South Africa: The Politics of a Democratic Transition

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The revolutionary spirit of South Africa’s struggle for freedom is manifest in the clenched fist, raised in the air, and the shout, amandla awethu! –power to the people! On December 10th 1997, when Nelson Mandela signed the constitution into law, citizens of South Africa, regardless of race, achieved universal suffrage and an extensive series of social and political rights for which they had struggled. After decades of struggle, apartheid rule came to an end. Today, South Africa is a country in transition, moving away from a legacy of segregation, violence, and state enforced impoverishment of its people, towards a new democratic politics and greater economic justice. To address the remaining barriers to political inclusion and the gap between the promises made in the constitution and the unstable socio-political reality facing many South Africans, frameworks of participatory democracy have been promoted by the state and non-governmental organizations.

This is a special topics class that will explore what it means to speak of democratization by looking specifically at the history and present conditions within South Africa. The main goals of this course will be to learn in more detail the story of South Africa’s struggle towards democracy, and to question what might be illustrative about South Africa’s experience for the democratization process in other parts of the world. While South Africa has uprooted the apartheid form of government, in practice, the transition to democracy requires confronting sharply contested questions of political and social organization. How does the South African struggle against apartheid define their current idea of what of democracy should look like? How does this compare with other definitions of democracy? How does the state create policies that work towards providing social, political and economic rights to its citizens? This class will answer these questions by looking at the history of the struggle to end apartheid and the current hurdles that face the democratization process.

This seminar has no prerequisites and will not assume particular prior knowledge or experiences. In the expectation that students will have diverse backgrounds and different level of familiarity with Africa, the seminar will enable participants to develop their own interests and their expertise.

Organization
This course seeks to achieve the breadth of a survey though the interactive style of a seminar. We will meet twice weekly. I shall take responsibility for introducing the topics, and reviewing the relevant literature. Class participants will share responsibility for the content and conduct of the seminar, including summarizing and criticizing their “Required Readings”, and suggesting avenues for developing further the topics we discuss. Students will sign up at the beginning of the semester to lead class on one day. Details are below.

Each seminar participant will select, early in the semester, a particular organization or individual in contemporary South Africa for continuing attention throughout the course. As the semester progresses, seminar participants will focus part of their effort on that organization or individual, including noting current events, developing a relevant bibliography, doing supplementary reading, and bringing their insights to class discussions. This work will culminate in a Final Essay. See attached description.

We will frequently view video clips that will provide additional perspectives on contemporary South Africa. Occasional longer films or other special presentations may be scheduled during the semester. ***Additionally, you will receive extra credit if you attend the weekly Southern African Film Series, which takes place every Tuesday of the semester at the Stern Student Center, Room 206, from 3-5:30.

Requirements
To encourage an interactive style of a seminar, each participant will share in the responsibility for the direction and conduct of the seminar, as well as completing her/his own individual work. At least once during the semester students will present their work to the seminar. I will have a sign-up sheet that will begin the third week of the semester.

Students will be expected to do the “Required Readings” for the course, and to explore additional readings from the “Suggested Readings” listed in the syllabus and from sources they locate themselves.

Students will prepare two Analytical Reviews of selected readings and a Final Essay on the organization or individual on which they focus.

Clearly, this seminar will require initiative, self-direction, and collective responsibility on the part of each participant. Written work is expected to be submitted in a timely fashion and late receipt of your work will result in a reduction in your grade.

Class Participation and Discussion: 15%
All students are expected to do all the assigned readings, be prepared to summarize the main issues and arguments, and participate in discussion on a regular basis. This course is designed to encourage critical thinking on controversial issues. Students will be frequently called upon to share their queries and opinions. If you find it difficult to speak in public, you should meet with the instructor during the first week of class to discuss strategies for resolving this problem.

**Individual Presentation: 15%**

Each student should select and make an oral presentation, which will take place on Thursdays. When you present, you are also required to hand in a one-page written response. “Write-ups” should be one page maximum, typed, and carefully edited. Most of all, it should demonstrate your “engagement” with the reading. They must provide evidence that you have done the weekly reading and give some critical thought to your grasp of the facts, concepts and debates in the reading. Quantity is not required; rather, two, three or one-paragraph questions or commentaries are fine. Quality is what is important. Don’t worry about being incorrect, provided you have engaged the reading.

The objective is to help students critically engage the ideas, theories and facts presented in readings and lectures. Learning how to pose the right analytic question is just as important as answering a question. I will reward those who are committed to the goals of the course and those who critically engage the readings.

