History 3652/ASRC3652: African Economic Development Histories
Cornell University
Fall 2015
M W F: 11:15-12:05

Instructor: Prof. Sandra E. Greene
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Course Description:

Africa today is most often described as economically underdeveloped. Poverty rates are high; many countries are deeply in debt; the economy in most countries has been unable to expand sufficiently to insure employment for its growing youthful population. Too many people have to subsist on less than $1-2 a day. What explains this situation? The legacy of the slave trade? Colonial exploitation? Poor policies pursued by independent African governments? How much has international aid helped or hindered the economic development of Africa? Does China’s recent heavy investment in Africa portend a movement away from, or a continuation of, Africa’s economic under-development? At the same time, the new millennium has seen several African countries embrace the kinds of changes that are putting them on the path to prosperity. What are those changes and what accounts for this? These questions and more will be addressed in this course on the history of Africa’s economic development.

Texts: All are on reserve in Uris Library

Walter Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa

Selected Readings (Custom Text)

In addition to the texts above (of which we will read significant sections), we will also read and discuss a number of articles from edited volumes and journals. These articles are found in the Custom Text, and can be identified in the syllabus when preceded by CT/UR (Custom Text/Uris Library Reserve). You can buy the custom text from the book store, and it is also available on reserve in Uris Library.

NOTE: TO FACILITATE BETTER NOTE TAKING SKILLS AND FULL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE DISCUSSION SESSIONS, NO COMPUTERS OF ANY TYPE WILL BE ALLOWED IN CLASS.

Course Organization:

The bulk of this course will consist of lectures and discussion sessions. The lectures will provide an introduction to the topic for that week. The discussions are organized to provide students with the opportunity to respond to the readings. Active participation on the part of everyone is essential. Students with the assistance of the professor will lead the discussions but all other students must be prepared at all times to participate, having already completed the readings that are being discussed. Students are expected to raise and share questions they have about the readings and to offer their reactions to the different perspectives offered in the texts and by their classmates.

Group Project: This course covers a great deal of information across time with examples from across the continent. To encourage greater engagement with and connection to an individual country, students at the beginning of the semester will be asked to pick one of the African countries that is now considered the most stable politically and/or economically to assess their status and progress with regard to their development into middle-income countries. Students will have the entire semester to gather information from such sources as The Economist, New York Times, Journal of Modern African Studies, and various internet sites (information from which must be verified using footnotes and references provided) on the country’s colonial and post-colonial history that has and/or continues to impact its development.
List of countries for group projects: Angola, Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Zambia

Each group will make a presentation at the end of the course.

Course Requirements:

1. Three 7-10 page papers on the three sections of the course............................50%

This lecture/discussion aspect of this course is divided into three sections: the first on the state and economic development; the second on trade and development; and the third on aid and development. Each of the three sections should briefly review the readings and the debates addressed in the section on which it focuses. Students should then offer their own insights and arguments with supporting information about the topic in question. These insights should take into consideration the various viewpoints raised in the discussion sessions. The due dates for these three papers are indicated in the body of the syllabus after each section.

2. Group presentation (everyone in a particular group will receive the same grade)...25%

Students will research what are the major issues faced by the population in a particular country and what factors seem most important in understanding the challenges to development in that country. The group will periodically meet with the professor to make sure established goals are being met throughout the semester.

3. Attendance and Class participation.................................................................25%

More than four absences (including excused ones for illness) will result in a drop of a letter grade from your final grade for the course.

4. Map Quiz .........................Mandatory to pass with the grade of "A" to pass the course

WEEK 1:

26 August (Wednesday): Introduction to Course/ Background to the Readings/Study maps for quiz
What do we mean by development?
What role does the past play in understanding contemporary development?
How do we measure development?

