

**Ec 82: Political Economy of Africa**  
**Midterm Exam**

Prof O'Connell

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**Instructions:** The exam consists of question 1 plus any 3 questions chosen from section 2. All essays have equal weight. A good essay is analytically clear and draws on empirical evidence and/or country examples where relevant.

**Part 1: Write a short essay.**

1. African countries tend to be fairly high on the scale of 'urban primacy' – meaning that the single largest city in the country accounts for a very large proportion of the country's total urban population (by comparison, the USA is low on this scale, with many large and medium-sized cities). Draw on Herbst and Bates to discuss the sources and implications of this pattern in SSA.

**Part 2: Choose any 3 short essays from this section.**

2. Human resources, geography, and governance: choose one of the three categories, and discuss what the global evidence since 1960 identifies as potentially important growth determinants within your chosen category. Looking at these determinants, was SSA simply fated to grow slowly over the 1960-2000 period? Is it similarly fated now? Explain.
3. Oil prospecting is very active these days, and a number of oil-importing African countries (e.g., Ghana, Senegal, Uganda) expect to become substantial net oil exporters within 5 years. Drawing on the global evidence, what advice would you give to maximize the development impact of these resource discoveries?
4. How, and to what extent, do formal and informal insurance arrangements help rural households in Africa cope with risks to income? Be specific and explain.
5. In his famous dual-economy model, W. Arthur Lewis views the traditional agricultural sector as harboring a surplus of labor that can become a source of industrialization. Yet when Lewis advised the government of Ghana (then the Gold Coast) in 1953, he argued that it was premature to transfer resources out of agriculture, and that the government should instead focus on raising agricultural productivity. Was Lewis repudiating his own model? Explain.
6. A number of African countries inherited monopoly export marketing boards from the late colonial period, and others set up these institutions early in the post-independence period. Most of these marketing boards were eliminated, however, or subjected to private sector competition, by the mid-1990s. Why? Discuss the costs and benefits of eliminating these institutions, from the perspective of the agricultural sector.