PSC 326.01: Politics of Africa

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The University Of Montana

Fall 9-1-1998

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The University of Montana
Department of Political Science

PSC 326 - Politics of Africa
Fall Term, 1998

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Class: LA 337, TTh 9:40-11:00 AM
Office Hours: TTh 11:10-1:00 PM
or by appointment

Course Description
This is a discussion course. The objectives are to seek understanding of, and sharpen
students' skill analyzing the problems of economic and political (under-) development in Africa.
The course begins by examining the nature and characteristics of African politics. Orthodox
explanations of corruption and why democracy has failed to take roots are discussed, along with
suggested solutions. Unconventional explanations rooted in colonial racism and the making of
Africa's commodity culture are examined, using the transformation of African men and women
into lifebouy men and lux women as a metaphor. The scope and limitations of the civilizing
mission of colonialism and contemporary neo-colonialism are examined with reference to extant
economic, political, and cultural globalization. For this purpose we focus on continuity and
change in social and family life, the role of religion and occultism, debt and structural adjustment
crises, and resistance to forced westernization epitomized by the issues arising from burying a
Kenyan lawyer.

Running through the course are certain fundamental questions such as the feasibility of
liberal democracy in contemporary the African context. 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.

Course Format and Requirements
The course will be organized as a discussion seminar. To ensure preparedness, you will be
required periodically to write short (no more than 3 pages) reaction papers to some of the reading
assignments. Details of seminar format and written assignments will be discussed in class.

Evaluation of Student Performance
(I) Reaction papers 30%; (ii) Attendance & participation 20%;
(iii) A mid-term 20%; and (iv) A final exam or term paper 30%

Texts
1) Chinua Achebe's political novel, A Man of the People,
3) David William Cohen and E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, Burying SM (Portsmouth, NH:
   Heinemann, 1989).
4) Faculty Pac
PSC 326 - Course Outline

Week 1: Introduction
Sept. 1: Overview: scope, contents and course requirements
Sept. 3: Video and Discussion on The Nature of the Continent.
**Reading:** Begin and try to finish by the week-end Achebe, *A Man of the people*

Unit 1: Understanding the Nature and Characteristics of African Politics
Week 2:
Sept. 8: Discussion of Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* chps 1-7
Sept. 10: Discussion of Achebe continued, chps 8-13

Week 3: Explaining Corruption: Mainstream Western views
Sept. 15: Update on Corruption: Video and discussion
Sept. 17: The concept of patrimonialism and prebendalism
**Readings:** - "Lancing the Swollen African State"
and "Accumulators and Democrats" (FacPac, pp.1-14)

Week 4: Explaining Failure of Democracy
Sept. 22: In Search of Stability: military intervention, military rule & problems of recivilianization
Sept. 24: Towards democratization - The civil society idea
**Readings:** "Hometown Voluntary Associations" (FacPac, pp. 27-39)

Week 5: Failure of democracy and democratization cont'd.
Sept. 29: The idea of tying aid to democratic reforms. A debate.
**Readings:** The articles by Michael Johns and Carol Lancaster in the FacPac, pp. 17-25
Oct. 1: Written Assignment

Unit 2: Rethinking Causes of Corruption and Failure of Democracy to take Root

Week 6: The colonial foundation.
Oct. 6: Overview: Scramble, partition, conquest - motif force, mode of rule, indirect rule as apartheid; nationalist struggle.
Oct. 8: The making of "modern" bodies and manners: race, civilization and rights.
Discussion of Timothy Burke, *Lifebouy men, lux women*, chps 1 & 2

Week 7: The colonial foundation cont'd
Oct. 13: Race, Commodity culture and incorporation into global capitalism. Discussion of Burke, chps 3&4.
Oct. 15: Psycho-social and economic implications. Discussion of Burke, chps 5 & 6
Week 8: The colonial foundation cont'd.
Oct. 20: Discussion of P. T. Bauer, "Colonialism is not responsible for Africa's problems" (FacPac pp. 105-108)
Oct. 22: "Tools of Exploitation." Discussion of a video

Unit 3. The Social System and Social Order

Week 9:
Oct. 27: Continuity and change in family, kinship & clan systems
      Reading: Brian Segel in FacPac, pp. 121-133
Oct. 29: Continuity and change in rural/urban life
      Reading: William Schwab, "Oshogbo - an Urban Community?" FacPac pp.43-55

Week 10: Religion & Occultism in political and social life
Nov. 3: (Election Day - No classes)
Nov. 5: Africa's Triple heritage: discussion and a video

Week 11: Religion and Occultism cont'd.
Nov. 10: Politicization of religion today: The Nigerian example
      Reading: Ibrahim in FacPac pp. 93-104

Week 12: Religion and Occultism concluded
Nov. 17: Discussion of video and symbolic politics of witchcraft
      Reading: Misty Bastian, "Bloodhounds who have no friends," FacPac, pp.75-89
Nov. 19: Neo-colonialism and Africa's socio-economic and political development:
         Globalization, structural adjustment and environmental crises.
         Readings: Barry Riddell, FacPac pp.109-117; and Nyang'oro, FacPac, pp.135-146

Week 13: Nov. 24-27: (Thanksgiving and Columbus Day holidays)

Week 14: Neo-colonialism and Africa's socio-economic development cont'd: Civilizing Mission by Other Means?
Dec. 3: Discussion of Burying SM cont'd. Chps. 3 & 4.

Week 15: Civilizing Mission by Other Means Cont'd
Dec 8: Discussion of Burying SM cont'd: Chps. 5,6 & conclusion
Dec 10: Review and assessment