

PLSC 170b / AFST 170b / ECON 327b:
African Poverty & Western Aid

- or -

Why is Africa poor and what (if anything)
can the West do about it?

Syllabus

Yale University

Spring 2009

Seminar time: 9:25am – 10:15am Tuesdays and Thursdays

Seminar location: TBA

Sections: TBA

Instructor: Chris Blattman, Departments of Political Science & Economics, christopher.blattman@yale.edu

Office Hours: TBA, in 77 Prospect St., Room A103

Course blog: TBA

Web/blog: <http://www.chrisblattman.blogspot.com/>

Purpose and Nature of the Course:

In the 1960s, Africa's future looked bright. This optimism was extinguished, however, by four decades of disappointing growth, failing states, corrupt regimes, widespread poverty and famine, and high levels of violence and civil war. Decades of five-year plans, foreign aid flows, military expeditions, and humanitarian interventions seem to have had little impact, and perhaps even a negative one.

Today, hope for growth and stability is again flourishing in Africa. Civil wars are dwindling, more of the continent is democratic than ever, and many countries have sustained modest growth rates for almost a decade. There are new private foundations, pledges to increase foreign aid, African and UN intervention forces, and books claiming that the end of poverty is within our grasp. The West is capable of saving Africa, according to some. Africa will grow and prosper in spite of the West, according to others. Still others fear that expectations and growth are about to come crashing down again as African and Western government repeat the mistakes of the past.

Why is Africa poor? What, if anything, can the West do about it? No course can answer these questions in full, but one can get started on the (hopefully lifelong) learning. Students will be exposed to the major and the not-so-major debates in aid and development. They will discuss the conventional and less conventional theories of poverty, growth, war and good governance, and why there is so much or so little of it in Africa. The aim is to help students think critically about these debates and their possible role in the problem and solutions.

Requirements:

This is a writing requirement course (WR) course, meaning all of the assignments will be written ones, based on your critical analysis and synthesis of the readings. It should be about the same amount of work as a non-WR class, except your section leaders will give you additional feedback on your writing, will teach you effective strategies for developing and sustaining ideas, as well as the habits and techniques of experienced writers.

More information on WR courses is here: <http://www.yale.edu/bass/students/wr/index.html>

Students will be evaluated on the following basis:

- Class and section participation (20%)
- Weekly short essays (30%)
- Two critical book reviews (50%)

There will be no exams.

About 100 to 120 pages of reading will be assigned each week (give or take). These readings are required, and your written work will be judged on how well you learn and apply these readings in your written work.

Critical Book Reviews:

You will write two critical book reviews this semester.

The first, **due March 26 before the beginning of class**, is a critical review of Jeffrey Sachs' book, *The End of Poverty*.

The second, **due May 4 at 6pm**, is a critical review of Paul Collier's book, *The Bottom Billion*.

Each review is to be approximately 10 to 15 double-spaced pages in length. Margins should be 1 inch, and font should be 12 point. Each review is to be submitted to your section leader via e-mail as a Word 2003 document or (better yet) a PDF.

The purpose of the reviews is for you to critically review the assumptions, theories, and recommendations contained in each book. You should make extensive use of the readings to question these assumptions, provide alternative theories, or alternative recommendations.

In addition, you should bring in a fresh and original perspective based on your own thoughts, experiences, or outside readings.

If you want to target your analysis and critique to a particular theme, idea, or recommendation within the book, that is fine. Choose wisely. Probably your best strategy, however, is to develop three to five intelligent critiques or ideas and develop each at moderate length. Feel free to discuss this decision with your section leader.

You will be evaluated most of all on the quality and originality of your argument. You can assume your reader has read the book and the course readings, and so you should spend a minimum of time summarizing arguments or material. This is not a book report, and you won't be rewarded for summarizing content. On the contrary, you will likely be penalized, since others will be filling the same space with original analysis and thoughts.

Late assignments—even ones late by a few hours—will have the grade reduced by 20% for each day late.

Weekly Assignments:

We will meet for 13 weeks this semester. At least 8 of these weeks (excluding the first week), students should submit a short essay that analyzes and critiques the week's readings.

Each essay should be less than two double-spaced pages in length (1 inch margins, 12 point font) and will be handed to your section leader at the beginning of each section.

