

**CONTEMPORARY AFRICA (SIS 265-001), SPRING 2009**  
**American University, School of International Service**

Tuesday/Friday 12:45-2:00 in Ward 114  
Office: Asbury 224-B  
Office hrs: Tues 2-5/Thur 2-4

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**COURSE OUTLINE**

This course explores the economic, social, and political challenges facing sub-Saharan Africa today, placing them in historical and global contexts. Key themes include democratization, the origins of conflict, and path dependent development. The course balances regional knowledge with broader comparative theory in order to address questions about African exceptionalism, democracy, and the effects of political institutions on governance.

In the first unit on colonialism we will discuss colonial rule, including how it affected traditional bases of authority and transformed the structure of economic life. We'll discuss (and question) the lasting impact of nationalism and decolonization on economic and political development. The second unit analyzes the politics of the post-independence era including the rise of one-party states, increased political centralization and economic experiments in socialism. The third unit examines ethnicity, nationalism and alternative sources of identity rooted in society. We'll discuss the causes of violence in Rwanda and Darfur, and consider religious challenges to the state in Nigeria. The fourth section focuses on puzzles of African development: Why are so many countries rich in resources but poor in per capita terms? Have external actors helped or hurt development? We'll evaluate different claims about the impact of economic liberalization and foreign aid. The last unit examines trends and causes of recent democratization, weighing the impact of historical factors as well as recent elections. It also explores the apparently different aspects of "successful" democracy in Senegal and South Africa.

**REQUIRED MATERIALS**

These books are available at the bookstore on campus and on reserve in the library:

- Meredith, Martin. 2006. *The Fate of Africa: a History of Fifty Years of Independence*. Public Affairs.
- Schaffer, Fredric *Democracy in Translation: Understanding Politics in an Unfamiliar Culture*, Ithaca and London: Cornell (1999).

**Recommended:**

- Tordoff, William *Government and Politics in Africa*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, Fourth edition (2002).

You should also subscribe to IRIN news bulletins pertaining to your case study (see below). Go to <http://www.irinnews.org>. Required readings posted on Blackboard are marked with an \*asterisk below; other required readings noted below are available via the Internet link provided in the syllabus. Additional required materials may be distributed in class or via Blackboard.

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Your grade will be calculated based on the following distribution:

- An in-class test on February 20 (20%)
- Policy memo and role playing simulation on March 6 (20%). NOTE: You should plan on coordinating with your team members in advance of the simulation.
- Short précis on a case study of your choice, due on March 24 (10%)
- In-class quiz on March 31 (10%)
- Final paper discussing democracy and democratization which incorporates your case study. Due on May 1 before 2 pm (30%).
- Class participation, including a Blackboard posting describing your case study (10%)

For your final paper, you will be expected to incorporate information from a case study of your choice. You will receive additional information about how to pick a case study. The final paper will be due during the time scheduled for the final exam. Emailed assignments will not be accepted without the prior permission of the instructor. The Academic Integrity Code will be strictly enforced. For details, see: <http://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/code01.htm>.

You are expected to be an active participant in class discussions. You are also required to post at least one message on Blackboard before **February 25** which identifies your case study. In addition, the instructor may ask students to post a message following particular class discussions.

### PART 1: AFRICA – BEFORE AND AFTER THE EUROPEANS

#### (1) Why Africa? (January 13)

#### (2) Colonial Rule (January 16)

Meredith, Introduction

\* M. Crowder, "Indirect Rule: French and British Style," *Africa* 34 (July 1964), pp. 197 – 205.

#### (3) Rural Rebellions (January 23)

\* Wangari Maathai, Chapter 3, "Education and the State of Emergency" in *Unbowed: A Memoir*. New York: Anchor Books (2006), 53 – 72.

\* Throup, D.W. 1985. "The Origins of Mau Mau," *African Affairs* 84 (July 1985): 399-433.

#### (4) The Age of Nationalism (January 27)

Meredith, Chapter 1, "The Gold Coast Experiment" and Chapter 4, "L'Afrique Noire"

\* Nnamdi Azikiwe. *Zik: A Selection from the Speeches of Nnamdi Azikiwe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1961), pp. 154 – 162.

#### (5) Decolonization (January 30)

Meredith, Chapter 5, "Winds of Change" and Chapter 7, "The White South"

#### Recommended:

Tordoff, Chapter 3, "Nationalism and the Transfer of Power"

→ VIDEO IN CLASS: *Wind of Change: the End of Colonialism in Africa* (DVD 4034)

**(6) Colonialism's Legacy (February 3)**

- \* Peter Ekeh. "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (1975), pp. 91 – 112.

Recommended: Tordoff, Chapter 2, "Colonialism and the Colonial Impact" (pages 36 – 41)

**PART 2: THE POST-COLONIAL MOMENT**

**(7) Post-Imperial Politics (February 6)**

Meredith, Chapter 8, "The Birth of Nations" and Chapter 9, "The First Dance of Freedom"

- \* Kwame Nkrumah. Excerpts from *Neo-Colonialism: the Last Stage of Imperialism*. London: Nelson (1965), pp. 239 – 259.

Recommended: Tordoff, Chapter 4, "State and Society"

**(8) Mobilizing for Development (February 10)**

Meredith, Chapter 10, "Feet of Clay" and Chapter 14, "In Search of Ujamaa"

- \* Julius Nyerere, "Freedom and Development," in *Freedom and Development*, Oxford University Press (1973), pp. 58 – 71.

