

# Government & Politics of Africa

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Last Updated: Wed, 07/30/2025

**Course prefix:** INTA

**Course number:** 8803

**Section:** JH

**CRN (you may add up to five):**

93890

**Instructor First Name:** Jennifer

**Instructor Last Name:** Hamilton

**Semester:** Fall

**Academic year:** 2025

## **Course description:**

This course explores governance and politics in African societies from the late pre-colonial period to the present. Students will learn about topics including traditional governance, the slave trades, colonial regimes and resistance to colonialism, clientelism, personalism, state decay, ethnic politics, democratization, election violence, civil war, international immigration, and more. Literary fiction, including both novels and short stories, will serve as case studies through which students encounter real political trends and affairs

## **Course learning outcomes:**

The course aims to achieve the following outcomes:

1. **Students will be able to identify political themes outside of academic contexts and relate those themes to political phenomena and ongoing political science research.** We are reading works of fiction, but these stories have strong bases in real politics. Students will be able to recognize and explain real political phenomena and patterns that they encounter in fictional literature and beyond.
2. **Students will understand the role that literature has played in African politics.** As Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o asserts, all writing is political. By the end of the course, students will be able to explain why and how literary fiction has served as an important political tool.
3. **Students will sharpen critical thinking, research, presentation, and persuasive writing skills.** In addition to developing subject matter expertise, students will receive feedback to improve important professional skills through course assignments. Graduate students will also develop the ability to read, understand, and

extract key information from academic writing.

4. **Students will gain exposure to new culture.** Few students who attend school in the United States read literary fiction written by African authors. One goal of the course is to broaden students' horizons to recognize artistic and cultural contributions made by African citizens, including understanding the diversity among these contributions.

### **Required course materials:**

The following texts are required and must be purchased or obtained from a library. The list indicates the edition that I own, but other editions are acceptable.

- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. *A Grain of Wheat*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2012. (originally published 1967)  
**Library availability:** on request from the Emory Shared Collection or USG System
- Achebe, Chinua. *A Man of the People*. Heinemann, 1988. (originally published in 1966)  
**Library availability:** on request from GT Library (remote storage), the Emory Shared Collection, or USG System
- Koinange, Wanjiru. *The Havoc of Choice*. Nairobi: Bunk Books, 2021. (originally published by Jacaranda Books Arts Music Ltd., 2019)  
**No library availability.**
- Iweala, Uzodinma. *Beasts of No Nation*. London: John Murray, 2006. (originally published 2005)  
**Library availability:** on request from the Emory Shared Collection or USG System

Additional readings will be available on Canvas. Students will need regular computer access to use the course website.

### **Grading policy:**

Course assignments fall into three main categories:

1. **Participation (30%).** This category focuses on preparation for and participation in class discussions.
- **Reading quizzes (10%).** Throughout the course and without notice, students will complete five to seven closed-book quizzes consisting of 4-6 multiple choice questions covering assigned readings for the given class meeting. These quizzes should be easy to anyone who completed the reading. They serve as an accountability mechanism/incentive for timely reading completion. I will drop each student's lowest reading quiz grade (including zeroes for missed quizzes) when calculating final grades. Students will complete a practice reading quiz during the first week to clarify expectations.
- **Discussion Participation (10%).** Discussion participation will include both regular attendance and regular contribution to class discussions. Students should plan to attend the vast majority of class meetings (90%+) and speak during most meetings

(70%+). To allow students to prepare, I will post discussion questions at least two days ahead of class discussion days as indicated in the syllabus. Students will receive a preliminary participation grade around the time of midterm reports, and an updated participation grade at the end of the term. Students concerned about their ability to routinely participate in class (including owing to absences) should speak with me as soon as possible. While I am happy to find alternative ways for students to demonstrate active engagement during the course, I will not accommodate pleas or excuses raised only at the end of term.

- **Non-Fiction Review (10%).** For at least seven stories (out of approximately ten), graduate students must select one item from the optional readings to read and summarize. A rubric for these summaries will appear on Canvas prior to the start of the course. Summaries will be hand-written and submitted in hard copy on the day the “fact behind the fiction” lecture begins for each story, as indicated on the syllabus. Students must complete these reviews independently and without AI use (including use to shorten or summarize the articles). Graduate students can complete a non-fiction review (optional) during the second week to clarify expectations.
- 2. **Presentation (42%).** Throughout the course, I will provide background information about African authors and the political realities behind the stories they wrote – but I cannot cover everything! The presentation at the end of term allows students to explore topics of interest further.

Graduate students will prepare a full “fact behind the fiction” lecture (30-35 minutes) based on a new short story or novella they select. Students will not be responsible for developing reading quizzes or discussion questions to accompany new stories.

Students can work in pairs or independently; however, students choosing to work in pairs will receive the same grade, regardless of individual effort. Total presentation lengths will be the same for pairs as for students working independently.

Presentation grades will consist of several components, completed in the following order:

- **Meeting (1%).** Students will meet with me to discuss story selection and potential resources. Students may come with a story and/or topic already in mind, or I can also provide recommendations based on countries or topics of interest.
- **Selection Approval (1%).** Students will need to submit the topic(s) of their presentation, as well as the story (or for undergraduates, song) from which these topics are drawn.
- **Annotated Bibliography (10%).** Students will prepare a list of non-fiction sources from which they plan to draw information for their presentation. Graduate students will prepare at least five sources. I will post a rubric for the annotated bibliography at or before the time of presentation meetings.
- **Presentation (25%).** Students will receive a grade for their presentation. The grade will focus solely on content, not on presentation skills. I will post a rubric for the presentations at or before the time the annotated bibliography is due.

