Governance through Debt

HIST 67300
The University of Chicago—Winter 2020
Thursday 12:30-3:20 PM
Harper Memorial Library, 135

Professor Destin Jenkins
Office Hours: Tuesday 3-5 PM
Harper East Tower, #687

Email: destin@uchicago.edu

This course explores how government debt, whether that repudiated during Reconstruction, used to finance municipal infrastructure, or issued by the World Bank to stimulate development across the globe, shaped matters of governance, sovereignty, and inequality. Readings consist of some theory, a handful of primary sources, and mostly secondary readings that cut across chronological, geographical, and political boundaries.

Readings


The readings listed above are on reserve at Regenstein Library and can be purchased at Seminary Co-op. Items marked with an asterisk (*) have been scanned and posted on our Canvas site under “Files.” In some cases readings are available as articles or e-books through the University library website.
Course Requirements

50%: Participation

Students are expected to attend all sessions. Unexcused absences and tardiness will greatly deflate your grade. You are expected to actively participate in class discussions. In addition, on the first day we meet, each student will choose one week in which to give a 10-15 minute oral report on the selected readings for the course. The report should include:

1) An overview of the general introduction of the book (the purpose of study, arguments, and stakes of the analysis);
2) A generous critique of and engagement with the major arguments;
3) Commentary on sources and methodological approaches; and
4) Assessment of the significance of the conclusions reached.

50%: Annotated Syllabus

For the final assignment you will complete an annotated syllabus on the topic of government/public debt (at any scale, in any region, place, or time period). The final assignment is due on Friday, March 20th by 5PM via. email. No late assignments will be accepted without a doctor’s note.

Schedule

I. January 9. Overview

II. January 16. What is Debt?


b) Sandy Brian Hager, Public Debt, Inequality, and Power (2016). [accessible through eBooks (Project Muse or JSTOR)]

III. January 23. Development

a) Sarah L. Quinn, American Bonds: How Credit Markets Shaped a Nation.

IV. January 30. War


V. February 6. Empire


VI. February 13. Sovereignty, part 1


VII. February 20. Debt Crises


VIII. **February 27. Austerity**

a) Laura Bear, *Navigating Austerity: Currents of Debt Along a South Asian River.*


IX. **March 5. Sovereignty, part 2**


b) Thomas Sankara, “A United Front Against Debt,” speech before the Organization of African Unity (1987).*

c) House of Representatives, *Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs, Subcommittee on International Development,* “Rescheduling South Africa’s Debt,” 100th Congress, 1st session (August 1, 1989).*

**March 12—College Reading Period**

**Friday, March 20th, 2020**

☑️ Final Assignment Due at 5pm—No Extensions!

**Resources and Policies**

Accessibility: *If you need any special accommodations or academic adjustments, please provide your professor with a copy of your Accommodation Determination Letter (provided to you by the Student Disability Services office) as soon as possible so that you may discuss with them how your accommodations may be implemented in this course.*

http://disabilities.uchicago.edu/

The Writing Program: [https://writing-program.uchicago.edu/](https://writing-program.uchicago.edu/)

UChicago Academic Integrity: [https://college.uchicago.edu/advising/academic-integrity-student-conduct](https://college.uchicago.edu/advising/academic-integrity-student-conduct)

Plagiarism: *You are encouraged to consult with one another on the choice of paper topics, and you may also share library resources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as someone else, but you should ensure that the written paper you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and reflects your own approach to the topic.*

Technology: You are allowed to use computers, tablets, and the like. This policy is subject to change if I find students abusing the privilege.