28 August (Friday): Session with Virginia Cole, Cornell Univ. Librarian, on note taking, and learning by listening.

PART ONE: THE STATE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WEEK 2:

31 August (Monday): Map Quiz review/ FILM- T-Shirt Travels.

Reading:

2 September (Wednesday): Discussion of film and Sparks reading
4 September (Friday): LECTURE- Political Organizations- State and non-State systems
- Why states in some places, decentralized communities in others?
- Why states emerged where they did?
- How were they politically organized?
- How did they approach economic development?
- What do the debates/theories say about how we should think about the early African states?
Readings:

WEEK 3: The Pre-colonial State and Economic Development

7 September (Monday) LABOR DAY HOLIDAY/NO CLASSES

9 September (Wednesday): LECTURE - Early African States- One Example
- Asante/Ashanti (Ghana)
Readings:

11 September (Friday): DISCUSSION-Competing Conceptions of the pre-colonial African State
- To what extent does the Asante case study support or undermine ideas about the pre-colonial state and its abilities to influence the lives of its citizens?
- Which of the theories about the pre-colonial state seem to hold up best under scrutiny given what we know?
- How would you describe the legacy that these states bequeathed future generations?
Readings:

WEEK 4: The Colonial State and Economic Development-A

14 September (Monday):
LECTURE: Background to Conquest-1
- Why colonization by Europe?

16 September (Wednesday) IN CLASS MAP QUIZ
LECTURE: Background to Conquest-2
- Different Colonizers –Same Impact?
Readings:

18 September (Friday) LECTURE: The Colonial State- Competing Interpretations
Colonial Economic policies- an overview
Competing interpretations:
  o The colonial state as exploitative?
  o The weak colonial state?
  o The incomplete work of the colonial state?

WEEK 5: The Colonial State and Economic Development-B

21 September (Monday) DISCUSSION: The Colonial State according to W. Rodney-
- What does Rodney have to say about the colonial state?
- Where do Africans fit into this analysis?
- Are they simply duped victims?

Readings:

23 September (Wednesday) DISCUSSION: The Colonial State according to Acemoglu
- How does Acemoglu’s views reinforce or counter those offered by Rodney?
- Does he overstate the value of European institutions?
- Are Austin’s critiques of Acemoglu/Robinson convincing?
- If so, how should we understand the colonial state?

Readings:


25 September (Friday) DISCUSSION: The Colonial State according to J. Herbst
- How does Herbst’s understanding of the colonial state compare with the ideas of Rodney and Acemoglu/Robinson and Austin?
- Can these different views be reconciled?

Readings:
1. Herbst, Chapter 3.

WEEK 6: The Post-Colonial State and Economic Development

28 September (Monday)

LECTURE: An Overview of the history of Post-colonial Politics and The Implications for Economic Development
- After Independence: elections/one party states/coups/civil wars
- After 1973: the economic impact of the oil crisis
- After 1989: Africa and the end of the Cold War

Reading:
30 August (Wednesday) FILM: *Drowning in Oil?* (32 min.)
LECTURE: Theories about the Problem

**Readings:**
3. CT/UR: Select Reviews of *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*
4. CT/UR: Update on *Drowning in Oil*: Reuters, “Equatorial Guinea: A Vice President is Ordered to Forfeit Assets in the U.S. (NYTimes 2014)

2 October (Friday) DISCUSSION:
- What relative roles do external and internal factors play in structuring how the post-colonial state operated with regard to economic development? How do you balance these factors with the role of the pre-colonial and colonial state in setting certain terms for the post-colonial state?
- Bates and Perkins offer different ways of thinking about the economic situation in post-colonial Africa. Which is most convincing? Can they be reconciled with one another?

**PAPER ON THE STATE IN AFRICAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
**DUE: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9**

PART TWO: PRODUCTION, TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

WEEK 7: The Atlantic Slave Trade and Its Economic Legacy

5 October (Monday) LECTURE: Background- Assessing the impact of the Atlantic Slave trade
- How long did the trade last?
- How did it change over time?
- Who was exported by whom?
- How many were exported?
- Who benefited?
- Theories about the economic impact of the trade

7 October (Wednesday) - DISCUSSION: Rodney v- Northrup
- What is the essence of Rodney’s argument?
- Does Northrup present evidence to counter Rodney’s basic arguments?
- To what extent do the findings by Northrup speak to the impact of the trade with Europe on Africa?

**Readings:**
9 October (Friday) LECTURE: After the Abolition of the Slave Trade and Slavery-
- The reasons for the abolition
- Ambivalent attitudes by Europeans and Africans
- Adjustments and their economic consequences

Readings:

WEEK 8: Production, Trade and Development Policies: Agriculture and Craft Production in Pre-colonial and Colonial Times

12 October (Monday): NO CLASS/FALL BREAK

14 October (Wednesday): LECTURE - Agriculture and Craft Industries in Post-Slave Trade Africa

The variety of agricultural and craft industries in Africa
- Factors affecting economic productivity
  - Land
  - Labor
  - Environment
  - The role of the state
- Focus on Cotton
- Background to the readings/Film clip: Basil Davidson’s *Kings and Cities* (section on dying industry in Kano)

16 October 3 (Friday) LECTURE: Export Agricultural in Colonial Africa

- Colonial Export Agriculture in Non-settler and Settler colonies: policies and problems
- How much exploitation/how much agency?
- How much profit, for whom, used for what?

