Consolidate," in *Political Reform in Francophone Africa*, Westview Press, 1997.

### Session 6. Cameroon

The former French Cameroon and part of British Cameroon merged in 1961 to form the present country. Due in part to the collaboration of the country's first president Ahmadou Ahidjo, Cameroon has generally enjoyed stability, which has permitted the development of agriculture, roads, and railways, as well as a petroleum industry. Despite a slow movement toward democratic reform, political power remains firmly in the hands of President Paul Biya.

**Reading**: Joseph Takougang, "Cameroon: Biya and Incremental Reform," in *Political Reform in Francophone Africa*, Westview Press, 1997, pp. 162-181.

#### Session 7. Chad

Chad endured three decades of civil warfare, as well as invasions by Libya and a Peacekeeping operation by the Organization of African Unity (1980-2), before peace was finally restored in 1990. The government eventually drafted a constitution, and held flawed presidential elections in 1996 and 2001. In 1998, a rebellion broke out in northern Chad, which has sporadically flared up despite several peace agreements between the government and the rebels. In 2005, new rebel groups emerged in western Sudan and made probing attacks into eastern Chad, despite signing peace agreements in 2006 and 2007. Power remains in the hands of an ethnic minority. President Idriss Deby held a referendum successfully removing constitutional term limits and won another fraudulent election in 2006. Attempted coups d'état have failed to overthrow his regime in 2006 and 2007, and 2008.

**Reading**: William J. Foltz, "Reconstructing the State of Chad," in I. William Zartman (ed.), *Collapsed States. The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995, pp. 15-31. \$\frac{3}{4}\text{Available on Google Books} \(\frac{(http://books.google.com/)\delta}.\)

**SESSION 8. Mid-Term Exam** 

PART THREE. FRENCH WEST AFRICA

**Session 9. Ivory Coast** 

Close ties to France, the development of cocoa production for export, and foreign investment made Cote d'Ivoire one of the most prosperous of the West African states, but did not protect it from political turmoil, especially since the death of the first President, Mr Houphouët-Boigny. In December 1999, a military coup overthrew the government, and General Robert Guei rigged elections held in 2000 that declared him the winner. Popular protest forced him to step aside and brought Laurent Gbagbo into power. In 2002 Rebel forces claimed the northern half of the country. President Gbagbo and rebel forces resumed implementation of the peace accord in 2003, but issues that sparked the civil war, such as land reform and grounds for citizenship, remained unresolved. In 2007 President Gbagbo and former New Force rebel leader Guillaume Soro signed an agreement in which Soro joined the government as Prime Minister and the two agreed to reunite the country, integrate rebel forces into the national armed forces, and hold elections, under the supervision of the United Nations. However, since then, the date for the elections has been constantly postponed for various reasons.

**Reading**: Robert J. Mundt, "*Côte d'Ivoire*: Continuity and Change in a Semi-Democracy," in *Political Reform in Francophone Africa*, Westview Press, 1997, pp. 182-203.

# Session 10. Senegal

The colonies of Senegal and the French Sudan were merged in 1959 as the Mali Federation in 1960, but the union broke up after only a few months, giving rise to two independent countries (Sénégal and Mali). Senegal then joined with The Gambia to form the nominal confederation of Senegambia in 1982, but the envisaged integration of the two countries was never carried out, and the union was dissolved in 1989. Nevertheless, Senegal remains one of the most stable democracies in Africa, thanks to the leadership of its founding President Leopold Senghor, whose Socialist Party ruled Senegal for 40 years, until the current President Abdoulaye Wade was elected in 2000. Since then Wade has amended Senegal's constitution over a dozen times to increase executive power and weaken the opposition, and adopted an autocratic governing style.

**Reading**: Richard Vengroff & Lucy Creevey, "Senegal: Evolution of a Quasi Democracy," in *Political Reform in Francophone Africa*, Westview Press, 1997, pp. 204-224.

### Session 11. Benin

Benin was the site of Dahomey, a prominent West African kingdom. The territory became a French colony in 1872 and achieved independence in 1960, as the Republic of Dahomey. A series of military governments ended with the rise to power of Mathieu Kérékou in 1972, and the establishment of a government based on Marxist-Leninist principles. In 1975, the government chose to change the name in order to reflect the fact that Dahomey kingdom did not coincide with the current political entity, and adopted Benin. Political reform began in 1989 and ushered in free elections that brought Nicéphore Soglo to power, marking the first successful transfer of power in Africa from a dictatorship to a democracy. Kérékou then won presidential elections held in 1996 and 2001. Kérékou stepped down at the end of his second term in 2006 and was succeeded by Thomas Yayi Boni, a political outsider.

**Reading**: Samuel Decalo, "*Benin*: First of the New Democracies," in *Political Reform in Francophone Africa*, Westview Press, 1997, pp. 43-61.

