

PSCI 3101 A
Conflict and Security in Africa
Friday: 11:35 am - 2:25 pm
Please confirm location on Carleton Central.

I. Course Description

Instructor: Dr. Isaac Odoom

Student Hours: Friday 2:30pm – 4:30pm or by appointment

Email: isaac.odoom@carleton.ca

II. Course Description

This course introduces students to the politics of conflict and security in Africa. It examines the causes, dynamics, and consequences of conflicts, as well as the responses by African states, regional organizations, and international actors. Core themes include colonial legacies, state formation, civil wars, terrorism, peacekeeping, human security, and emerging challenges such as digital security and climate change.

In the first part of the course, we will focus on the history, causes, dimensions, and outcomes of contemporary conflict in Africa. The second part introduces theories and approaches that help us better understand and analyze the complexities of these conflicts. Throughout the course, students will engage with scholarly debates and case studies while reflecting on African agency and Africa's place in global security politics.

The overall purpose of the course is to equip students with historical, theoretical, and analytical tools to enable critical thinking and ethical awareness in understanding African security beyond stereotypes.

III. Course Format

This is a lecture course designed to be accessible to all students, but it requires consistent reading of assigned literature and attention to current events in Africa to enable meaningful class participation.

Each class will be divided into two parts:

- The first half will consist of a lecture where I highlight key concepts, debates, and approaches. Lectures will not simply summarize the readings but will provide analytical frameworks and broader context.
- The second half will be used for interactive activities such as discussions, small group exercises, and lead discussion sessions.

We will begin each lecture with a brief discussion on “*What’s in the news (about Africa) this week?*” to encourage students to connect course themes with ongoing developments.

IV. Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify and analyze key historical, political, and economic factors driving conflicts in Africa.
 2. Explain the role of regional and international actors in African security.
 3. Critically assess scholarly and policy debates on African conflicts.
 4. Compare and contrast case studies to draw general insights about conflict and security.
 5. Communicate complex ideas through written and oral formats, including short papers, and discussion leadership.
 6. Develop critical thinking skills and ethical awareness in analyzing African security beyond stereotypes.
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V. Texts

There is no required textbook for this course. Required readings for each week are listed in the course schedule. All readings will be available on ARES via Brightspace free of charge.

VI. Evaluation at a Glance

Component	Weight	Due Date	Notes
Attendance & Participation (includes Lead Discussant role)	15%	Ongoing	Active participation in class discussions; each student serves once as lead discussant.
Africa Map Quiz	5%	Sept 26 (Week 4)	In-class quiz on African geography (countries, regions).
Midterm Test	25%	Oct 17 (Week 7)	In-class test covering Weeks 1–6.
Media Critique Paper	20%	Nov 14 (Week 11)	4–5 page short paper analyzing a news article in relation to course themes and readings.
Final Exam	35%	Exam Period (Dec)	Exam covering entire course, with emphasis on applied knowledge in the course
Total	100%		

VII. Evaluation in Detail

1. Attendance & Participation (15%)

Active participation is central to this course. Students are expected to attend regularly, complete weekly readings, and contribute to discussions.

- **Lead Discussant Role (5%):** Each student will serve once as a lead discussant for the weekly readings. Discussants post 1–2 questions on Brightspace by **Wednesday night**, introduce their questions briefly in class, and submit a 1-page reflection. [Further details will be posted on Brightspace]
- **General Participation (10%):** Includes regular attendance, meaningful contributions to class discussion, and respectful engagement with peers.
- Instructor will take class attendance weekly.

2. Africa Map Quiz (5%)

Held in class on **Sept 26 (Week 4)**. Students will identify African countries and major regions. This ensures a good foundation for understanding case studies throughout the course.

3. Midterm Test (25%)

Held on **Oct 17 (Week 7)** during class. Covers material from Weeks 1–6 (lectures, readings, and discussions). The closed book exam is intended to encourage students to keep up with readings and course content, and to allow students to demonstrate their understanding of the early elements of the course material. Students will be required to answer short and long answer questions (choices will be provided).

4. Media Critique: *Conflict in the News* (20%)

Due **Nov 14 (Week 11)** via Brightspace. Students select a recent news article (published within the past 24 months) about an African conflict/security issue. The short paper (4–5 pages) will:

- Summarize the article.
 - Connect it to one weekly theme and one debate from class.
 - Engage with at least two assigned readings to assess how the article reflects or misrepresents scholarship.
- Students must attach the news article (PDF) to their submission.

Further guidelines will be posted on Brightspace.

5. Final Exam (35%)

Scheduled during the formal exam period. Students will answer essay-type short/long answer questions related to course content. Review and Sample questions will be discussed in class on Nov 28. Do not book any travel plans during this period until the final exam schedule is posted.

Contact Policy:

Email is the best way to contact me. I normally reply within 24-48 hours, weekends excluded. All email must be through official Carleton University email accounts. For longer questions I recommend scheduling regular office hours or a Zoom appointment.

Students should note that to obtain credit in this course, students must fulfill all of the course requirements.

Previous papers/work.