Recommended: Tordoff, Chapter 5, "Political Parties"

**(9) Modernization and Markets (February 13)**

\* Robert Bates, Chapters 1 and 2 in *Markets and States in Tropical Africa* (1981)

- \* Goran Hyden, Chapter 4 in *African Politics in Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge (2006).

**(10) Authoritarianism and Personal Rule (February 17)**

Meredith, Chapter 11, "A House Divided" and Chapter 13, "The Coming of Tyrants"

**(11) In-class test (February 20)**

**PART 3: CONFLICT AND PEACE IN AFRICAN SOCIETY**

→ Reminder: A Blackboard posting identifying your case study is due before February 25.

**(12) Islam and Nigeria's Civic Cultures (February 24)**

"Plateau Government Orders Shoot on Sight," Oyibos Online, December 30, 2008.  
<http://www.oyibosonline.com/cgi-bin/newsscript.pl?record=4728>

- \* John Paden. 2005. "National Muslim Identities and Values," Chapter 6 in *Muslim Civic Cultures and Conflict Resolution*. Washington, DC: Brookings (2005), pp. 115-136.

**(13) Ethnic Violence in Rwanda (February 27)**

Meredith, Chapter 27, "The Graves Are Not Yet Full"

Recommended:

M. Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton Univ. Press (2001), pp. 185 – 233

**(14) Somalia (March 3)**

Meredith, Chapter 26, “Black Hawk Down”

John Prendergast, “15 Years after Black Hawk Down: Somalia’s Chance?” Enough! Strategy Paper (April 2008). <http://www.enoughproject.org/files/publications/SomaliaApril2008.pdf>

Recommended:

Kenneth Menkhaus, “Somalia: Governance vs. Statebuilding,” in *Building States to Build Peace*, edited by Charles Call. Boulder, Lynne Rienner (2008).

Mark Bowden, “The Guns of Anarchy,” *Washington Post*, December 21, 2008.

**(15) Role Playing Scenario (March 6)**

POLICY MEMO DUE

→ Spring Break (March 8 – 15)

**PART 4: DEVELOPMENT PARADOXES AND PARADIGMS**

**(16) A “Growth Tragedy”? (March 17)**

Meredith, Chapter 16, “The Slippery Slope”

\* Paul Collier and Jan Willem Gunning. 1999. “Why Has Africa Grown Slowly?” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 13 (summer): 3-22.

Recommended: Tordoff, Chapter 8: “Political Liberalization and Economic Reform” (pages 228-239)

**(17) Transforming African Economies (March 20)**

Meredith, Chapter 22, “The Lost Decade”

\* Peter Lewis, “Growth without Prosperity in Africa,” *Journal of Democracy* 19 (Oct. 2008): 95 – 109.

Recommended:

\* Jeffrey Herbst. “The Structural Adjustment of Politics in Africa,” *World Development* 18 (1990), pp. 949-958.

**(18) IN-CLASS WORKSHOP (March 24)**

→ CASE STUDY PRECIS DUE

**(19) Trade and Aid (March 27)**

\* Nicholas Kristof, “Year After Year, Grave After Grave.” *New York Times*, October 11, 2005.

Jenny Aker, “How Can We Avoid Another Food Crisis in Niger?” Center for Global Development, September 2008. <http://www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/16679/>

Frederic Mousseau and Anuradha Mittal, “Free Market Famine,” *Foreign Policy in Focus*, October 26, 2006. Available at: <http://www.fpif.org/pdf/gac/0610famine.pdf>

→ Short movies in class: “Hungry for Help: Food Crisis in Niger” and “The Constant Crisis”

**(20) In class quiz (March 31)**

## PART 5: DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA

### (21) Democratization: Path Dependency? (April 3)

\* Jennifer Widner. "Political Reform in Anglophone and Francophone African Countries," in *Economic Change and Political Liberalization in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Jennifer Widner, editor. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press (1994), pp. 49 – 79.

#### Recommended:

Meredith, Chapter 23, "The Struggle for Democracy"

### (22) A South African Success Story? (April 7)

Meredith, Chapter 24 "A Time of Triumph" (you might want to review Chapter 7 too)

\* Karin Bruillard, "Offshoot of Venerable ANC Officially Formed in S. Africa," *Washington Post*, December 17, 2008, p. A 11.

Gwen Thompkins, "Crime, Politics Causing Many to Leave South Africa," National Public Radio, October 16, 2008. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=95749360>

### (23) Democracy and Elections (April 10)

Staffan Lindberg, "The Surprising Significance of Elections in Africa," *Journal of Democracy* 7 (1): 139-151. Available for free at: <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/lindberg/downloads.html>

Fredreic Shaffer, *Democracy in Translation*, Chapter 1

### (24) Towards Illiberal Democracy? (April 14)

\* Jeanne Toungara. 2001. "Ethnicity and Political Crisis in Côte d'Ivoire," *Journal of Democracy* (July 2001): 63-72.

Norma Kriger, "Can Elections End Mugabe's Dictatorship?" *Association of Concerned Africa Scholars Bulletin*, June 25, 2008, available at:

<http://concernedafricascholars.org/can-elections-end-mugabe%E2%80%99s-dictatorship/>

### (25) Democracy: Universalism or Authenticity? (April 17)

Fredreic Shaffer, *Democracy in Translation*, Chapters 2 – 3

### (26) Democracy in Senegal (April 21)

Fredreic Shaffer, *Democracy in Translation*, Chapters 4 – end.

### (27) TBA (April 24)

### (28) Conclusion and Review (April 28)