

## **POLITSC 3798**

# **Field Research Methods for Politics & Development in Africa: Education Abroad in Malawi**



Political Science 3798  
2019 Summer Education Aboard  
The Ohio State University

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**Summer Session 2019**

**Pre-departure meetings: April 2 and April 8, 2019**

**Travel and in-country: May 27-June 24, 2019**

## Course Description

This education abroad course focuses on research methodologies used to understand political and economic outcomes in Africa. The course will be especially useful for undergraduate students who plan to conduct research or design programs and interventions in the developing world, including students who plan to:

- Collect original data for an undergraduate thesis project
- Conduct original research after graduation (e.g., Fulbright IIE, graduate school)
- Work in international development (e.g., USAID, Peace Corps, Global Health Corps)
- Work in monitoring and evaluation for international development (e.g. USAID, World Bank)

However, the course is also appropriate for those interested in simply learning more about politics and development in Africa.

Through a combination of readings, lectures, applied assignments, and structured educational experiences in Malawi, students will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to conduct high quality social science research in a developing country context. The course will focus in particular on mastering practical skills and methodologies that are in high demand in academia and in the international development community, such as key informant interviews, focus group discussions, random sample surveys, survey experiments, field experiments, impact evaluations and randomized control trials. The course will also emphasize ethical practices in such research.

Structured educational experiences within Malawi will focus on elucidating political and economic issues that warrant rigorous research, contextualizing those issues within Malawi society and culture, and introducing students to individuals and organizations engaged in research in Malawi. OSU students will have many opportunities to interact with students and scholars from the University of Malawi, Chancellor College located in Zomba, Malawi.

All students in the course will use what they have learned to design an original research project on politics and/or development issues in Malawi. The project proposal will include a clear research question, its relationship to existing scholarship, and a detailed research plan of action. Ideally, this research proposal will be used in funding proposals for students to return to carry out the research towards an undergraduate research thesis.

## Course Objectives

This course is aimed at giving students practical skills for conducting research on politics and development in Africa and other regions of the developing world. Towards that end, the course objectives are to:

- Understand major challenges to political and economic development in Africa, with a particular focus on Malawi
- Become familiar with a variety of research methods used for collecting original data in a field site located within a developing country
- Use the field research methodology covered in the course to develop an original research proposal focused on politics or economic development in Malawi

Students will acquire concrete, in-demand skills that can be used to conduct high quality research in developing country contexts. In particular, students will acquire the following set of skills:

- Identifying and accessing administrative data
- Conducting key informant interviews and focus group discussions
- Designing survey questionnaires
- Programming survey questionnaires for mobile data capture using Open Data Kit
- Calculating statistical power and determining appropriate sample sizes
- Designing embedded survey experiments
- Designing impact evaluations, randomized control trials, and field experiments
- Basic descriptive data analysis using R
- Ethical practices and principles for research in the developing world

## **Course Format**

This course will meet twice prior to our departure to Malawi. At the first meeting (April 2, 2019), we will focus on how to prepare for the trip, both practically and intellectually. At the second meeting (April 8, 2019), we will go over the politics and economics of Malawi, both historically and contemporarily, so that all students have a basic understanding of the context in which they will be studying. You will receive a course reader that includes all of the assigned reading for the remainder of the course at the second pre-departure meeting. You will be required to bring this course reader with you to Malawi. Both of these pre-departure meetings are mandatory.

We will then travel to Malawi four weeks (departing May 27, 2019 and returning June 24, 2019). While in Malawi, you will attend lectures by your OSU instructors and several guest lectures by Malawian scholars and practitioners, read assigned materials on past research and research methodologies, and engage in hands on research design and methodology. There will also be many structured education activities and excursions throughout Malawi that will complement what we have learned in class.

## **Required Texts**

Readings for this class will consist of articles, book chapters, and policy reports. All readings will be printed and bound for each student, and students will be responsible for transporting their own reading materials to Malawi. Readings should be completed prior to the day under which they are assigned.

## **Course Assignments**

The course will earn three credit hours. Assignments are detailed below.

### ***Pre-Departure Exam on Malawian Context (10%)***

To provide a foundation of knowledge about Malawi before the course, we will hold two pre-departure class meetings. A brief exam will evaluate knowledge of Malawian politics and development at the end of the second pre-departure meeting. The exam will count for 10% of the total grade.