For this course and its assignments, using work already submitted for other courses is unacceptable. Students are invited to talk to the instructor if they have any questions related to this provision.

Changes to the syllabus:

This syllabus is subject to change. Any amendments will be posted on Brightspace and announced in class.

Generative AI and this course (adapted from Peter Andree's course outline)

Generative Artificial Intelligence tools (such as ChatGPT, Google's Bard, Bing AI, etc.) are powerful new tools that can be helpful to social science researchers. However, the quality and validity of outputs from these tools varies considerably. Further, students are being trained, in part, to think critically, and to strengthen their own writing skills.

For this course, students are expected to do their own research and write the entirety of their own assignments. AI can be used as a guide to new topics, and to correct spelling and grammar, but no more. Students may use AI tools to better understand topics at a general level, and to help them identify sources they may not have known about, much as one might use Wikipedia. As with Wikipedia, the validity of which also varies, text written by Generative AI tools should not be copied into a student's assignment, or even quoted from directly. Instead, students should find and work from original sources to inform their papers, and then cite those original sources in their list of references cited.

The instructor reserves the right to ask students to submit evidence of their own research (e.g. rough notes, screenshots of reference sources, etc.) and to participate in an oral defense of any submitted assignment.

Instructor and students will have a chance to discuss the use of AI in class.

(This note on AI was developed using language from online resources).

Course Schedule

The weekly reading list is subject to changes by the instructor in the course of the term. Instructor will inform students of any changes ahead of time.

Week 1 (Sept 5) – Course Organization & Introduction

- Overview of course themes, expectations, and Africa map activity preview.
- Recommended: TED Talk (Video): Chimamanda Adichie, 'The Danger of a Single Story', 2009. [Available online <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9lhs241zeg>]
- You can start using the Africa Map learning tool at <https://lizardpoint.com/geography/africa-quiz.php#> to learn the basic political geography of the continent.

Week 2 (Sept 12) – Approaches to African Conflicts and Security

- **Required:** Paul D. Williams. 2017. "Continuity and Change in War and Conflict in Africa." *Prism*, vol 6 (4): 33-46.
- **Recommended:** P.D. Williams, "Thinking about Security in Africa," *International Affairs*, 83(6), November 2007, pp. 1021-1038.
- **Video:** MSNBC. (2022, March 12). Comparing the coverage of war in Europe Versus War in Africa. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llxGhGtNL60>

Week 3 (Sept 19) – Colonial Legacies and State Formation

- **Required:** P.T. Zeleza, "The Causes and Costs of War in Africa: From Liberation Struggle to the 'War on Terror'," in A. Nhema and P.T. Zeleza (eds.), *The Roots of African Conflicts: The Causes and Costs*, 2008, Introduction, pp. 1-35.
- **Recommended:** A. Adu Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism*, 1987, Ch. 2, pp. 27-57.
- **Podcast:** This is a Short History Of...The Scramble for Africa. Available at: <https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/short-historyof/id1579040306?i=1000664049280> [You can skip the first 6 minutes]

Week 4 (Sept 26) – Liberation Wars and the Cold War in Africa (Africa Map Quiz)

- **Required:** Houser, G. M. (1987). Assessing Africa's Liberation Struggle. *Africa Today*, 34(4), 17–32. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4186444>
- **Recommended:** Khapoya, V. B., & Agyeman-Duah, B. (1985). The Cold War and Regional Politics in East Africa. *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 5(2).
- **Video:** *The Mau Mau in Kenya: The Untold Story*.

Week 5 (Oct 3) – Coups, Militarism, and State Fragility

- **Required:** Suleiman and Onapajo, "Why West Africa has had so many coups and how to prevent more," *The Conversation* (Feb 2022)

- **Recommended:** Abrahamsen, R., 2018. Return of the generals? Global militarism in Africa from the Cold War to the present. *Security Dialogue* 49 (1-2): 19-31.
- **Video:** *Why Coups are Making a Comeback in Africa* (2022).

Week 6 (Oct 10) – Ethnic Conflict and Genocide

- **Required:** Blanton, R., Mason, T. D., & Athow, B. (2001). Colonial style and post-colonial ethnic conflict in Africa. *Journal of Peace Research*, 38(4), 473-491.
- **Recommended:** Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 'The Myth of Tribe in African Politics,' *Transition* 101, (2009), pp. 16-23
- Sudan conflict: How did we get here?: Into Africa: CSIS podcasts. Into Africa | CSIS Podcasts. (2023, April 20). <https://www.csis.org/podcasts/africa/sudan-conflicthow-did-we-get-here>

Week 7 (Oct 17) – Midterm Test (in-class)

- No lecture or assigned readings.