Readings:


19 October (Monday): DISCUSSION- on non-settler and settler colonies

- What dynamics influenced agricultural policies in a settler colony like Kenya?
- How do these policies differ from those in non-settler colonies?
- What can be said of the role of agency in settler colonies?
- How would you compare the impact of colonialism in settler colonies to those in non-settler colonies, long-term and short term?
- How would you assess the impact of colonialism? As exploitative? As a necessary development? As having little impact on Africa?

WEEK 9: Agricultural Production and Trade for Development in Post-Colonial Africa- Part I
21 October (Wednesday): LECTURE:

- Independent African government policies - reviewing Herbst and Bates
- The realities on the ground: Berry bringing Africa’s peoples and cultures back into the equation:
- Making the link between local issues and international trade policies

23 October (Friday) Lecture/ FILM: The Trade Trap (27 min.)

26 October (Monday) FILM: Cotton Money and the Global Jeans (75 min.)

WEEK 10: Development in Post-Colonial Africa, Part II

28 October (Wednesday) LECTURE: A view from below

2. CT/UR: Sara Berry, No Condition is Permanent (1993) Chapters 3 and 7.

30 October (Friday) DISCUSSION

- How is Berry’s analysis of the history of agricultural policy similar yet different from the kinds of analyses already discussed (Herbst, Acemoglu, Bates?)
- Can they be reconciled?
- Do the films add to or detract from Berry’s analysis?

PAPER ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT
DUE: FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6

PART THREE: THE HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT AID

WEEK 11: Foreign Aid and the Push for Democracy

2 November: (Monday) LECTURE: Providing Economic Assistance / Pushing for Democracy

- The history of African self-help and early foreign intervention in Africa- assumptions and intentions
- Origins of more recent involvement; assumptions and intentions
- Evolving models based on different theories about the origins of the crisis

Readings:

4 November (Wednesday) LECTURE: The Issue of Food Aid

- The history of food aid to Africa
- Debates about the economic consequences of such aid

Readings:

6 November  (Friday) DISCUSSION OF THIS WEEK’S READINGS

WEEK 12: Stepping Back/Offering Solutions: African Aid - Economists Speak

9 November (Monday) DISCUSSION:

- Is it working? What is the way forward?

Readings:

11 November (Wednesday) DISCUSSION: STUDENT LED/PROFESSOR OUT OF COUNTRY

- Is it working? What is the way forward?

Readings:

13 November (Friday) DISCUSSION: STUDENT LED/PROFESSOR OUT OF COUNTRY

- Is it working? What is the way forward?

Readings:

WEEK 13: TAKING A DIFFERENT APPROACH: NGO’S and Micro-credits

16 November (Monday) LECTURE: NGOs/CSOs: Focus on the history of credit institutions in Africa/ The Pros and cons of micro-credit

- History of the focus on NGOs/CSOs
- Debates about the impact of NGO/CSO work
- Focus on Africa’s credit institutions
- The history of the micro-credit movement

18 November (Wednesday): FILM/DISCUSSION:


Readings:

20 November (Friday): NO CLASS/ PROFESSOR AT PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE

WEEK 14: A New Actor in African Development: China (Part 1)

23 November (Monday): LECTURE
- A history of China’s Relations with Africa
- What is driving China’s embrace of Africa?
- What is driving Africa’s interest in China

25 November (Wednesday) NO CLASS/THANKSGIVING BREAK

27 November (Friday) NO CLASS/THANKSGIVING BREAK

WEEK 15: A New Actor in African Development: China (Part 2)

30 November (Monday) DISCUSSION

Readings:
2. CT/UR: Ian Taylor “china’s Steady Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa,” Europa World Plus (2011)

WEEK 16: Group presentations

2 December (Wednesday): Group Presentation

4 December (Friday): Group Presentation and discussion/class wrap-up

PAPER ON AID AND AFRICA DUE: 
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11