The comment should fulfill one or more of the following purposes:

- Original comments on or critiques of the readings.
- An original synthesis of the readings with other readings or another literature.
- A research idea that seeks to advance the analysis reviewed in the week’s readings, including a description of the rationale, the research question and hypothesis, and the theoretical approach and any empirical strategy and data.
- Last week only: An outline (including central arguments) for your final book review

The purpose of these essays is to get you think critically about the principal readings beforehand, to generate a productive discussion during seminar time, and to enhance your absorption of the material. You should also aim to improve your critical writing capacity over the course of the semester.

You will be graded on your 8 best submissions, and so you will be able to skip up to 4 without penalty (since there will be none submitted the first week). Submitting all 12 potential comments is to your benefit, but not necessary.

Comments should be written in concise prose—that is, sentences rather than phrases or bullets. You should avoid repeating material from the readings, and avoid obvious criticisms if possible. You will be evaluated solely on your ability to think and write clearly, creatively, and originally.

Comments will be given a grade of 1 to 4: (4) inspired, (3) clever and interesting, (2) meets expectations, and (1) needs improvement. I anticipate that most comments will receive a 2 or 3, with 1’s and 4’s the exception. If fewer than 8 comments are submitted, missing comments will receive a zero.

Sections:

The sections are a time for you to discuss your thoughts about the readings with a small group of classmates, as well as ask questions of your section leader about the readings. Your section leader will typically guide a discussion, and 20 percent of your grade will be determined by the quality of your comments.

You should be well-prepared for these discussions by virtue of having prepared your short essay ahead of time. These weekly assignments should be handed in to your section leader at the beginning of section and should tackle **that week’s readings** (even if your section is early in the week).

Section leaders will also spend time instructing you on writing styles and techniques, including feedback on your weekly essays.

Grading standards will be as uniform as possible across sections. At the end of the semester, I will correct for any differences in the grade distributions across sections and section leaders. Thus there are no “easy” or “hard” section leaders.

Your section leaders and section times are as follows:

Section leader	Time & Location
• Karisa Cloward	TBA
• Nathaniel Cogley	TBA
• Sinead Hunt	TBA
• Kyohei Yamada	TBA

Writing resources:

Mostly you will be evaluated on your substance and organization, although style still counts. The idea is for ESL students not to be at a disadvantage. The clarity and strength of your argument is what counts, not the stylistic flourishes.

I cannot recommend enough the following guides to writing. Whether you want to go on in life to write fiction, journalism, or academic journal articles, these are the universal, indispensable guides to crisp and elegant prose. I would recommend them in the following order:

- William I. Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, "[The Elements of Style](#)"
- William Zinsser, "[On Writing Well](#)"
- Keith Hjortshoj, "[The Transition to College Writing](#)"

You may also want to check out the (free) [Purdue online writing lab](#) or resources at the [Yale college writing center](#). They can help you improve your writing skills if you think you'd like some extra help.

Plagiarism:

I take plagiarism in this class very seriously, and so cite, cite, cite. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Plagiarism is the use of someone else's work, words, or ideas as if they were your own.

Integrating and critiquing different ideas is the whole point of the course, and so giving credit where it's due (but adding your own reflection) will get you higher grades than putting your name on someone else's work or idea.

Most of all, Yale punishes academic dishonesty severely. The most common penalty is suspension from the university, but students caught plagiarizing are also subject to lowered or failing grades as well as the possibility of expulsion. Please be sure to review [Yale's Academic Integrity Policy](#).

You can find a fuller discussion of using sources and avoiding plagiarism on the [Writing Center Website](#).

Staying Current:

Paying attention to African and development news is not required, but it will help you (and might even be interesting). Here are some resources that might interest you:

Podcasts:

- BBC Africa Today: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/podcasts/africa/>
- Development Drums: <http://developmentdrums.org/>

News:

- BBC Africa: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/default.stm>
- All Africa: <http://allafrica.com/>
- Africa Confidential: <http://www.africa-confidential.com/home>
- You can also sign up for the United Nations IRIN news bulletins for Africa here: <http://www.irinnews.org/subscriptions/subslogin.asp>. These will give you regular feeds of news on the continent as soon as it comes in.