Week 8 (Oct 24) – Fall Break: No Class

Week 9 (Oct 31) – Resources, Greed, and Grievance

- **Required:** Obi, C. I. (2010). Oil extraction, dispossession, resistance, and conflict in Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue canadienne d'études du développement*, 30(1-2), 219-236.
- **Recommended:** M. Boas, "The Liberian Civil War: New War/Old War?" *Global Society*, 19(1), January 2005, pp. 73-88.
- **Video:** Blood Diamonds

Week 10 (Nov 7) – Terrorism and Insurgency in the Sahel (Guest Lecture)

- **Required:** Sandor, A., Frowd, P. M., & Hönke, J. (2024). Productive failure, African agency, and security cooperation in West Africa: The case of the G5 Sahel. *European Journal of International Security*, 1-19.
- **Recommended:** Violent Extremism in the Sahel (Council of Foreign Relations) <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violent-extremism-sahel>
- **Podcast:** *The New Alliance of the Sahel States and the future of African Institutions:* <https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/into-africa/id1441573078?i=1000698118438>

Week 11 (Nov 14) – Gender, Human Security, and Sexual Violence in War (*Media Paper Due*)

- **Required:** Baaz, M.E. and Stern, M., 2011. Whores, men, and other misfits: Undoing 'feminization' in the armed forces in the DRC. *African Affairs* 110 (441): 563-585.
- *Podcast:* UN Women – Ending Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Week 12 (Nov 21) – Peacekeeping and African Regional Security Institutions

- **Required:** Alex de Waal (2015), *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa*, Ch. 6.
- **Recommended:** Allen, N., & Mazurova, N. (2024, April 30). African Union and United Nations Partnership Key to the future of peace operations in Africa – Africa Center.
<https://africacenter.org/spotlight/african-union-united-nations-peace-operations/>
- **Video:** Africa Center for Strategic Studies. (2024, February 19). *The State of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Africa* – Africa Center for Strategic Studies.
<https://africacenter.org/spotlight/the-state-of-united-nations-peacekeeping-operations-in-africa/>

Week 13 (Nov 28) – Global Powers and Future of African Security (Course Conclusion)

- **Required:** Achinivu, C. (2024). The Supply of Digital Authoritarianism to Africa: an Empirical Study. *The African Review*, 51(5), 525-546. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1821889x-bja10110>
- **Recommended:** Manfredi Firmian, F. (2025). Russia's state capture strategy in Africa, from Wagner to the Africa corps. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 36(4), 783-812.
- Course Wrap-up and exam preparation

REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Student Mental Health

As a university student, you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. Here is a list that may be helpful:

Emergency Resources (on and off campus): <https://carleton.ca/health/emergencies-and-crisis/emergency-numbers/>

Carleton Resources:

Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>

Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>

Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>

Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>

Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>

Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Off Campus Resources:

Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>

Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>

Empower Me: 1-844-741-6389, <https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>

ood2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>

The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>

Academic consideration for medical or other extenuating circumstances: Students must contact the instructor(s) of their absence or inability to complete the academic deliverable within the predetermined timeframe due to medical or other extenuating circumstances. For a range of medical or other extenuating circumstances, students may use the online self-declaration form and where appropriate, the use of medical documentation. This policy regards the accommodation of extenuating circumstances for both short-term and long-term periods and extends to all students enrolled at Carleton University.

Students should also consult the [Course Outline Information on Academic Accommodations](#) for more information. Detailed information about the procedure for requesting academic consideration can be found [here](#).

Pregnancy: Contact your Instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For accommodation regarding a formally-scheduled final exam, please contact Equity and Inclusive Communities (EIC) at equity@carleton.ca or by calling (613) 520-5622 to speak to an Equity Advisor.

Religious obligation: Contact your Instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details [click here](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, please request your accommodations for this course through the [Ventus Student Portal](#) at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). Requests made within two weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. For final exams, the deadlines to request accommodations are published in the [University Academic Calendars](#). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally scheduled exam (if applicable).

Survivors of Sexual Violence: As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and its survivors are supported through academic

accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>.

Accommodation for Student Activities: Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

PETITIONS TO DEFER

Students unable to write a final examination because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control may apply within **three working days** to the Registrar's Office for permission to write a deferred examination. The request must be fully supported by the appropriate documentation. Only deferral petitions submitted to the Registrar's Office will be considered. [See Undergraduate Calendar, Article 4.3](#)

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s). Permissibility of submitting substantially the same piece of work more than once for academic credit. If group or collaborative work is expected or allowed, provide a clear and specific description of how and to what extent you consider collaboration to be acceptable or appropriate, especially in the completion of written assignments.

WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

Please reference the [Academic Calendar](#) for each term's official withdrawal dates

OFFICIAL FINAL EXAMINATION PERIOD

Please reference the [Academic Calendar](#) for each term's Official Exam Period (may include evenings & Saturdays or Sundays)
For more information on the important dates and deadlines of the academic year, consult the [Carleton Calendar](#).

GRADING SYSTEM

The grading system is described in the Undergraduate Calendar section [5.4](#).
Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is an essential element of a productive and successful career as a student. Students are required to familiarize themselves with the university's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as "*presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*" This can include:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT);
- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "*substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.*"

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

RESOURCES (613-520-2600, phone ext.)

Department of Political Science (2777)	B640 Loeb
Registrar's Office (3500)	300 Tory
Centre for Student Academic Success (3822)	4 th floor Library
Academic Advising Centre (7850)	302 Tory
Paul Menton Centre (6608)	501 Nideyinàn
Career Services (6611)	401 Tory