

# NATALIE WENZELL LETSA

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## Academic Appointments

University of South Carolina  
*Associate Professor*, Department of Political Science, 2025-

University of Oklahoma  
*Wick Cary Assistant Professor*, Department of International and Area Studies, 2017-2025  
*Director*, African Studies Institute, 2017-2025

Stanford University  
*Postdoctoral Scholar*, Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law, 2018-2019

## Education

Cornell University: Ph.D., Government, 2017  
Committee: Nicolas van de Walle (chair), Valerie Bunce, Adam Levine

Reed College: B.A., Political Science, 2009

## Publications

### Book

Letsa, Natalie Wenzell. 2025. *The Autocratic Voter: Partisanship and Political Socialization under Dictatorship*. Cambridge University Press.

### Peer-Reviewed Articles

2025. Letsa, Natalie Wenzell. "Partisanship and Political Socialization in Electoral Autocracies," *American Political Science Review*, 119(1): p. 208-223.

2023. Letsa, Natalie Wenzell and Yonatan Morse. "Autocratic Legalism, Partisanship, and Popular Legitimation in Authoritarian Cameroon," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 87(4): p. 935-955.

2023. Wilfahrt, Martha and Natalie Wenzell Letsa. "Judge, Landlord, Broker, Watchman: Assessing Variation in Chiefly Duties in the Ghana-Togo Borderlands." *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 61(3): p. 439-462.

2020. Letsa, Natalie Wenzell. "Expressive Voting in Autocracies: A Theory of Non-Economic Participation with Evidence from Cameroon." *Perspectives on Politics*, 18 (2): p. 439-453.  
-Recipient of APSA's Heinz I. Eulau Award for best article published in *Perspectives on Politics* in 2020.
2020. Letsa, Natalie Wenzell and Martha Wilfahrt. "The Mechanisms of Direct and Indirect Rule: Colonialism and Economic Development in Africa." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 15 (4): p. 539-577.
2019. Letsa, Natalie Wenzell. "The Political Geography of Electoral Autocracies: The Influence of Party Strongholds on Political Beliefs in Africa." *Electoral Studies*, Volume 60.
2018. Letsa, Natalie Wenzell and Martha Wilfahrt. "Popular Support for Democracy in Autocratic Regimes: A Micro-Level Analysis of Preferences." *Comparative Politics*, 50 (2): p. 231-250.
2017. Letsa, Natalie Wenzell. "'The People's Choice': Popular (Il)Legitimacy in Autocratic Cameroon." *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 55 (4): p. 647-679.
2017. Letsa, Natalie Wenzell. "Voting for Peace, Mobilizing for War: Post-Conflict Voter Turnout and Civil War Recurrence." *Democratization*, 24 (3): p. 425-443.

## Other Publications

- Book Review: *Colonial Origins of Democracy & Dictatorship*, by Alexander Lee and Jack Paine. *Perspectives on Politics*, 23 (3): September 2025.
- Book Review: *Controlling Territory, Controlling Votes: The Political Geography of African Campaign Violence*, by Michael Wahman. *African Studies Review*, 67 (3): Sept. 2024.
- Book Review: *The Scarce State: Inequality and Political Power in the Hinterland*, by Noah Nathan. *Governance*, 36 (4): October 2023.
- Book Review: *A Trail of Crab Tracks*, by Patrice Nganang. *World Literature Today*, November 2022.
- Book Review: *The Autocratic Middle Class: How State Dependency Reduces the Demand for Democracy*, by Bryn Rosenfeld. *Political Science Quarterly*, 137 (1): Spring 2022.
- Letsa, Natalie Wenzell. "The Roots of Violence: Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis" *The Republic* (Nigeria), (February 2020).
- Book Review: *How Autocrats Compete: Parties, Patrons, and Unfair Elections in Africa*, by Yonatan Morse. *Perspectives on Politics*, 17 (4): December 2019.
- Letsa, Natalie Wenzell. "What's Driving the Conflict in Cameroon?" *Foreign Affairs* (online), (November 8, 2018).
- Letsa, Natalie Wenzell. "Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis May Intensify Post Post-Poll" *Oxford Analytica Daily Brief*, (October 5, 2018).
- Letsa, Natalie Wenzell. "Cameroon's Anglophone Resistance Will Endure" *Oxford Analytica Daily Brief*, (July 5, 2017).

## Working Papers

- "Echoes of the 'Hidden War:' Collective Memories of UPC Violence" with Joseph Lasky. Revise & resubmit.

“State-Building, Collective Efficacy, and the Co-Production of Public Goods in Rural Africa” with Martha Wilfahrt. Revise & resubmit.

