

INTA 3240/8803-JH Syllabus

Government and Politics of Africa; INTA 3240-A/8803-JH; 3 credits

Fall 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor: Jennifer Hamilton

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General Course Information

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

Through this course, students will be able to

1. Appraise the extent to which fictional work represents real political phenomena
2. Assess the merits and limitations of literary fiction as a political tool
3. Produce oral and written presentations to effectively convey these appraisals and assessments

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)

- Achebe, Chinua. *A Man of the People*. Heinemann, 1988. (originally published in 1966)
- Koinange, Wanjiru. *The Havoc of Choice*. Nairobi: Bunk Books, 2021. (originally published by Jacaranda Books Arts Music Ltd., 2019)
- Mohamed, Nadifa. *The Orchard of Lost Souls*. Simon & Schuster, 2022. (originally published 2013)

Grading Policy:

When assigning course grades, I will round your weighted average to the nearest whole number and assign a letter grade based on this breakdown: 0-59% F, 60-69% D, 70-79% C, 80-89% B, 90-100% A.

To dispute grades, you 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.

Assignments

Component	Weight	
	Undergraduate	Graduate
Participation	30%	30%
Reading Quizzes	10%	10%
Discussion Participation	15%	10%
Non-Fiction Reviews	5%	10%
Presentation	40%	40%
Essay	30%	30%
Preliminary submissions	5%	5%
Final submission	25%	25%

Description of Graded Components

Reading Quizzes: Throughout the course and without notice, students will complete approximately five closed-book quizzes consisting of approximately four multiple choice questions and one open-ended, reflective question covering assigned readings for the given class meeting. These quizzes serve as an accountability mechanism for timely reading completion, and they should be easy for anyone who completes the reading. I will drop each student's lowest reading quiz grade when calculating final grades. Students will complete a practice reading quiz during the first week to clarify expectations.

Discussion Participation: 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 Reviews: Each unit will review non-fiction political and social science literature relevant to the fictional story we are reading. Graduate students must complete seven non-fiction reviews, while undergraduates must complete four non-fiction reviews across the term, with a maximum of one review submitted per unit. For each non-fiction review, students must select one optional to complete and summarize. A rubric for these summaries will appear on Canvas prior to the start of the course. Students must complete these reviews independently and without AI use (including use to shorten or summarize the articles). Students can submit one additional non-fiction review to replace a low grade.

Presentation: 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; for example, students can present on an unexplored topic from a previous story or a topic from a new story that they select. I will announce the presentation length by October 1 as course enrollment stabilizes, but it will not exceed fifteen minutes for undergraduate students/thirty-five minutes for graduate students. Students can work in pairs or independently. Total presentation lengths will be the same for pairs as for students working independently.

At an initial meeting with me, students will 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. Students will need to submit the topic(s) of their presentation, as well as the story from which these topics are drawn. Next, students will prepare a list of non-fiction sources from which they plan to draw information for their presentation. Undergraduate students will prepare at least three sources, while graduate students will prepare at least five sources. Toward the end of term, students will present their work, mimicking the “fact behind fiction” style used throughout the course. The instructor and peers will provide constructive written feedback. After receiving this feedback, students will complete a reflection form where they self-assess their presentation grade.

Final Essay: 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.

Students will complete two preliminary submissions at least two full pages in length at times they select during the course. These preliminary submissions are an opportunity to receive low-stakes feedback on components or drafts of the final paper (completion-based grading). For example, students can submit well-developed examples or a rough draft.

The final essay will be due on the day of the scheduled exam slot for the course. Undergraduate students must use at least five concrete examples from at least four different stories we discussed in the course as evidence and reference at least one non-fiction assigned reading. The total essay length must be 6-7 full pages double spaced, excluding references. Graduate students must use at least six concrete examples from at least four different stories we discussed in the course as evidence and reference at least three non-fiction assigned readings. The total essay length must be 7-9 full pages double spaced, excluding references.

Course Policies

Attendance and/or Participation

Attendance is a graded component of the course; see expectations detailed above. Students should expect to actively contribute to the course via comments or questions during most course meetings.

Student Conduct

Politics and political science are fields with ample disagreement, and I expect disagreement to become evident during class discussions. Discussion of contentious issues is central to intellectual development. However, there are appropriate and inappropriate ways to engage in disagreement to produce a constructive learning atmosphere. You are free to disagree with one another, as well as with leading theorists in the discipline. However, you must justify such disagreement with reference to ideas and evidence, not with reference to identities or origins. Ad hominem attacks will not be tolerated; you must engage respectfully. When conveying normative (value-based) judgments or personal experiences, you should identify these contributions as such; for example, “I” statements are appropriate in these instances.

You must adhere to the requirements outlined in the Georgia Tech Student Code of Conduct and the Sexual Misconduct Policy, thereby contributing to the establishment of a respectful and productive learning community. Disruptive conduct includes (but is not limited to) routinely arriving late or departing early in a disruptive or inconsiderate manner; repeatedly interrupting or interjecting during class without being called upon; repeated audible disruptions such as ringing or dinging cell phones or side conversations; clear disengagement with learning activities in order to text or conduct non-course related activities online; harassment of or threatening behavior toward the instructor or classmates, either verbally or physically; or repeated use of profane language, except when directly quoting material relevant to course conduct. Failure to cease disruptive activity upon instructor request will result in dismissal for the remainder of the class meeting; repeat offenses will result in referral to the Dean of Students.

Academic Integrity

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. Review [Georgia Tech’s Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#). If you are uncertain what constitutes a violation of academic integrity, it is imperative on you to clarify in advance; ignorance is not an acceptable excuse for violations.

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Generative AI Usage

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 generative 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. 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.

Prohibited uses of generative AI include, but are not limited to, summarizing and/or analyzing readings and organizing content for essays or presentations. Being able to read, understand, and consolidate information is a skill you must develop yourself.

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.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

Campus Resources for Students

Student Well-Being:

Even the best and brightest students face challenges during their academic careers, whether related to coursework or other aspects of life. Prioritizing your physical and mental well-being can help ensure your best performance as a student. The Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-Being has compiled a comprehensive list of wellness-related resources available to students, which you can access [here](#).

Undergraduate Student Academic Success Resources:

Academic Success and Advising (a unit in the Office of Undergraduate Education & Student Success) provides free support for your courses. Students can attend scheduled supplemental review (PLUS) sessions, stop by Drop-In Tutoring, or schedule a one-on-one appointment through Knack. To explore what options work best for you, please visit us online at success.gatech.edu/tutoring, email us at tutoring@gatech.edu, or come see us at Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons, Suite 283.

Graduate Student Academic and Professional Success Resources:

A list of resources for graduate students is given on the [Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Education](#) website. Specific information for [current graduate students](#) includes

- [Academic Resources](#) such as the Communications Center, Language Institute, Library, Catalog, Registrar, resources for conducting research, Advocacy and Conflict Resolution resources, and how to manage unexpected situations that may impact your academic performance;
- [Student Resources](#) such as Campus Services, Child Care/Family programs, Health & Wellness, Career Services, and the Student Resource Guide; and
- [Professional Development](#) such as the programming from the Career Center and other professional development resources and events”