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PSC 326H.01: Politics of Africa

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University of Montana
Department of Political Science

PSC 326 - Politics of Africa
Fall Term 1995 - 1996

Professor: Olatunde Ojo
Office: LA 354
Phone: 243-4418

Class: LA 337, TTh 11:10-12:30
Office Hours: MT 1:10-2:40PM
or by appointment

Course Description

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 headlines. The course begins by examining the nature and characteristics of African 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. The greater part of the course is devoted to the analysis and discussion of critical issues, institutions, processes and trends in the post-colonial era. In the final part of the course, we debate the extant and proposed solutions to the more critical contemporary problems, such as the economic and debt crises, human rights, structural adjustment, democratization, population, and environmental crises, etc.

Running through the course are certain fundamental questions such as the feasibility of liberal democracy in Africa, and under what conditions. Is liberal democracy a prerequisite of development or is it the other way around? How can leadership accountability be institutionalized in Africa? Is insistence on internationally recognized human rights the answer? The dilemma such questions pose for Western policy in Africa are discussed.

Texts

The basic texts are:

- 1) Chinua Achebe's political novel, A Man of the People, vividly describes national characteristics and flavor of African political life. It should be read immediately;
- 2) April & Donald Gordon (eds), Understanding Contemporary Africa (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992) discusses major institutions, issues and trends needed for a proper grasp of the reality of the continent today and in the foreseeable future;
- 3) Walter Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (Washington, DC: Howard Univ. Press, 1974) is a classic on the international socio-economic parameters within which the African drama is played and shaped;
- and 4) Wekesser, ed., Africa: Opposing Viewpoints (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1992), presents opposing arguments and interpretations of background events in Africa.

Course Requirements

There will be one or two quizzes (approximately 10% of course evaluation), a mid-term examination (20%) and a final (30%). A 10-15 page paper is also required (30%). 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, 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 as a 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.

PSC 326 - Course Outline

Part One: Introduction to Africa and Its Politics

Week 1: Introduction

Sept. 5: Overview: scope, contents and course requirements

Sept. 7: Introduction to the African continent

Readings: April & Donald Gordon, chps 1 + 2

Week 2: Nature and Characteristics of African Politics

Sept. 12: Discussion of Chinua Achebe's A Man of the People
chps 1-7

Sept. 14: Discussion of Achebe continued, chps 8-13

Part Two: Understanding African Politics: The Socio-Economic, Cultural and Religious Contexts

Week 3: Family and Kinship System

Sept. 19: Marriage, descent groups and social order

Readings: April & Donald Gordon chp 8 and pp 251-257

Sept. 21: "Legacy of Life Styles" video

Week 4: The Religious Context

(SEPTEMBER 25 IS LAST DAY TO ADD CLASS)

Sept. 26: Africa's triple heritage and politics

Readings: April & Donald Gordon chp 10

Sept. 28: "New Gods" video

Quiz 1

Week 5: The Economic Context: Underdevelopment and Its Development

Oct. 3: Early European contacts and their effect on Western development

Reading: Walter Rodney chps 1, 2, 3 + 5; April & Donald Gordon chp 3

Oct. 5: Europe's contribution to Africa's underdevelopment:
From slave trade through legitimate trade to
colonialism and its impact including neo-colonialist
relations after independence

Reading: Walter Rodney chps 4 + 6; April & Donald Gordon chp 3

Week 6: The Economic Context, continued

(OCTOBER 9 IS LAST DAY TO DROP CLASS OR CHANGE GRADING OPTION)

Oct. 10: "Tools of Exploitation" video

Oct. 12: Debate: Colonialism is not responsible for
Africa's under-development

Reading: Carol Wekesser, chp 1, viewpoint 1+2 pp 9-30

Week 7: African Nationalism, Past & Present; The Post-colonial State

Oct. 17: Origins, social basis, instruments, modus operandi & factors for success; current micro-nationalism

Oct. 19: Nature of the post-colonial state; state-society nexus

Reading: April & Donald Gordon chp 4

Recommended readings: Gordon chp 11 esp. pp 258-276;

Carol Wekesser chp 1 viewpoint 4 (Davidson) pp 38-43

Part Three: Contemporary Problems & Proposed Solutions

Week 8: The Military in Politics

Oct. 24: "In search of stability" video

Quiz 2

Oct. 26: Military intervention, military performance in office, and military withdrawal: recivilianization vs. democratization

Week 9: Africa's Developmental Crisis

Oct. 31: Africa's lack of development after decades of effort: Western vs. African views (LPA vs. Berg Report)

Nov. 2: Prescriptions for cure - LPA, Berg Report and New International Economic Order

Reading: April & Donald Gordon chp 5 esp. pp 92-220

Week 10: Development Crisis, continued

Nov. 7: Mid-Term Exam

Nov. 9: Africa's debt crisis: Is structural adjustment the answer?

Readings: Carol Wekesser, chp 3, viewpoints 3 + 4

(Adedeji); J. Barry Riddell, "Things Fall Apart Again:

Structural Adjustment Programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa"

JMAS 30, 1(1992) 53-68 on Reserve

Week 11: Ideology, Human Rights and African Development

Nov. 14: African development: Is capitalism the answer? Is socialism?

Readings: Carol Wekesser chp 1, viewpoint 5 (Ayittey)

pp 44-50; chp 4, viewpoints 3 (Kennedy), 4 (Rudebeck)

and 6 (Eze) pp 159-181

Nov. 16: African development: Are democratization and human rights the answer?

Readings: Carol Wekesser chp 2, viewpoint 6 (de Wall)

pp 87-94; chp 3, viewpoints 5 (Johns) and 6 (Lancaster)

pp 129-144; chp 4, viewpoint 5 (Muna) pp 170-174

Week 12

Nov. 21: The OAU and Human Rights

Nov. 23 - THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Week 13: Human Rights and African Development, continued
Nov. 28: Aid, corruption and lack of empowerment: Is
Autonomous Aid Fund the answer?
Reading: April & Donald Gordon chp 9
Nov. 30: Women's rights and African development
TERM PAPER DUE

Week 14: Population, Environment and Famine: Causes, Linkages and
Solutions

Dec. 5: The nature and extent of population and
environmental crises
Dec. 7: Is birth control an urban population policy? The
answer
Readings: April & Donald Gordon chps 6 + 7; Wekesser
chp 2, viewpoint 3 (Population Institute) and viewpoint
4 (Jacqueline Kasun)

Week 15: Regionalism and African Development

Dec. 12: Is economic integration an answer? The experience
to date
Dec. 14: South Africa, African-Americans and African
development

Dec. 18 - Final Exam 10:10 am - 12:10 pm