

Ec 82
Political Economy of Africa
Swarthmore College

MIDTERM EXAM

Prof S. O'Connell

Spring 2008

Instructions:

Please write your name on the outside of your bluebook(s), and not on the inside. Answer all 4 essays, in any order. You have 12 minutes per essay, so keep your answers short. Use the concepts we have developed, and illustrate with concrete examples. Choose a point of view if you wish, or respond in a more balanced way – but either way, be selective, because these are very short essays.

1. Early in the post-independence period, African heads of state agreed (in the Organization of African Unity) to treat existing borders as inviolable. What is the significance of this for subsequent economic policy, according to Herbst?
2. According to Ndulu and O'Connell, the empirical growth literature has emphasized geography and governance in explaining Africa's overall growth shortfall relative to other developing regions. If this approach has merit, it should also shed light on the comparative performance of individual countries. Does Botswana fit in? Explain briefly.
3. Why is the distinction between idiosyncratic and systemic risk important in understanding rural livelihoods in Africa? Give an example of each. Identify one important way rural households manage risk: which type of risk does this mechanism mainly address, and what are its limitations?
4. Bates advances 'ideology' and 'interests' as two leading explanations for the presence or absence of highly distortionary control regimes in post-independence Africa. Looking at Ghana, what were key features of controls before the mid-1980s, and what role do you give to these two explanations?