Blogs:

- <http://www.cgdev.org/section/opinions/blogs/>
- <http://africacan.worldbank.org/>
- <http://www.undispatch.com/>
- <http://rodrik.typepad.com/>
- <http://africaunchained.blogspot.com/>
- <http://wrongingrights.blogspot.com/>
- <http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/node>
- <http://psdblog.worldbank.org/psdblog/>
- <http://meaningfulnessoflittletings.blogspot.com/>
- <http://tukopamoja.wordpress.com/>

One idea: sign up for news feeds and relevant blogs in an RSS reader (e.g. Google Reader) and make it your home page.

Information portals:

- http://www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/AS.html
- <http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/africa/guide.html>
- <http://www.worldbank.org/afr/>
- <http://www.afrika.no/>
- <http://www.africaonline.com/site/>
- <http://worldviews.igc.org/awpguide/>
- Country Pages: http://www.africa.upenn.edu//Home_Page/Country.html

Books you'll need:

Required books:

The following book is as close as we will get to a textbook in this course, and is a must-read:

- Todd J. Moss (2007). [*African development*](#). London, Lynne Rienner.

We are also going to read the following books in full, for class or for your critical book reviews:

- Jeffrey Sachs (2005). [*The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*](#). New York, Penguin Press.
- Paul Collier (2007). [*The Bottom Billion*](#). Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Robert H. Bates (2008). [*When Things Fell Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa*](#). Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- van de Walle, N. (2001). [*African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979-1999*](#). Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Recommended books:

This history of Africa is concise and interesting:

- John Iliffe (2007). [*Africans: The History of a Continent*](#). Cambridge University Press.

Be sure to get the 2007 version, which has a new chapter on AIDS we will be reading. The book is not required reading for the course, but will undoubtedly enhance your performance.

The following books by Bill Easterly are very good (and very inexpensive). I assign some of his articles in the class, but I strongly recommend you buy his books. They will greatly enhance your book reviews:

- William Easterly (2001). [*The Elusive Quest for Economic Growth: Economists' Adventures and Misadventures in the Tropics*](#). Cambridge, MIT Press.
- William Easterly (2006). [*The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill, and So Little Good*](#). New York, Penguin Press.

Finally, the following books are available free online:

- Mkandawire, T. and C. Soludo (1999). *Our Continent, Our Future: African Perspectives on Structural Adjustment* Trenton, Africa World Press. ([Yale library](#))
- Center for Global Development, [*The White House and the World: A Global Development Agenda for the Next U.S. President*](#)

All the required and recommended books are available in the Yale bookstore. In some cases, online bookstores like Amazon may be cheaper. Most of the books are available for the Kindle or other e-book readers.

The books will be on 2-hour reserve in the library, so scrambling to get these scarce copies is an option. But I suggest purchasing them. All are less than twenty-five dollars, and several are as cheap as ten dollars.

Lectures and Readings:

“Required” readings are, well, required—you’ll need to show that you’ve read and understand them in your short essays and critical book reviews. The “recommended” readings are optional. I will sometimes highlight their findings in lecture. They are also potential sources of material for your short essays, and displaying knowledge of them will enhance your performance.

1) Jan 13 & 15: Introduction

Required

- Binyavanga Wainaina (2005). [How to Write About Africa](#). Granta. London, Granta Publications. 92.
- Moss, Chapter 6
- Mkandawire & Soludo, [Chapter 1](#)

Recommended

- Benno Ndulu and Stephen O’Connell (2008). “[Policy Plus: African Growth Performance 1960-2000](#),” in *The Political Economy of Economic Growth in Africa, 1960-2000*. B. J. Ndulu, S. A. O’Connell, R. H. Bates, P. Collier and C. Soludo.
- Iliffe, Chapter 11
- Sachs, Chapters 1-3
- Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo (2006). “[The Economic Lives of the Poor](#),” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 21(1), 141-167
- Steven Radelet and Sami Bazzi (2008). [U.S. Assistance to Africa and the World: What Do the Numbers Say?](#) CGD Brief
- David Roodman (2008). [The Commitment to Development Index for Africa: How Much do the Richest Countries Help the Poorest Continent?](#) CGD Brief

2) Jan 27 & 29: Initial conditions

Map quiz in section this week

Required

- Jared Diamond (1997). *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. (Chapter 4)
- Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion* (Chapters 3 and 4)
- Jeffrey Sachs (2000) [Tropical Underdevelopment](#), CID Working Paper No. 57
- Acemoglu, D., S. Johnson, et al. (2003). “[Disease and Development in Historical Perspective](#).” *Journal of the European Economic Association* 1(2-3): 397-405.

Recommended

- W. Easterly and R. Levine, “[Tropics, germs, and crops: the role of endowments in economic development](#)” *Journal of Monetary Economics*, 50:1, January 2003.
- Jared Diamond (1997). *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Stanley L. Engerman and Kenneth L. Sokoloff, [Factor Endowments, Inequality, and Paths of Development among New World Economies](#), *Economia*, Fall 2002

3) Jan 20 & 22: Colonial legacies

Required

- Moss, Chapter 2

- Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Princeton 1996 (Chapter 2)
- Crawford Young (2004). "[The end of the post-colonial state in Africa? Reflections on changing African political dynamics.](#)" *African Affairs* 103(410): 23-49.
- Peter P. Ekeh (1975). "[Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement.](#)" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17(1): 91-112.

Recommended

- Iliffe, Chapters 9 & 10
- Nathan Nunn, [The Long-Term Effects of Africa's Slave Trades](#)
- Franz Fanon (2004). *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press.
- Nicola Gennaiolo and Ilia Rainer, "[The Modern Impact of Precolonial Centralization in Africa,](#)"

4) Feb 10 & 12: Personal rule and the politics of patronage

Required

- Moss, Chapter 3
- Collier, Chapter 5
- Van de Walle, Chapters 1 & 3
- George Ayittey (1998). *Africa in Chaos*, St Martins Press. (Chapters TBA)

Recommended

- David Leonard and Scott Strauss, *Africa's Stalled Development*
- Jakob Svensson (2005). "[Eight Questions about Corruption,](#)" *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 19:3, 19-42
- William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*
- Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988 (Chapters 3 and 8)
- Jean-Francois Bayart, Stephen Ellis & Beatrice Hibou, *The Criminalization of the State in Africa*

5) Feb 17 & 19: State failure

Required

- James A. Robinson (2002). "[States and Power in Africa by Jeffrey I. Herbst: A Review Essay.](#)" *Journal of Economic Literature* 40(2): 510-519.
- Bates, Chapters 2-4, 6

Recommended

- Bates, Chapters 1 & 5
- Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Catherine Boone (2003). *Political Topographies of the African State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pierre Englebert (2002). *State Legitimacy and Development in Africa*, London: Lynne Rienner.

6) Feb 26 & Mar 3: The AIDS Crisis

Required

- Elizabeth Pisani (2008). *The Wisdom of Whores: Bureaucrats, Brothels, and the Business of AIDS*. New York, WW Norton & Company. (Chapter 4)

- Moss, Chapter 10 (p 177-183 only)
- Mead Over (2008). [Opportunities for Presidential Leadership on AIDS: From an "Emergency Plan" to a Sustainable Policy](#) (White House and the World Policy Brief)
- Iliffe, **Chapter 13** (in the 2007 edition)

Recommended

- Thirumurthy, H., J. G. Zivin, et al. (2008). [The Economic Impact of AIDS Treatment: Labor Supply in Western Kenya](#), Unpublished working paper.
- Elizabeth Pisani (2008). *The Wisdom of Whores: Bureaucrats, Brothels, and the Business of AIDS*. New York, WW Norton & Company.
- World Bank, [Confronting AIDS](#)

7) Mar 5: Civil war

Required

- Moss, Chapter 4
- Collier, Chapter 2

Recommended

- Christopher Blattman and Edward Miguel, "Civil War," forthcoming in *Journal of Economic Literature*

8) Mar 24: Reform and structural adjustment

Required

- Moss, Chapter 7
- van de Walle, Introduction and Chapter 5

Recommended

- Mkandawire & Soludo, [Chapters 2 & 3](#)
- van de Walle, Chapters 2 and 4

9) Mar 26: The aid industry

First book review due, on Jeffrey Sachs' "The End of Poverty"

Required

- Moss, Chapter 8
- Steven Radelet (2006). [A Primer on Foreign Aid](#), CGD Working Paper 92.
- Michael Clemens and Todd Moss (2005). [What's Wrong with the Millennium Development Goals?](#) CGD Brief.

