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PSC 326.01: Politics of Africa

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The University Of Montana

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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
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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*.
- 2) Timothy Burke, *Lifebouy men, lux women*. Duke University Press, 1996
- 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

Nov. 12: Witchcraft and social order: Discussion of "9-year old pregnant witch;" "penis-shrinker death toll;" and "Open the Wombs." FacPac, pp. 57, 59, 61-72.

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. 1: Discussion of Burying SM, Introduction & chps 1-2

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