### ***Active Participation (10%)***

Students are expected to be active and engaged in all aspects of the program. These means more than just showing up for class meetings, structured educational experiences, and excursions. Students must be academically and socially engaged in order to receive full participation credit.

### ***In-Class Presentation of Reading (10%)***

In week 2, we will cover five topics in politics and development in Malawi. Each student will be assigned one reading to present to the class. While all students will be responsible for reading all assigned articles, each student will formally present a summary of one assigned reading, and lead the discussion of that reading. Particular attention should be paid to the research methods employed in each assigned reading.

### ***Research Project Outline (5%)***

At the end of week 2, students will submit an outline with a basic research question of interest related to politics or development in Malawi, a brief overview of the relevant literature, and initial ideas for how the research question might be addressed. This outline constitutes the first step towards a research proposal.

### ***Memo Applying Each Method/Data Type (15%)***

In week 3, students will learn about four different types of data and related methodologies that can be used for research on politics and development. At the end of week 3, students will submit a memo that briefly describes how each data source or method could be applied to their specific research question. Each method will be discussed in 250-500 words, for a total length of 1000-2000 words.

### ***Technical Skills Assessments (20%)***

In week 4, students will learn four technical skills to be used in research. For each skill, students will take a brief exam/assessment that evaluates their mastery of the technical skill. Each of the four assessments will be worth 5% of the total grade.

### ***Final Research Proposal (30%)***

The final assignment will be a formal research proposal that outlines a research question, situates that question within existing scholarship, and lays out a concrete and specific research plan for answering the question. Research proposals must be between 2000 and 2500 words. Final proposals are due via Carmen by 5pm on July 5, 2019.

## Disability Services

Students with disabilities (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions) that have been certified by the Office of Student Life Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office of Student Life Disability Services is located in 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue; telephone 614-292-3307, [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu).

## Late Assignments and Incompletes

Please do not be afraid to talk with me if you cannot make a deadline. If you turn in an assignment one day late *and have not spoken with me*, you can only receive 75% of the original points. If it is two days late, you can receive 50%, and if it is three days late, you can receive 25%. Assignments that are more than three days late *without explanation* will not be graded. Please see me if there is any issue that may influence your ability to complete assignments.

## Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct at <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

## Grading

Letter grades will correspond to the following percentages:

A	93-100 %	B+	87-89	C+	77-79 %	D+	67-69 %
A-	90-92 %	B	83-86 %	C	73-76 %	D	60-66 %
		B-	80-82 %	C-	70-72 %	E	<60%

## Course Schedule

### Pre-Departure Meeting 1: April 2 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

- Overview of the course and expectations
  - Final syllabus circulated
  - Course contract developed
- Practical preparations for the trip
  - Pack lists
  - Dos and Don'ts
- Discussions of privilege and intercultural exchange
  - Watch “Danger of a Single Story” TEDTalk, Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche.
- Final prep:
  - Downloading course software on students’ personal computers
    - R, R Studio, relevant packages
    - Afrobarometer Round 7 Dataset
    - Create Qualtrics account
  - Receive course readings packet
  - Assign students to days/readings to lead discussion

### Required Readings:

- Martin, Courtney. 2016. “The Reductive Seduction of Other People’s Problems.” *The Development Set*, January 11.
- Wainaina, Binyavanga. 2005. “How to Write About Africa,” *Granta*, 92.
- Martin, Courtney. 2016. “The ‘Third World’ is Not Your Classroom.” *Bright*.
- Gardner, Ben and Ron Krabill. 2017. “Against the Romance of Study Abroad.” *Africa is a Country*.
- Swidler, Ann and Susan Cotts Watkins. 2017. “Interpreting Local Society to Outsiders.” In *A Fraught Embrace: The Romance and Reality of AIDS Altruism in Africa*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. pp. 28-33.

