



School of International Service
International Peace and Conflict Resolution Program

“Conflict in Africa”

SIS-496-006, SIS-696-006: Special Studies in International Politics
Spring 2007, Wednesdays 5:30 – 8:00 PM, Ward 201

Professor: Susan Shepler, Ph.D.

E-mail: shepler@american.edu

Office: Clark 203

Office Telephone: 202-885-2454

Office Hours: Tuesdays 5-8 PM or by appointment

Course Summary:

This course is a historical and analytical overview of conflict in Africa. The course begins with conflict in pre-colonial Africa and the advent of colonialism. The bulk of the course is concerned with an exploration of theories regarding the causes of conflict in Africa, ranging from the economic and social impact of colonialism, political culture, ethnic divisions, greed and grievance, etc. Two recent major conflicts in Africa will be analyzed with respect to these theories. Finally, possibilities for peace in Africa will be addressed. I reserve the right to change or add readings as the semester progresses.

Grading:

Your course grade will be based on the following elements:

Conflict Report. (20%). You will choose one African conflict, past or present, and give a brief history of the conflict and an assessment of how each of the theories we have discussed contribute to understanding the conflict. (Please do not choose either the DRC or Sierra Leone). Be sure to address each theory with respect to the conflict you have chosen, even if you decide to dismiss it as an explanation. Ten pages, double-spaced, properly cited.

Term Paper. (40%). This is a more substantial research paper written on any theme related to the class. It should be twenty pages double-spaced and properly cited. A paper proposal (1 page) and a list of at least two external sources will be due one month before the final due date.

Final Exam. (30%). The exam will include short definitions of terms introduced in class as well as several essay questions requiring you to synthesize course themes.

Participation. (10%). This includes class attendance, participation in classroom discussions, and completion of in-class written assignments.

Required Texts:

Bayart, Jean-François, Stephen Ellis, and Béatrice Hibou (1999) *The Criminalization of the State in Africa*. Indiana University Press.

Clark, John F. (2004) *The African Stakes of the Congo War*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Collier, Paul, and Nicholas Sambanis, eds. (2005). *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis*. Volume 1: Africa. The World Bank.

Lan, David. (1985) *Guns and Rain: Guerillas & Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe*. University of California Press.

Mamdani, Mahmood (2001) *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton University Press

Other readings will be available on Blackboard.

Class meetings:

01/17/07: Introduction to the Course

01/24/07: Conflict in Pre-colonial and Colonial Africa

Readings:

Freund, Bill (1984) *The Making of Contemporary Africa: The Development of African Society since 1800*. Indiana University Press. Chapters 2 and 6 (pp. 16-38 and pp. 111-142), "Material and Cultural Development in Africa Before the Nineteenth Century" and "The Material Basis of Colonial Society, 1900-1940"

Mamdani, Mahmood (1996). *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton University Press. Chapters 2 and 3 (pp. 37-108), "Decentralized Despotism" and "Indirect Rule: The Politics of Decentralized Despotism"

01/31/07: New Barbarism

Readings:

Kaplan, R. (1994). "The Coming Anarchy: How scarcity, crime, overpopulation, and disease are rapidly destroying the social fabric of our planet." *Atlantic Monthly* (February 1994): 44-76.

Besteman, C. (1996). "Representing Violence and "Othering" Somalia." *Cultural Anthropology* **11**(1): 120-133.

Mkandawire, T. (2002). "The terrible toll of post-colonial 'rebel movements' in Africa: towards an explanation of the violence against the peasantry." *Journal of Modern African Studies* **40**(2): 181-215.

02/07/07: Economic and Demographic

Readings:

Collier and Sambanis, Chapters 1 and 10, and one case study chapter of your choosing (not DRC).

Urdal, H. (2004). The Devil in the Demographics: The Effect of Youth Bulges on Domestic Armed Conflict, 1950-2000, The World Bank.

02/14/07: Political Culture (Citizen and Subject, Settler and Native)

Readings:

Mamdani, Chapters 1-3, 7.

02/21/07: The State (Weak and Criminal)

Readings:

Zartman, I. William (1985). Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa. Oxford University Press. Chapter 1 (pp. 3-18), "Conflict in Africa."

Reno, W. (1997). "African Weak States and Commercial Alliances." African Affairs 96: 165-185.

Bayart, et al., Chapters 1 and 2

Helander, Bernhard (2005). "Who Needs a State? Civilians, Security, and Social Services in North-East Somalia" in No Peace No War: An Anthropology of Contemporary Armed Conflicts. Richards, P., Ed. Athens, OH, Ohio University Press.

02/28/07: Class and Patrimonialism

Readings:

O'Brien, D. C. (1996). A Lost Generation? Youth Identity and state decay in West Africa. Postcolonial Identities in Africa. R. Werbner and T. Ranger. London, Zed Books Ltd.: 55-74.

Kandeh, J. (2004). Coups from Below: Armed Subalterns and State Power in West Africa. New York, Palgrave Macmillan. Chapters 1-3 (pp. 13-64).

One other reading, tbd.

03/07/07: Culture

Readings:

Ellis, S. (1999). The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War. New York, New York University Press. Chapter 6 (pp. 220-280)

Lan, D. The whole book if you can.

SPRING BREAK

03/21/07: Conflict Reports Due – Present to Class

03/28/07: DRC Intro

Note: TERM PAPER PROPOSALS DUE

Readings:

Collier, Chapter 3

Mamdani, Chapter 8

Vlassenroot, Koen (2006) “A societal View on Violence and War: Conflict & Militia Formation in Eastern Congo” in Violence, Political Culture & Development in Africa. P. Kaarsholm, Ed. Ohio University Press. Pp. 49-65.

Guest Speaker?

04/04/07: Further DRC Analysis (Regionalism)

Readings:

Selections from Clark (to be determined)

Intro to Sierra Leone. Guest Speaker?

04/11/07: Sierra Leone Analysis

Richards, P. (2001). Are "Forest" Wars in Africa Resource Conflicts? The Case of Sierra Leone. Violent Environments. N. L. Peluso and M. Watts. Ithaca, Cornell University Press: 65-82.

Abdullah, I. (2004). Bush Path to Destruction: The Origin and Character of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF/SL). Between Democracy and Terror: The Sierra Leone Civil War. I. Abdullah. Dakar, CODESRIA: 41-65.

Fanthorpe, R. (2001). "Neither Citizen nor Subject? 'Lumpen' Agency and the Legacy of Native Administration in Sierra Leone." African Affairs **100**: 363-386.

Shaw, R. (2003). Robert Kaplan and "Juju Journalism" in Sierra Leone's Rebel War: The Primitivizing of an African Conflict. Magic and Modernity: Interfaces of Revelation and Concealment. B. Meyer and P. Pels. Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press: 81-102.

04/18/07: Peace Making

Readings:

Mamdani, Chapter 9

Rothchild, Donald (1997). Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa: Pressures and Incentives for Cooperation. Brookings Institution Press. Chapter 1, “African State Management of Ethnic Conflict.” Pp. 1-24.

Busumtwi-Sam, James (2004). "Development and Peacebuilding: Conceptual and Operational Deficits in International Assistance" in Durable Peace: Challenges for Peacebuilding in Africa, T. Ali and R. Matthews, eds. University of Toronto Press. Pp. 315-353.

Guest Speaker?

04/25/07: Term Papers Due – In class presentations
Summing Up

05/09/07: FINAL EXAM
(final exam details not yet announced)