

## **Broad overview of lecture content as of 4 February 2010**

### **1. Introduction**

How is power exercised on the continent, with emphasis on “the view-from-below”....

How does the power of the state (or formal politics) play out in the lives of individual Africans (e.g., women, youth, disabled, refugees, farmers, businessmen)? Or communities (i.e., geographic entities)? Or groups (social, class, ethnic, religious, etc)?

Approach is agent-centred.

Course is divided into two broad sections over four analytical parts: analysis of the state (parts II and III of the course) and analysis of the impact of state power on/in everyday life (part IV). In other words, emphasis is not on elites (as is the case in many comparative political science classes).

Consideration of where to find politics in Africa:

- A. Analysis of the formal and informal relationships that influence and shape how people engage in politics.
- B. Politics can be considered formal or informal. **FORMAL** politics are those that are institutional demarcated through formal rules and laws of the states. Such activities include voting, implementing government policy, passing law, functioning of the judiciary, etc. **INFORMAL** politics include the responsibilities of patrons to the client (and vice-versa), the demands of one’s ethnic group, negotiating with local officials or central government authorities. One does not need to hold a formal political appointment or title to be influential in politics.

### **2. Thinking About Africa**

Challenging common Western assumptions about “Africa” (Dowden) and how “Africans” perceive our Western perception of them (Wainanina)

### **3. Understanding and Explaining African Politics**

Discussion of trends and approaches to analysing politics on the continent. Critiques of dominant approaches within comparative politics: Modernisation; Dependency/Underdevelopment; Statist (Chazan).

Discussion of Chazan’s integrative approach. Simply stated, she advocates for an **integrative approach** to study political behaviour and phenomena on the continent.

This means that the problem drives the choice of methods, not vice-versa. I called this **METHODOLOGICAL ECLETICISM**, meaning that you choose the tools (theories, concepts, etc) that help you solve the problem at hand rather than forcing your empirical

evidence to “fit” within existing theories or approaches. In other words, research that is problem-driven not paradigm-driven.

Discussion of different types of sources to understand and explaining politics on the continent:

A. **ACADEMIC**

B. **NON-ACADEMIC**

Refer to pp. 10-11 of the syllabus for guidance on academic (books, articles, chapters) and non-academic (NGOs and UN documents, think tank reports, human rights reports, journalist accounts, etc).

#### **4. Everyday Life**

Appreciation of the rhythms of everyday life on the continent (Kapuscinski; Saul). Focus on rural livelihoods, not middle class or elites. Subsistence farmers make up some 70% of the population of sub-saharan African. Also focus economic life in towns and villages (Saul)

Different patterns of agriculture and pastoralism across the continent, notably “regional variations for supporting human life” (Neff)

Tropical zones (ICTZ); wet-dry seasons; continental plates, topsoil; environment migration; desertification; disease.

Carriers and Barriers: Phenomena that influence, control, channel, restrict or enhance human spatial processes (Neff)

Resource base: copper, diamonds, coltan, oil, etc

#### **5. Chris Huggins on the politics of land use and tenure**

These notes are available separately on the class webpage.

#### **6. Patterns of colonial rule and its Legacies**

Discussion of the distinct ways in which colonial rule varied by region and coloniser. Colonial rule was late (beginning in the 1880s, and not consolidated in some areas until much later into the 20<sup>th</sup> century).

Colonial rule designed to 1. Establish colonial hegemony in a defined area (cookie-cutter boundaries; 2. Provide security to those colonial and African actors imperative to the colonial function; 3. Create legitimacy among the population; 4. Collect revenues (taxes, prestations, export resources) as efficiently as possible (Thomson).

British type: Most attention paid to recruiting local authorities as their representatives (or intermediaries (**Indirect rule**)).

French type: Elite groups linked to politics in French and cultivating French culture in the colonies (**direct rule**).

Portuguese type: Promotion of **Lusotropical empire** of direct incorporation into the Portuguese state.

Belgian type: Paternalistic administration of the colonial state funded through revenues gained through violent extraction of natural resources (and the resultant foreign investment).

### **Legacies/Impact:**

1. Continuity of the colonial state boundaries. Why? Impact on Pan-Africanism (Ekeh; also Boone from 4 Feb).
2. Ethnic politics. How did the colonial administration shape the formation of ethnic identities (Thomson)
3. Gender politics. Did the colonial administration shape the subordination of women in the public sphere (Ekeh)
4. Class politics: Why no African middle class? (Cooper)

### **7. Nationalism and Liberation**

Promise and optimism of nationalist sentiment and rhetoric following liberation (from colonisers). Why was the mood so jubilant? How quickly did it fall? Nkrumah as an example.

A. The importance of the shared experience of armed struggle. Why was the socialist model so appealing to many African “freedom fighters” from the 1960s?

B. The problem of armed factions within liberation struggles. What caused factional splits? And what is its legacy?

C. Once in power and the politics of national unity: The dilemma of trying to build a state that is strong enough to overcome internal divisions, yet not so strong as to become oppressive.

Note the political beliefs and behaviour of African and the policy responses of state. How was policy implemented by the new African leaders? How did ordinary Africans respond? How were all the promises of the new leaders to be financed? Was the post-independence state capable of executing all of its promises? (Cooper)

### **8. The Postcolonial State**

Thinking about the state as the primary source of legitimate power on the continent. Willingness and ability of state power-holders to crush opposition to maintain power. What group(s) capture the state? How do they hold on to formal state power? With what effect for ordinary Africans?

The embeddedness of society (meaning civil society) in the mechanisms and practices of the state. State is part of society; society is not a separate entity that functions

successfully without the input (control?) of the state apparatus.

Legitimate authority vested in personal rule (to be discussed further on 22 Feb: Big Man politics)

The economy also embedded in the state. The political agenda intricately linked to economy. The post-colonial state characterised in the early literature as either “strong” or “weak” on the basis of its capacity to legitimately carry out policy decisions. (Note the post-cold war category of “failed” states). Capacity is linked to the available economic resources to fulfill state policy, and to the relationship between the state apparatus and civil society. Can civil society shape/influence how state resources are spent and to what end?