There will be more than one student presenting each Thursday. The task is to present a short, informal presentation on an assigned reading. The main part of presentation should be no longer than 5 minutes. The presentation should consist of the following:
- The main argument of the reading
- Major concepts within the reading
- The significance or usefulness of the reading
- How the reading relates to past course readings and/or the course themes
- The presentation should conclude with at least one question for class discussion from the readings she or he is presenting on

Here are some examples of ways to pose good questions or develop critical commentary on the readings:
1. Summarize a theory or concept that is described in the readings concisely, and then apply the generalization to a different context and debate if and why it applies.
2. Take a quote from the text that you think is most important, one that captures the key argument in the readings, or one that puzzles you, and then analyze what the author is trying to explain, or fails to do, or how your own standpoint agrees or disagrees with the quote. Critique the bias you see.

3. Search for an anomaly, a contradiction or paradox in the assigned text. Authors says that something is true in such and such context, but s/he appears to overlook this rule or generalization in another passage/quote. Can both be true?

4. Compare and contrast the view of two assigned authors discussing the same social change, institution or cultural process. Search for the source of the difference. What explains why they agree and why they differ? What’s the underlying assumption/method/theory/value?

Evaluation and Grading
The primary criteria for grading will be individual progress throughout the semester in mastery of the course themes and relevant literature and in critical, analytic, and synthetic skills as made evident by your analytical and final essays. Your contribution to the collective effort of the class will also factor highly into your grade. Thus, your attendance and participation is a crucial part of your evaluation.

Attendance and Participation: 15%
Individual Presentation: 15%
Analytical Essays: 30% each, due Feb. 17 and March 31. A hand-out to describe the analytical essay is forthcoming.
Final Essay: 40%

Readings
Several sorts of readings are necessary for this class: broad overviews of major events and actors, analyses of specific issues and interactions in South African history, politics, and society, and empirical studies of particular people, places, and events. To provide alternative perspectives we will also draw on the observations and analyses presented in a novel by Nadine Gordimer, Burgers’ Daughter.

The required books will be available at the book store:
In addition to the above list, there will be many required readings available on WebCT. I understand that printing can be a pain, but I prefer that you print out the articles so that you can take notes on them and bring them to class for our discussions.

Assignments:

Week 1: January 13-15
Beinart, Chapter 1- African Rural Life and Migrant Labor, pp. 9-35
Worden, Chapter 2 – The Conquest of the Land, pp. 7-36

Week 2: January 20-22
Beinart, Chapter 2 - Economic and Social Change on the Settler Farmlands, pp. 36-61 and Chapter 3 – War, Reconstruction and the State from the 1890s-1920s, pp. 62-87
Worden, Chapter 3 – Changes in Town and Countryside, pp. 38-72

Week 3: January 27-29
Beinart, Chapter 4- Black Responses and Black Resistance, pp. 88-113
Worden, Chapter 4 – White Supremacy, Segregation and Apartheid, pp. 74-104

Week 4: February 3-5
Beinart, Chapter 7 – Economy and Society in the 1960s and 1970s, pp. 170-200
Worden, Chapter 5 – The Heyday of Apartheid, pp. 105-134

Week 5: February 10-12
Beinart, Chapter 9 – Black Political Struggles and the Reform Era of P.W. Botha, 1973-1984, pp.228-253
Worden, Chapter 6 – The Decline and Fall of Apartheid, pp. 134-159

Week 6: February 17-19 **Paper 1 due on Feb. 17th**

Week 7: February 24-26
Beinart, Chapter 7 – The ‘New South Africa’, pp. 160-166

Week 8: March 3-5 SPRING BREAK – Read Burger’s Daughter
Week 9: March 10-12

Week 10: March 14-16
Jones and Stokke, “Democratising Development: The Politics of Socio-Economic Rights”, pp. 1-34 (WebCT)

Week 11: March 24-26
Harvey, “Managing the Poor by Remote Control”, pp. 120-128 (WebCT)

Week 12: March 31, April 2 ***Paper 2 due on March 31
Mbali, “TAC in the History of Patient-Driven AIDS Activism: The Case for Historicizing South Africa’s New Social Movements”, pp. 129-149 (WebCT)
Ashforth, “Introduction”, pp. 1-19

Week 13: April 7-9
Ashforth, “Democratic Statecraft in a World of Witches”, pp. 243-278

Week 14: April 14-16

Week 15: April 21-23
Gorden, “We Must Have the Women!”: Refusals to Institutionalized Agency”
The Final Essay should be understood as a process that will continue throughout the Semester. The essay itself is the final step in that process. Specifically:

1. At the beginning of the Semester seminar participants will identify a specific organization or individual for intensive study. The starting point for that selection is the attached list, drawn from major events and turning points in recent South African history. You may propose to focus on an organization or individual not on that list.