- **Peer Feedback (5%).** Students will receive a grade for supporting your peers. Students will watch peers' presentations and provide constructive written feedback. I will assess this grade individually, regardless of whether students presented with a partner.

3. **Essay (28%).** I will release the prompt for this essay during the first or second week of the course, so students can consider their responses throughout the course. Students are allowed (and encouraged) to discuss the essay with other students. However, all writing must represent the student's own work. Students can brainstorm together, but they must outline, write, and revise alone. The essay will not require research beyond information provided during the course, although students may conduct such research if they choose. Students are allowed to reference their own experiences and impressions (using first person) in the essay. Graduate students must use at least seven concrete examples from at least five different stories we discussed in the course as evidence and reference at least three non-fiction assigned readings. The total essay length must be 8-9 full pages double spaced, excluding references.

Essay grades will consist of two components:

- **Rough Draft (3%).** Students will submit a rough draft of the essay (about half the length of the full essay) via Canvas on November 18 for a completion grade. I will provide feedback on this early draft.
- **Final Draft (25%).** Students will submit a final draft of the essay via Canvas on Friday, December 5. I will post a rubric for this essay no later than November 1.

**Grade Dispute Procedure.** To dispute grades, students must submit a regrade request via email within the dispute window. The dispute window starts 24 hours after students receive the returned graded assignment and ends 72 hours after students receive the returned graded assignment. The regrade request must include a specific description of where and why I should have awarded additional points. I will not accept generalized requests to regrade assignments without this specific description. Upon regrading, I can either raise the grade, lower the grade, or keep it the same.

**Final Grades.** When evaluating final grades, I will round your weighted average to the nearest whole number and assign a letter grade based on this breakdown:

A: 90-100

B: 80-89

C: 70-79

D: 60-69

F:0-59

**Extension Policy.** Students cannot receive extensions for reading quizzes, but their lowest quiz grade will not count toward the course grade. Students can request extensions for other course assignments in advance of the assignment deadline. Extension requests must be sent via email to [jhamilton99@gatech.edu](mailto:jhamilton99@gatech.edu) with the subject "INTA 3240 Extension Request." Extension requests do not need to include an explanation for the request, but they do need to include a proposed alternative deadline. Although I will consider requests to present later, I might not be able to accommodate them, as these changes will affect other students as well.

**Attendance policy:**

Students should plan to attend class in person unless they have a compelling reason not to attend (e.g., illness or legitimate conflict). Discussion participation will include both regular attendance and regular contribution to class discussions. Students should plan to attend the vast majority of class meetings (90%+) and speak during most meetings (70%+). Students will receive a preliminary participation grade around the time of midterm reports, and an updated participation grade at the end of the term. Students concerned about their ability to routinely participate in class (including owing to absences) should speak with me as soon as possible. While I am happy to find alternative ways for students to demonstrate active engagement during the course, I will not accommodate pleas or excuses raised only at the end of term.

**Academic honesty/integrity statement:**

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

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Per the Center for Teaching and Learning, "Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, which will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations. For more information on the Honor Code, visit the [OSI website](#)." If you are uncertain what

constitutes a violation of academic integrity, please check with the instructor prior to submitting an assignment.

**AI Usage Policy.** Students can employ AI (e.g., ChatGPT, Grammarly) or their peers as a limited tool to support their work, but not as a substitute for completing the assignment themselves. Students cannot use AI or peers to produce a full draft of an assignment, to produce drafts for sections of the assignment, nor for rewriting entire sentences or paragraphs. Students also cannot use AI to summarize assigned readings rather than reading it for themselves. Acceptable uses of AI include the following:

- *Identifying resources.* Students can use ChatGPT or similar platforms to identify a story or song for their presentation, as well as to identify non-fiction sources for the annotated bibliography/presentation. They should then locate those resources to read and integrate them *on their own*. Being able to read, understand, and consolidate information is a skill you must develop yourself. As such, students will and must be able to pinpoint and appropriately cite the original source of any statistics, quotations, or claims. AI platforms often fail to accurately document the source of information they provide; in this respect, these platforms do not constitute an acceptable source.
- *Light copy editing.* Students can use tools like Grammarly to check subject-verb agreement, punctuation, spelling, etc. However, they cannot use Grammarly or other AI tools to write or rewrite entire sentences or paragraphs. Learning to compile information and write competently is a skill you must develop for yourself.

AI usage for the non-fiction review assignments is wholly prohibited.

Any usage of AI must be noted within submissions, including both which AI resources were employed and how. Students are advised to keep records of their work progress, including rough (unedited) drafts and/or AI transcripts, to demonstrate compliance with course policies in case their work is flagged for a potential violation of academic integrity. Students may also be asked to discuss the ideas represented in their assignments to confirm that it represents original work.

**Peer consultation.** Students are welcome to brainstorm together for both the presentation and essay assignments, as well as their preceding components. However, all submitted material must be drafted independently. Students may peer-review draft work or use university writing resources to check drafts. Students should not consult on reading quizzes or non-fiction reviews.

**Previous coursework.** Students cannot recycle work from other courses, either past or ongoing, either in part or in full, without individual permission from the instructor. I will consider these requests on a case-by-case basis based on compatibility with learning objectives.