### Pre-Departure Meeting 2: April 8 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

#### In meeting:

- Lecture on history, politics, and development in Malawi
- Discussion of assigned readings
- Assessment
  - Quiz on basic knowledge of history and politics in Malawi
- Final prep
  - Receive gifts for transport
  - Sign course contract

### Required Readings

- Tenthani, Kizito and Blessings Chinsinga. 2010. “Political Parties, political settlement, and development” in *Political Transition and Inclusive Development in Malawi: The Democratic Dividend*. Routledge Press. pp. 35-56.
- Kayuni, Happy and Richard Tambulasi. 2010. “The Malawi 1964 cabinet crisis and its legacy of ‘perpetual regression of trust’ amongst contemporary Malawian politicians.” *Social Dynamics* 36(2): 410—427.
- Dulani, Boniface and Kim Yi Dionne. 2014. Presidential, Parliamentary, and Local Government Elections in Malawi, May 2014. *Electoral Studies* 36: 218—225.

## MALAWI

Depart CMH as a group on May 27, 2019 at 6:20am

Arrive in Lilongwe on May 28, 2019 at 12:50pm

### *Week 1: Cultural Orientation*

May 28 (T): Arrival in Lilongwe

May 29 (W): Cultural Orientation I (Mua Mission)

- Travel from Lilongwe to Mua Mission (3 hours)
- Overview of Malawian cultural practices
- Guest lecturer: Alick Bwanali, Lecturer in Linguistics, Univ. of Malawi; Chichewa Instructor at the Centre for Language Studies
- Visit to Chamare Museum (cultural history of Malawi) at Mua Mission
- Traditional dance (Bwalo) at Mua Mission

May 30 (R): Cultural Orientation II

- Introductory Chichewa lessons at Mua Mission
- Guest lecturer: Alick Bwanali, Lecturer in Linguistics, Univ. of Malawi; Chichewa Instructor at the Centre for Language Studies
- Visit carving studios
- Travel from Mua Mission to Zomba (3 hours)

May 31 (F): Orientation to Zomba

- “Azungu challenge” scavenger hunt in Zomba

June 1 (Sa): Day in the Village

- Pairs of students will spend the morning through lunch with a Malawian family in a rural village near Zomba, experiencing local life first-hand, including:
  - Water provision
  - Food preparation
  - Local dress
  - Traditional food
- Facilitated/translated group discussion with students and host community about differences between daily life in the US and Malawi

June 2 (Sun): Free day

- Group hike on Zomba Plateau (optional)
- See final page for potential activities



## ***Week 2: Open Questions in Politics and Development in Malawi***

*\*Schedule may change based on guest lecturers' availability*

### June 3 (M): Decentralization and Local Politics

- Guest Lecturer: Asiyati Chiweza, Professor of Political Science, Univ. of Malawi
- Required reading:
  1. Chiweza, Asiyati. 2010. The Political Economy of Fiscal Decentralization: Implications for Local Governance and Public Service Delivery, in *Political Transition and Inclusive Development in Malawi: The Democratic Dividend*. Routledge. pp. 95-111.
  2. Bowers, Jake, Lula Chen, Chris Grady, and Matt Winters. 2018. Collective action and solid waste collection in Zomba, Malawi. Research Design, Metaketa II Project, Evidence in Governance and Politics.
- Structured Educational Experience: Zomba City Council and Zomba District Assembly

### June 4 (T): Foreign Aid and Development

- Guest Lecturer: Michael Chasukwa, Senior Lecturer, Political Science, Univ. of Malawi
- Required reading:
  3. Banik, Dan and Michael Chasukwa. 2010. “The impact of emerging donors on development and poverty reduction” in *Political Transition and Inclusive Development in Malawi: The Democratic Dividend*. Routledge. pp. 147-168.
  4. Swidler, Ann and Susan Cotts Watkins. 2017. *A Fraught Embrace: The Romance and Reality of AIDS Altruism in Africa*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. Chapters 9 and 11.
  5. Wroe, Daniel. 2012. Donors, dependency and political crisis in Malawi. *African Affairs* 111(422): 135—144.