2. Seminar participants should begin immediately to identify sources on, read about, and collect materials relevant to the organization or individual they are studying. Those sources may be books, magazines, newspapers, novels, interviews, biographies, academic analyses, and the like, in print or electronic form. Note that while information gathered from relevant web sites will be essential for this effort, it will not be sufficient, since some important documents and substantial analyses may be found only on paper. Your bibliographic survey will thus need to include attention to print as well as electronic sources. (Keep in mind that libraries generally have more limited hours than the internet.) Since all sources reflect, more or less visibly, the values, assumptions, concerns, and analytic perspective of their authors and since those perspectives may not be clear in a particular reading, studying the history and politics of an individual, organization, or event requires consulting multiple sources. Most effective is working with sources whose orientations diverge. Each source can help to identify the biases, limitations, and errors of the others. Relying on a single source for major information is insufficient. Accordingly, the sources selected should include different perspectives on and conclusions about the individual or organization studied.

For each article, book, chapter, or other source that you identify, you should keep careful records of the complete citation and notes about both what that source provides and the utility for your work. An annotated list of what you regard as the five most important articles, chapters, or books that you have found for the transition domain you are studying (you will of course find many more than five) is to be attached to your Final Essay.

3. A Final Essay on the organization or individual you are studying and its/her/his role in the contemporary South African transitions is due at the final class meeting, Thursday, April 23.
a. Whether broadly or more narrowly focused, the Final Essay should indicate clearly (1) the organization or individual you have been studying, with a brief historical and contextual overview; (2) the current situation and activities of the individuals or organization you have been studying; and (3) the role, general strategy, and importance of that individual or organization, particularly in relation to the transition to majority rule or democratic principles. Put simply, you should be asking: What has been the role of the individual/organization in the transition from the apartheid to the post-apartheid era, either broadly in the achievement of majority rule or in a particular contested transition, say, education, or housing, or gender equity? Who has been identified as the major opponents to be confronted? What have been the major strategy and tactics employed? What, in your view, explains the apparent effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the individual or organization you have been studying?

b. While your essay reflects your own thinking, it draws on sources you have consulted throughout the Semester. Those sources must be clearly and fully identified. In addition to the list of sources you have used, the Final Essay is to be accompanied by an annotated list of what you regard as the five most important articles, chapters, or books you have found for the organization or individual you are studying. The note for each entry in that list should indicate briefly (1) the major topic(s) covered and (2) your assessment of the utility of the source. Generally, this list should reflect the different types of sources you have found useful. This list should include web sites only if you have found them to be unusual and independent sources of information (most often web sites, like libraries, are the location of information rather than the author or primary source of that information).

Your Final Essay should be concise and focused: 5-7 pages (approximately 2,000 words), plus references and the attachments listed above.

c. The evaluation of your Critical Essay will consider both the substantive — (1) overview of the organization studied; (2) systematic and critical analysis of the organization's role in post-apartheid transitions; (3) relevant empirical evidence to support the analysis — and the methodological — (5) clarity and conciseness in the presentation; (6) comparative and critical use of appropriate sources — dimensions of your paper

Organizations and Individuals Active in Contemporary South Africa

As noted above, this list is intended as a starting point for the selection of an organization or individual for focused attention this Quarter. It is drawn from
the Treason and Rivonia Trials, the organizations active since World War II, the parties that have contested South Africa’s majority rule elections, and petitioners to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. There are of course many other possibilities for this assignment. You may propose an alternative organization or individual, to study this Semester.

Afrikaner Broederbond
Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB)
Neville Alexander
Ray Alexander
Anglo American Corporation
Kader Asmal
Azanian Peoples Organisation (Azapo)
Black Sash
Allen Boesak
Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi
Cheryl Carolus
Congress of South African Students (COSAS)
Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)
F.W. de Klerk
Democratic Party
Federal Party
Ruth First
Bram Fischer
Gert Jakes Gerwel
Frene Ginwala
Bantu Holomisa
Inkatha Freedom Party
Pallo Jordan
Ronnie Kasrils
Moses Kotane
Mosiua Patrick Lekota
Patricia de Lille
Mac Maharaj
Winnie Madikizela Mandela
Govan Mbeki
Thabo Mbeki
Es’kia Mphahlele
Kgalema Motlanthe
National Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU)
National Party/New National Party
National Union of Mineworkers
Beyers Naudé
Lilian Ngoyi
Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka
Blade Nzimande
Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC)
Naledi Pandor
Cyril Ramaphosa
Mamphela Ramphele
Richard Rive
Joe Slovo
Albertina Sisulu
South African Communist Party (SACP)
South African Council of Churches
South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU)
South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO)
South African Students’ Organisation (SASO)
Helen Suzman
Oliver Tambo
Eugene Terre’Blanche
Desmond Tutu
Unity Movement
Vryheidsfront (Freedom Front)
Helen Zille
Jacob Zuma
Nkosazana Zuma