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PSC 326.01: Politics of Africa

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This is a lecture/discussion course in which we seek understanding of the problems of economic and political (under) development which every so often puts Africa in the news. It begins by examining the nature and characteristics of African governments and politics. It then seeks explanation in the colonial inheritance, the continuing neo-colonial political economy and the nature of the post-colonial state. For this purpose we spend a few weeks discussing colonialism and its impact, the anti-colonial movement, and the changing social structure. Then ethical issues, institutions, processes and trends in the post-colonial era are analyzed and discussed. In the final part of the course, we join the debate on the extant and proposed solutions to Africa's problems.

Running through the course are certain fundamental questions such as the feasibility of liberal democracy in Africa, and under what conditions? Is ethnic pluralism compatible with the emergence of civil society so essential for overcoming the predilection of the state for dictatorial undemocratic and poor rule? Is liberal democracy a prerequisite of development, or is it the other way round? In the socioeconomic condition of Africa, will democracy inevitably lead to good government — one that is benevolent, accountable and at the same time development-oriented? How can accountable governments be institutionalized in Africa? Is insistence on such basic human rights as freedom of speech and association the answer? The dilemma such questions pose for Western policy in Africa are discussed.

The basic texts are William Tordoff, Government and Politics in Africa second edition (Indiana University Press, 1993) and Walter Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. The latter gives the international socio-economic parameters within which African governments and peoples play the political drama outlined and discussed in Tordoff. Chinua Achebe's political novel, A Man of the People, is a supplementary text which gives an overview and flavor of African political life. It should be read immediately. Other required supplementary readings are from professional journals in the field or from chapters in other books. These are all available on reserve in the library.

There will be one mid-term examination (20% of course evaluation) and a final (40%). A 10-15 page paper is also required (30%). Your class participation -- attendance and
contributions to discussion -- will comprise the remaining 10% of the course evaluation. Because this is largely a discussion course, it is essential that you do the relevant assigned readings before class sessions to enable you participate meaningfully and get the most out of the interaction.

The Term Paper. This may be a research or a "thought" paper on a topic of your choice. Or it may be a critical review of one book on African politics written in the last 15 years. The better research papers are more analytic than descriptive, empirical than normative. Typically the research paper implicitly or explicitly offers a hypothesis linking two ideas or concepts, and collects evidence for or against it, and evaluates its worth. An example might be the transition to civil rule in say, Ghana, or the impact of ethnicity on the 1993 national elections in Kenya.

A "thought" paper on the other hand, carefully examines one or two concepts in terms of either their clarity or accuracy, their linkages with other important concepts, their ease of operationalization or their ability to explain other phenomena. For example, perhaps you want to explore the concept of corruption in Africa in general or in a specific African country. You identify the several components of corruption, ask whether it makes sense to treat these components as part of the concept, and ascertain what it is that can be explained through the concept. Or perhaps you may want to criticize the way the concept has been used by an author or authors to explain underdevelopment in Africa in general or in a specific country. Another example might be to examine the way the concept of tribalism has been used to explain political crises in Africa. Or you may want to evaluate an idea or proposal for solving any of the myriad problems in Africa, e.g. population reduction as a prerequisite to development, liberal democracy as sine qua non to development, or structural adjustment solution to Africa's debt crisis.

There are many different forms an analytic or thought paper might take, but I hope you get the general idea from these illustrations.

Please note that September 15 is the last day to add or drop classes without financial penalty.
Outline

Aug. 26: Introduction
Aug. 29, 31, Sept. 2:
  Nature and Characteristics of African Politics:
  An Overview.
  Readings: Chinua Achebe, the entire novel;
  William Tordoff, chapter 1.
Sept. 7, 9:
  Africa Before the Coming of Europe
  Readings: Walter Rodney, chaps. 1 & 2
Sept. 12, 14, 16:
  Africa's Contribution to European Development
  Readings: Rodney, chaps. 3 & 5
Sept. 19, 21, 23:
  Europe's Contribution to Africa's Underdevelopment
  9/19: movie, "Tools of Exploitation"
  Readings: Rodney, chaps. 4 & 6; P. T. Bauer,
  "Colonialism is not responsible for Africa's problems" on
  reserve.
Sept. 26, 28, 30:
  Colonial Political Impact and Inheritance
  Readings: Tordoff, chaps. 2 & 3
Oct. 3, 5, 7:
  Neo-Colonial Ties
  10/7: movie, "Global Africa"
  Readings: Guy Martin, "The Historical, Economic and
  Political Bases of France's African Policy"
Oct. 12, 14:
  State-Society Nexus
  Readings: Tordoff, chap. 4; Rene Lemarchand, "Uncivil
  States and Civil Societies" on reserve
Oct. 17, 19, 21:
  The Decline of the Political Party
  10/19: Mid-Term exam
  Readings: Tordoff, chap. 5
Oct 24, 26, 28:
  Emergence of Military Rule
  Readings: Tordoff, chap. 7; Patrick McGowan and
  T. H. Johnson, "Sixty Coups in 30 years" on reserve
Oct. 31, Nov. 2, 4:
  The Impact of Military Rule
  11/4: movie, "In Search of Stability"
Nov. 7, 9, 11:
  Selected Socio-Economic Crises: Nature and Causes
  Readings: Earnest Harsch, "Accumulators and Democrats:
  Challenging State Corruption in Africa" on reserve; Virginia
  Delancey, "The Economies of Africa" on reserve
Nov. 14, 16, 18:
  Population, Environment and Famine: Causes, Linkages
  and Solutions - Is population the answer? Is early warning
  system?

Nov. 21
Population, Environment and Famine continued

TERM PAPER DUE

Nov. 28, 30, Dec. 2
Debt and Development; Democratization and Development; Regionalism and Development
Readings: J. Barry Riddell, "Things Fall Apart Again: Structural Adjustment Programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa" on reserve; Michael Johns, "Aid to Africa Should be Tied to Democracy," and Carol Lancaster, "Aid to Africa Should Not Be Tied to Democratic Reforms" both on reserve; Tordoff, chaps. 8 & 9

Dec. 5, 7, 9
Concluding Remarks and movie, "A Garden of Eden in Decay?"