## Session 12. Togo

French Togoland became Togo in 1960, and enjoyed a brief period of democratic rule before Gen. Gnassingbe Eyadéma came to power in 1967, and ruled Togo with a heavy hand for almost four decades. Despite the facade of multiparty elections instituted in the early 1990s, the government was largely dominated by President Eyadéma, whose party has maintained power continually and holds a majority of seats in today's legislature. Upon Eyadéma's death in February 2005, the military installed the president's son, Faure Gnassingbe, and then engineered his formal election two months later. He was reelected in March 2010.

**Reading**: John R. Heilbrunn, "*Togo*: The National Conference and Stalled Reform," in *Political Reform in Francophone Africa*, Westview Press, 1997, pp. 225-245.

### PART FIVE. BELGIAN AFRICA

# Session 13. Democratic Republic of Congo

Republic of the Congo gained its independence from Belgium in 1960, but its early years were marred by political and social instability which ended when Col. Joseph Mobutu seized power and declared himself president in a 1965 coup. He subsequently changed his name to Mobutu Sese Seko in an attempt to rebuild authenticity in the country, and that of the country to "Zaire." Mobutu ruled for 32 years through sham elections and the use of brutal force. Ethnic strife and civil war, touched off by a massive inflow of refugees in 1994 from fighting in Rwanda and Burundi, led in May 1997 to the toppling of his regime by a rebellion led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who renamed the country the "Democratic Republic of the Congo." His regime was itself challenged by a second insurrection again backed by Rwanda and Uganda in 1998. Laurent-Désiré Kabila was assassinated in 2001 and his son, Joseph Kabila, was named head of state. He won the elections in 2006.

**Reading**: Gérard Prunier, "From War to Peace: Congolese Transition and Conflict Deconstruction (January 2003-July 2007)," *Africa's World War*: pp. 285-328.

#### Session 14. Rwanda

Before independence from Belgium, the majority ethnic group, the Hutus, overthrew the ruling Tutsi king. Over the next several years, hundreds of thousands of Tutsis were killed or driven into exile in neighboring countries. The children of these exiles later formed a rebel group, the Rwandan Patriotic Front, and began a civil war in 1990, exacerbating ethnic tensions, and culminating in April 1994 in the genocide of roughly 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus. The Tutsi rebels defeated the Hutu regime and ended the killing in mid-July 1994, but approximately 2 million Hutu refugees – many fearing Tutsi retribution – fled to neighboring Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zaire (now Democratic Republic of the Congo). Rwanda has held local elections in 1999 and presidential and legislative elections in 2003 and 2010. But the Tutsi elite struggle to return to majority rule, given the country's Hutu ethnic majority.

The Post-Genocide Government has initially established both French and English in addition to Kinyarwanda as official languages, but it has changed recently by removing French. Education is therefore in English and Kinyarwanda. Administration also operates in

those two languages. Despite such a circumstance, it remains valid to discuss Rwanda in the context of this course, for its historical connection to the Francophonie.

**Reading**: Gérard Prunier, "Rwandese Society and the Colonial Impact: The Making of a Cultural Mythology," *The Rwanda Crisis*, pp. 1-29.

# **SESSION 15. Final Exam**

# 7. Additional Supplementary Readings

Lecture 2. Assimilation: The Model of French Colonialism

François-Xavier Verschave, *La Françafrique: le plus long scandale de la République* (Paris: Stock, 1999)

Lecture 4. Gabon

Pierre Péan, Affaires africaines (Paris: Fayard, 1983)

Lecture 5. Congo-Brazzaville

Cassie Knight, *Brazzaville Charms: Magic and Rebellion in the Republic of Congo* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2007)

Lecture 6. Cameroon

Achille Mbembe, On the Postcolony (Berekeley: University of California, 2001)

Lecture 7. Chad

Ian Gary & Terry Karl, *Bottom of the Barrel: Africa's Oil Boom and the Poor* (Washington DC: Catholic Relief Services, 2003)

Lecture 9. Ivory Coast

Jon Woronoff, West African Wager: Houphouet versus Nkrumah (Metuchen NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1972)

Lecture 10. Senegal

Mamadou Diouf, *Histoire du Sénégal. Le modèle islamo-wolof et ses périphéries* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2001)

Lecture 11. Benin

Stephen Smith, *Voyage en postcolonie: Le Nouveau Monde franco-africain* (Paris: Grasset, 2010)

Lecture 12. Togo

Dirk Kohnert, "Togo: Thorny Transition and Misguided Aid at the Roots of Economic Misery," in A. Saine et al (eds) *Retrospective Analysis of Recent Elections in West Africa* 

(London: Oxford University Press, forthcoming) available at <a href="http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/9060/">http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/9060/</a>

Lecture 13. Democratic Republic of Congo

International Crisis Group, "Conflict History: DR Congo," available at <a href="https://www.crisisgroup.org">www.crisisgroup.org</a>

Lecture 14. Rwanda

Gerard Prunier, Africa's World War, Congo, The Rwandan Genocide and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009)