

**University of Ottawa
School of Political Studies**

**INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN POLITICS
Winter 2010
Susan Thomson**

Writing your ISSUE REPORT

Your Issue Report should aim to demonstrate how the readings of one or more classes help illuminate an issue of importance in African politics. Issue Reports are a dispassionate analysis and answer of a question that you chose early in the term. The key aspect is to link the everyday politics of African men and women to what we have learned in class or you have read in the readings. **Please consult the syllabus for the list of due dates as well as a partial list of resources to help you think through your chosen issue.**

For example, you could choose to analyse the impact of desertification on the people of Mali, or the role of the UN in combating HIV/AIDS in South Africa. You could also look at the politics of famine in Ethiopia, or clan politics in Somalia, the impact of war on child soldiers in Sierra Leone (or Uganda, or Mozambique, etc), rape of women and girls as a crime against humanity in Guinea, the politics of land reform in Zimbabwe or the plunder of the rainforest in the DRC. These are just a few examples. As the course progresses, you should gain inspiration for a specific issue that you wish to follow throughout the course. Ideally, you would focus on the issue in one specific country (i.e., your country of expertise) and provide comparative analysis from a neighbouring country or other country with a similar experience. For example, you could analyse Ghana's recent elections (a class reading) and compare with Kenya's 2007 elections. You can also choose an issue of relevance to the African diaspora like immigration and asylum issues or the role of Western Union remittances from relatives living in the West on local politics. **The key thing is to link everyday political realities to what you have learned in class through a specific contemporary issue.**

Ideally, your Issue Paper will situate and then analyse your issue from the perspective of ordinary Africans. You can approach your issue from the perspective of men or women, boys or girls, from the perspective of a specific population (the Maasai, the Hutu, the Shona, the Ibo, the Fulani, etc) or economic class (peasant farmers, informal sector workers, professional classes, etc).

It is important not to overlook or under-estimate the historical element of your contemporary issue. Your literature review is particularly important in this regard as it will show me that you have read widely, and considered a number of historical sources. The historical component of your Issue Paper should stretch back at least to the Independence period.

Two excellent books that you can pick up from Chapters that provide historical lineages to current events by country are:

Richard Dowden, *Africa: Altered States, Ordinary Miracles*. New York: Public Affairs, 2009.

Martin Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair*. New York: Public Affairs, 2006. (This is also available from Morrisset library)

Your Issue Paper must follow standard guidelines for academic writing (footnotes, bibliography, etc). It should be no longer than 15 pages of main text. They must be double-spaced with 12 point Times New Roman font and conventional 1" margins. Please submit your paper with a cover page that includes only your student number, not your name.

Issue Papers are due in class on 12 April 2010.