### June 5 (W): Ethnicity and Traditional Governance

- Guest Lecturer: Happy Kayuni, Associate Professor of Political Science, Univ. of Malawi
- Required reading:
  6. Kayuni, Happy. 2018. Ethnic identity mobilization and the state: Interrogating the role of chiefs in formation of Chewa movement. Working paper, University of Malawi-Chancellor College.
  7. Robinson, Amanda Lea. 2016. Internal Borders: Ethnic Based Market Segmentation in Malawi. *World Development* 87: 371-384.
  8. Chiweza, Asiyati. 2007. “The Ambivalent Role of Chiefs: Rural Decentralization Initiatives in Malawi” in *State recognition and democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa : a new dawn for traditional authorities?* New York: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 53—78.
- Structured Educational Experience: Meet with a TA Malemia

### June 6 (R): Political Economy of Agriculture

- Guest Lecturer: Blessings Chinsinga, Professor of Political Science, Univ. of Malawi
- Required reading:
  9. Chinsinga, Blessings and Michael Chasukwa. 2018. “Narratives, climate change and agricultural policy processes in Malawi,” *Africa Review* 10(2): 140—156.

10. Chinsinga, Blessings and Colin Poulton. 2014. "Beyond Technocratic Debates: The Significance and Transience of Political Incentives in the Malawi Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP)." *Development Policy Review* 32(S2): S123—S150.

June 7 (F): Gender and Politics

- Guest Lecturer: Tiyesere Mercy Chikapa, Lecturer of Political Science, Univ. of Malawi
- Required reading:
  11. Chikapa, T.M. 2016. The Joyce Banda Effect: Explaining the Discrepancy Between Public Opinion and Voting Behavior, in *Women in Politics in Malawi*, I. Amundson and H. Kayuni, editors. Bergen: Christian Michelson Institute. pp. 45-56.
  12. Lora-Kayambazinthu, E. and Shame, E.A. 2016. A Different Yardstick: Gender and Leadership in the Political Discourse, in *Women in Politics in Malawi*, I. Amundson and H. Kayuni, editors. Bergen: Christian Michelson Institute. pp. 57-70.
  13. Clayton, Amanda, Amanda Lea Robinson, Martha Johnson and Ragnhild Muriaas. 2019. (How) do voters discriminate against women candidates? Experimental and qualitative evidence from Malawi. Working paper.
- Structured Educational Experience: WOLREC in Blantyre

June 8 (Sa): Visit Thyolo/Mulanje

- Travel to Setemwa Tea and Coffee Estate in Thyolo (2 hours)
- Tea tasting and tour
- Lunch (packed by Pakachere) and hike to Likhubula Falls in Mulanje District
- Travel to Zomba (2 hours)

June 9 (Su): **Research project outline is due by 10pm**

### ***Week 3: Types of Data and Field Research Methods***

June 10 (M): Identifying and accessing administrative data

- Guest: Gift Kayira, Lecturer of History, University of Malawi and History PhD candidate at University of West Virginia
- Required reading:
  14. Kapiszewski, Diana, Lauren M. Maclean, and Benjamin L. Read. 2015. Thinking Outside the (Archive) Box: Discovering Data in the Field. In *Field Research in Political Science: Practices and Principles*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. pp. 151-189.
- Structured Educational Experience: National Statistics Office of Malawi and Malawian National Archives

June 11 (T): Key informant interviews and focus group discussions

- Required reading:
  15. Kapiszewski, Diana, Lauren M. Maclean, and Benjamin L. Read. 2015. Interviews, Oral Histories, and Focus Groups. In *Field Research in Political Science: Practices and Principles*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. pp. 190-233.
- Structured Educational Experience: University of Malawi, Centre for Social Research and Invest in Knowledge Initiative (IKI)

June 12 (W): Original surveys and survey experiments

- Guest Lecturer: Boniface Dulani, Senior Lecturer in Political Science, Univ. of Malawi; Senior Partner at Institute for Public Opinion and Research; Fieldwork Operations Manager for Afrobarometer
- Required reading:
  16. Kapiszewski, Diana, Lauren M. Maclean, and Benjamin L. Read. 2015. Surveys in the Context of Field Research. In *Field Research in Political Science: Practices and Principles*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. pp. 266-298.
  17. Biruk, Cyrstal. 2018. "The Office in the Field: Building Survey Infrastructures" in *Cooking Data*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. pp. 31-66.
  18. 10 Things to Know about Survey Implementation. Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP) Methods Guide.
- Structured Educational Experience: Institute for Public Opinion and Research (IPOR)

June 13 (R): Impact evaluations, randomized control trials, and field experiments

- Required reading:
  19. Glennerster, R. and K. Takavarasha. 2013. *Running Randomized Evaluations: A Practical Guide*. Princeton University Press. Ch. 1
- Structured Educational Experience: Visit a program field site (e.g., Mwandama Millennium Village project)

June 14 (F): Ethics in field research

- Required reading:

20. MacLean, Lauren Morris. 2006. "The Power of Human Subjects and the Politics of Informed Consent" *Qualitative Methods* 4(2): 13-15.
21. Biruk, Cyrstal. 2018. "Clean Data, Messy Gifts: Soap-for-Information Transactions in the Field" in *Cooking Data*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. pp. 100-128.

