

SOUTH AFRICA: CONTESTED TRANSITIONS

Critical Essay: The Process

The organizing theme of this course is **contested transitions**. While it is common for commentators to characterize the current period in South Africa as a transition from apartheid to reconstruction and development, it is clear that under that umbrella there are many transitions, all linked, but each with its own characteristics, form, and trajectory. All are contested.

To help organize our work we will deal with transitions in the constitutional and legal framework of South Africa, in education, and in other domains. While these transition domains are connected and overlapping, they are not identical. Activists, interests, and alliances differ from one domain to another. Those who support more governmental decentralization in one arena (the legal-institutional domain), for example, may also fear the entrenchment of all-white schools and thus favor greater national control over school resources and decision making in another arena (the education domain).

As a seminar, we are working to develop a fuller understanding of the transitional situation in South Africa. To enable seminar participants to concentrate attention on a manageable part of that process, each student will focus on a particular organization or individual throughout the Quarter. Thus, each seminar participant will have a special area of concern that is individualized and at the same time integrated into the course. To reinforce our collective effort, seminar participants will be responsible for sharing their observations and analyses, using class discussions, the course web site and wiki, and other strategies for that. The individual study of a particular organization or individual will culminate in a Critical Essay, due at the final class meeting.

The Critical Essay should be understood as a **process** that will continue throughout the Quarter. The essay itself is the final step in that process. Specifically:

1. At the beginning of the Quarter 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. (Note that since we shall all study them, some individuals—for example, Nelson Mandela—and organizations—for example, the African National Congress—are not included in that list.)

You may propose to focus on an organization or individual not on that list. To permit us to explore developments over time, to examine the roots and contexts for current events, and to wrestle with changing perspectives, the selected organization or individual should have (a) been active during the apartheid era (and perhaps earlier) and the present, (b) manifested a clear position on the content and process of the transition to majority rule, and (c) been sufficiently visible to assure that adequate sources will be available. Since it has now been more two decades since the transition to majority rule, another possibility is (d) post-apartheid organizations that focus on what they regard as transition failures, for example in health, housing, and education. We will review the proposed topical focuses early in the Quarter.

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, most often 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 Critical Essay.**

3. **Each week (beginning the third week of the Quarter) all seminar participants are to add information on the organization or individual they are studying to their own project page on the course wiki (reached through the course web site: history48q.stanford.edu → Student Notebooks).**

It is useful to think of those wiki pages as electronic research notebooks to be maintained throughout the seminar. That strategy for recording observations, reflections, analytic approaches, puzzles, projections, inferences, conclusions, and speculations is intended to emphasize (a) research as a process of identifying, specifying, and clarifying important questions, and more generally, (b) research as an on-going process rather than intermittent and disconnected creative insights and applied energy. Locating the research notebooks on the course web site will enable seminar participants to review, comment on, and contribute to each other's work. Hence, it will be important for all seminar participants to make notebook entries regularly. Clearly, this is not an assignment that can be completed satisfactorily the day before it is due.

Those entries can be information (for example, the origins and history of an organization) or observations and reflections drawn from readings and seminar discussions.

Each entry into the electronic research notebooks—rather like adding something new to a scrapbook or a journal—should be accompanied by brief comments on (a) the source of the information and (b) what you have learned from it.

4. To develop skill at using that means of communicating with other seminar participants, you are encouraged to use the wiki notebooks to review and respond to the information and comments posted by others. **Twice during the quarter (once by the end of Week 6 (16 February); once by the end of Week 9 (9 March), comment on another student's work to date.**

While it is helpful to point out omissions and errors, your major concern should be to contribute to the development of a colleague's analysis. For example, you might suggest connections with other students' work, or with topics or themes discussed in class. You might identify a relevant publication or web site and explain why you deem it useful. You might suggest an alternative perspective on the individual/organization being studied or a new path of exploration. Think of the sort of comment you would find helpful and then do that for another class member. **A copy of at least one response of that sort is to be attached to your Critical Essay.**

5. **A Critical Essay on the organization or individual you are studying and its/her/his role in the contemporary South African transitions is due 12 noon, Tuesday 13 March.** The notebook/scrapbook in your individual wiki is your collection of information on the activities and significance of at least one individual or organization active in contemporary South Africa. The Critical Essay is a brief analysis based on that collection.

- a. Whether broadly or more narrowly focused, the Critical 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 in contemporary social transformation.** 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 Quarter. Those sources must be clearly and fully identified. In addition to the list of sources you have used, the Critical 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).
- c. The Critical Essay is also to be accompanied by a copy of at least one response or comment you have added to the notebook of another seminar member. (That should have occurred during the quarter, not at the end of the course.)
- d. Your information collection (on your wiki page) will be reviewed online. Your Critical Essay should be concise and focused: 5-7 pages (approximately 2,000 words), plus references and the attachments listed above.
- e. 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—(4) comparative and critical use of appropriate sources; (5) clarity and conciseness in the presentation—dimensions of your paper.

Approached imaginatively, the Critical Essay process should be informative, helpful to others in the seminar, and fun to do.

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. This list does not include organizations and individuals we shall study (for example, Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress). There are of course many other possibilities for this assignment. You may propose an alternative organization or individual, to study this Quarter. To permit us to explore developments over time, to examine the roots and contexts for current events, and to wrestle with changing perspectives, the selected organization or individual should have (a) been active during the apartheid era (and perhaps earlier) and the present, (b) manifested a clear position on the content and process of the transition to majority rule, and (c) been sufficiently visible to assure that adequate sources will be available. Alternatively, select (d) a post-apartheid organization that focuses on transition failures.

Abahlali baseMjondolo (Durban Shack Dwellers' Movement)	Thabo Mbeki
Afrikaner Broederbond	Thandi Modise
Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB)	Es'kia Mphahlele
Ray Alexander	Kgalema Motlanthe
Anglo American Corporation	National Health and Allied Workers Union
Kader Asmal	National Party/New National Party
Azanian Peoples Organisation (Azapo)	National Union of Mineworkers
Black Sash	Beyers Naudé
Allen Boesak	Lilian Ngoyi
Mangosuthu Gatscha Buthelezi	Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka
Cheryl Carolus	Blade Nzimande
Congress of South African Students (COSAS)	Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC)
Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)	Naledi Pandor
F.W. de Klerk	Cyril Ramaphosa
Democratic Left Front	Mamphela Ramphela
Democratic Alliance	Richard Rive
Economic Freedom Fighters	Albie Sachs
Equal Education	Joe Slovo
Ruth First	Albertina Sisulu
Bram Fischer	South African Communist Party (SACP)
Gert Jakes Gerwel	South African Council of Churches
Frene Ginwala	South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU)
Bantu Holomisa	South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO)
Inkatha Freedom Party	South African Students' Organisation (SASO)
Pallo Jordan	Helen Suzman
Ronnie Kasrils	Oliver Tambo
Mosiua Patrick Lekota	Eugene Terre'Blanche
Patricia de Lille	Treatment Action Campaign
Mac Maharaj	Desmond Tutu
Winnie Madikizela Mandela	Unity Movement
Mmusi Maimane	Vryheidsfront (Freedom Front)
Julius Malema	Helen Zille
Trevor Manuel	Jacob Zuma
Govan Mbeki	Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma