What are our best theoretical expectations for how democracies should work? Does reality (or at least our data to measure reality) fit such models? Which institutions and practices are likely to produce critical public goods and services? Do ordinary citizens enjoy real opportunities to influence government action, and to what extent are such powers mediated by ascriptive and other identities? What do citizens want and how do they express their preferences? These are general questions, relevant across world regions, but in this seminar, we will pose them in the context of the relatively young democracies of sub-Saharan Africa, which generally have emerged under conditions of weak statehood and widespread poverty.

This seminar is intended to for Ph.D. students, primarily in political science, with strong research interests in the politics of "good governance" and human development in Africa and/or other “developing” regions. This is not an overview of African political history, nor a broad survey of the literature on African politics. Although the focus will be on African materials, I will welcome discussion of placing African cases and the literature on African politics and development in a broader comparative framework. Also, while the goal of the seminar is to promote top quality social scientific research, we will try to frame what we read (and what you propose) within specific historical contexts and intellectual histories. Moreover, we will try to connect more contemporary micro-level research to an important literature in macro-comparative research.

Increasingly, we find deeper connections between scholarly research/practice and that of leading development institutions, especially the World Bank. As such, we will read and consider several works produced by Bank researchers, which have been highly influential on policy-makers and practitioners around the world.

Every week, we will attempt to identify core research questions, conceptual and measurement issues, and key propositions/causal theories. We will discuss the credibility of various ideas, examine the strengths and weaknesses of existing research designs and discuss opportunities for possible new research.

All students are expected to select one African country for ongoing research and expertise, and each week, you should be prepared to brief the class on the relevance of the questions at hand to that country. Given the focus of the course,
you must select a country rated by Freedom House as “Free” or “Partly Free” OR by Polity as a democracy (Polity score >=6) at some point since 2000. It is up to you whether or not you would like to select a country you know well or to take the opportunity to develop expertise in a new country. Your final research design paper should propose research in that country (and possibly others if appropriate).

Assignments:
1 book review (5-7pp) and presentation
1 research proposal / pre-analysis plan (20pp)
- This should include a 5-8pp background / case study analysis in which you describe the relevant politics and service delivery issues for your research design.

Presentations: Group presentation for books / individual for research proposal

Grading:
Book review: 20% (Due one week after presentation of book).
Final research proposal: 50%
Class participation: 20%
Presentations: 10%

1. Feb 9 / Canceled for snow storm

2. Feb 17: Introduction: Motivation / why focus on Democratic Governance in Africa? Some review of the field and a discussion of how we shall proceed.
   • Bratton and Van de Walle, (1997). Democratic Experiments in Africa (Cambridge), chapters 3 and 6

3. Feb 23: Background / context – weak states and democratization:


• Country work: Read the relevant historical background on your country, for example, from Cambridge History of Africa, volumes 6-8.


4. March 2: What is a workable theory of democratic accountability?


5. March 9: What (apart from economic incentives) shape individual attitudes and behaviors? Who are (African) “voters”/“citizens” and what should we expect from them?

- Country work: Spend a bit of time analyzing Afrobarometer data for your country. Think about what might be some implications of different theories of human motivation that are testable using these data. What do the data tell us?

6. March 16: What explains the ability of states to tax (and of citizens’ willingness to pay), particularly under democratic regimes?

- Levi, *Of Rule and Revenue,* chapter 2

7. March 30: What role do political parties play in the aggregation of interests, and how did different types of party systems emerge? (Book week)
   • What's a book? How constructed? How similar to / different from scholarly articles?
   • Students will “choose” (but we will divide up into three groups…) a recently-published book to review and to present (collectively). (Please do not track down already published reviews prior to writing and submitting your papers):
     • Leonardo Arriola Multiethnic Coalitions in Africa (Cambridge 2012).

8. April 6: Can democratic accountability improve the delivery of basic services? (part I: Focus on education and democracy)

9. April 13: Can democratic accountability improve the delivery of basic services? (part II: Focus on Health)


• Country work: Search newspaper articles, scholarly literature – has “service delivery” been politicized in your country? With what impact?

10. April 27: What is multi-level / polycentric governance, and what are the consequences for democratic accountability?


• Country work: To what extent do you find “polycentric governance” in your country?

11. May 4: What is the effect of ethnic diversity on democratic practice? **PRESENTATIONS PART I**


• Country work: Is ethnicity politically salient in your country? In what ways? Are there any mediating institutions or practices?

12. May 11: What is the relationship between gender and democratic practice? **PRESENTATIONS PART II**


• Country work: What is the gender balance of power in your country, among the executive and legislature, and among citizens?