Recommended

- Development Drums, [Episode 6](#)
- UN Millennium Project, Jeffrey D. Sachs, [Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals](#), January 2005 () (Chapters 1 and 2)
- William Easterly and Tobias Pfitze, [Where Does the Money Go? Best and Worst Practices in Foreign Aid](#)" *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 22, No.2, Spring 2008

10) Mar 31 & Apr 2: Foreign aid critiques

Required

- William Easterly "[Can the West Save Africa?](#)" forthcoming Journal of Economic Literature, 2008
- Joseph E. Stiglitz (2003). Globalization and Its Discontents. New York, WW Norton & Company. Chapter 1.
- Nancy Birdsall (2004). [Seven Deadly Sins: Reflections on Donor Failings](#), CGD Working Paper 50.
- Daniel Etounga-Manguelle (2000). Does Africa Need a Cultural Adjustment Program? Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress. L. E. Harrison and S. P. Huntington. New York, Basic Books: 65–77.
- Andrew Mwenda (2007). [Andrew Mwenda Takes a New Look at Africa](#), TED Talk. (17 minutes)

Recommended

- William Easterly (2006). The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill, and So Little Good. New York, Penguin Press.
- Alex de Waal, Famine crimes : politics & the disaster relief industry in Africa, London : African Rights & the International African Institute, 1997
- Graham Hancock, Lords of Poverty
- Robert Klitgard, Tropical Gangsters
- Alesina, A. and D. Dollar (2000). "Who Gives Foreign Aid to Whom and Why?" *Journal of Economic Growth*, 5, 33-64.

11) Apr 9 & 14: Trade and industrialization

Required

- Moss, Chapter 12 & 13
- Vijaya Ramachandran (2008). [Power and Roads for Africa](#), CGD Essay
- Rodrik, D. (2007). One economics, many recipes: globalization, institutions, and economic growth. Princeton, Princeton University Press. [Chapter 4](#)

Recommended

- Benn Eifert, Alan Gelb and Vijaya Ramachandran, [Business Environment and Comparative Advantage in Africa: Evidence from the Investment Climate Data](#), CGD Working Paper 56
- World Bank, [2005 World Development Report – A Better Investment Climate for All](#) (Chapter 1)
- Paul Collier, JW Gunning (1999). [Explaining African Economic Performance](#), Journal of Economic Literature.
- Valerie Bockstette, Areendam Chanda, and Louis Putterman (2002). [States and Markets: the Advantage of an Early Start](#), *Journal of Economic Growth*, 7, 347-369
- Rodrik, D. (2007). One economics, many recipes: globalization, institutions, and economic growth. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

12) Apr 16 & 21: Democracy, Governance, and Fixing States

Required

- Moss, Chapter 5
- Claude Ake, The Feasibility of Democracy in Africa, p. 75-92
- Amos Sawyer (2004). "[Violent conflicts and governance challenges in West Africa: the case of the Mano River basin area](#)." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 42(03): 437-463.
- Jeffrey Herbst (1996). "[Responding to State Failure in Africa](#)." *International Security* 21(3).
- V. Page Fortna (2004). [Interstate Peacekeeping: Causal Mechanisms and Empirical Effects](#), *World Politics* Vol. 56, No. 4, July 2004.

Recommended

- van de Walle, Chapter 6
- Moss, Chapter 11

13) Apr 23: Conclusions

Required

- Moss, Chapter 1 & 14
- Bates, Chapter 7
- George Ayittey (2005). *Africa Unchained*, Palgrave Macmillan. (Chapters TBA)

Recommended

- van de Walle, Chapter 7
- William Easterly, *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill, and So Little Good*, Penguin Press.
- Mkandawire & Soludo, [Chapter 4](#)

14) May 4, 6pm: Second book review due

- Review Collier's book, *The Bottom Billion*, especially the last half (Chapters 6 to 11)
- E-mail to your section leader on time