- **Memo applying each method/data is due via Carmen by 10pm**

June 15 (Sa): Liwonde National Park

- Travel to Liwonde National Park (1 hour)
- Group discussion over lunch on tourism and economic development
- Afternoon boat safari
- Sunset driving safari

June 16 (Su): Liwonde National Park

- Morning driving safari
- Travel to Zomba (1 hour)

#### ***Week 4: Technical Skills for Field Research***

June 17 (M): Determining sample size and random sampling

- Guest Lecturer: Boniface Dulani, Senior Lecturer in Political Science, Univ. of Malawi; Senior Partner at Institute for Public Opinion and Research; Fieldwork Operations Manager for Afrobarometer
- Required reading:
  - 22. Harter, Rachel. 2008. "Random Sampling." *Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
  - 23. 10 Things to Know about Statistical Power. EGAP Methods Guide.
- Tools: <https://egap.shinyapps.io/power-app/>
- Workshop/Assessment: **Problem sets and quiz**

June 18 (T): Survey questionnaire design

- Guest Lecturer: Boniface Dulani, Senior Lecturer in Political Science, Univ. of Malawi; Senior Partner at Institute for Public Opinion and Research; Fieldwork Operations Manager for Afrobarometer
- Required reading:
  - 24. Krosnick, Jon A. and Stanley Presser. 2010. "Question and Questionnaire Design" in Peter V. Marsden and James D. Wright (eds.), *Handbook of Survey Research*. Bingley, UK: Emerald. pp. 263-314.
  - 25. 10 Things to Know about Survey Design. EGAP Methods Guide.
- Activity: evaluate survey questions, identify problems, and revise
- Workshop/Assessment: **Design questionnaire for individual research project (10 questions)**

June 19 (W): Programming surveys for mobile data capture

- Required reading:
  - 26. <https://www.qualtrics.com/support/survey-platform/survey-module/survey-module-overview/>
- Workshop/Assessment: **Program survey questions in Qualtrics for mobile data capture** (using questions written on previous day)

June 20 (R): Basic data analysis in R

- Required reading:
  - 27. Isbell, Thomas and Joseph J. Chunga. 2017. "Malawians increasingly cautious about exercising right to 'free' political speech" Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 176.
  - 28. Afrobarometer Round 7 Malawi Questionnaire
    - Mark questions of interest to you, that you would like to explore
- Workshop/Assessment: **Problem set for data analysis in R**
- Group dinner at Casa Rossa

June 21 (F): Lake Malawi

- Travel to Cape Maclear on Lake Malawi (3.5 hours)
- Free time for swimming, snorkeling, boat cruises, kayaking, etc.

June 22 (Sa): Travel to Lilongwe

- Travel to Lilongwe (3.5 hours)
- Evening debrief of overall experience
  - Discuss how to improve the experience for future courses
  - Determine how to share experiences with others at OSU

June 23 (S): Fly LLW-CMH

- Depart Lilongwe at 2:20pm
- Arrive CMH on June 24 at 5:05pm

## **POST RETURN**

Final research proposals due July 5, 2019 by 5pm via Carmen

## **OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES**

This course leaves very little unstructured time, and demands at least 2-3 hours of preparation per course day. However, for diligent students, there may be time to engage in additional activities while in Zomba (typically late afternoons and Sundays):

- Additional Chichewa lessons with a qualified instructor
- Local church and mosque worship services
- Shopping in the local market
- Soccer/golf/racquetball/tennis
- Hikes on Zomba Plateau
- Horseback riding on Zomba Plateau (around \$40/hour)
- Having traditional clothing made by a local tailor
- Pakachere organized activities:
  - Cooking class
  - Traditional dance class