“Opposition in Paul Biya’s Cameroon” in *Power and Politics under the Paul Biya Regime in Cameroon*, edited by Moses Tesi.

“Nonpartisanship and Support for Democracy in Autocratic regimes.”

## **In Progress**

Book Project: *The Origins of Opposition in sub-Saharan Africa*, with Martha Wilfahrt.

“Lessons in State-building from the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon” with Raymond Mbebi.

“How Well Do You Know Me? Evidence from Survey Response Pairs.”

## **Grants**

### **External**

2021 West African Research Association Postdoctoral Fellowship

2020 APSA Centennial Center Research Grant

2016 African Studies Association Student Travel Award

### **University Grants**

2024, 2023, 2022, 2021, 2019, and 2018: OU International Studies Faculty Support Grant

2023, 2022 OU African Studies Institute Faculty Research Grant

2022, 2020 OU Faculty Investment Program

2022 OU African Studies Institute Mentorship Grant

2019 OU Junior Faculty Fellowship

2016 Houston I. Flournoy Graduate Fellowship (with Nicolas van de Walle), Cornell

2014 The Mario Einaudi Research Travel Grant, Cornell

## **Invited Talks**

“Nonpartisanship and Support for Democracy in Autocratic regimes,” Oxford Authoritarian Politics Network Conference. 2025.

“The Autocratic Citizen: Partisanship and Political Behavior under Dictatorship,” NYU Comparative Politics Workshop. 2021.

“Legacies of British and French Colonial Rule in sub-Saharan Africa,” UC Berkeley Africa Colloquium. 2019.

“Political Geography in Africa’s Electoral Autocracies,” Center on Development, Democracy and the Rule of Law, Stanford University. 2018.

“Perceptions on Regime Legitimacy and Political Participation in Cameroon,” US Department of State, Executive Exchange with the Ambassador to Cameroon. 2017.

## **Conferences & Workshops**

American Political Science Association: 2025, 2021, 2020, 2019, 2017, 2016, 2015  
African Studies Association: 2025, 2021, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015  
Authoritarian Politics Mini-Conference at SPSA: 2024, 2019  
Authoritarian Politics Mini-Conference at WPSA: 2023, 2019  
Midwest Political Science Association: 2023, 2016, 2014, 2013  
Cameroon Conference - Université Paris Diderot: 2018  
Midwest Group in African Political Economy (MGAPE): 2017  
Visions in Methodology: 2017  
APSA Workshop on Elections and Democracy in Africa: 2009

## **Fieldwork Experience**

Cameroon: Summer 2022, August 2015 - July 2016  
Ghana: Summer 2019, Summer 2016, August 2009 - July 2010, August 2007 – June 2008  
Togo: Summer 2019  
Senegal: Summer 2014

## **Teaching**

### **Undergraduate**

African Politics and Society  
Political Economy of Development  
Elections Around the World  
Development Practice  
Authoritarianism and Democracy  
African Elections  
Political Participation in Authoritarian Regimes

### **Graduate**

Political Economy of Development  
African Politics and Society (online)

## **Professional Service**

*Pro Bono* Expert Witness on 27 different Cameroonian asylum cases to the US, 2020-

### **To the Discipline**

Secretary, African Politics Conference Group (APCG), 2019-2021  
  
Committee Member, Best Fieldwork Award, Democracy & Autocracy Section of APSA, 2021  
  
Co-Organizer, APSA–APCG Africa Research Development Group, 2020  
  
Founding Organizer, APCG Online Colloquium, 2018-2020

Reviewer: *African Affairs, American Journal of Political Science, American Political Science Review, British Journal of Political Science, Cambridge University Press, Comparative Politics, Comparative Political Studies, Electoral Studies, Government & Opposition, Journal of Borderlands Studies, Journal of East Asian Studies, Journal of Modern African Studies, Journal of Politics, Peace and Conflict Studies, Perspectives on Politics, Political Behavior, Political Research Quarterly, Political Studies, Public Opinion Quarterly*

## **University of Oklahoma**

Director, African Studies Institute, 2017-2025

OU CIS Graduate Studies Committee, 2019-2025

Interim Director of Graduate Studies, 2024-2025; Fall 2022

College of International Studies Policy Committee, 2024-2025

Faculty Advisor, East African Alliance student group, 2022-2025

Faculty Advisor, African Students Association, 2024-2025

Co-organizer, Workshop on Human Rights, Conflict, and Elections at OU, Spring 2024

Chair, Scholarships Committee, 2021

Undergraduate Studies Committee, 2017-2018