

COURSE CODE: GNS 202

COURSE TITLE: Elements of Politics and Government

NUMBER OF UNITS: 1 Unit

COURSE DURATION: One Semester

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Man as a political animal; theories of state. The evolution of the modern State. Varieties of political system and institutions. Ideologies of political Liberalism, Conservatism, Socialism, Pan Africanism etc. Colonialism and the evolution of the Nigerian Politics, Structure, and problems of the contemporary international political system. Politics in Africa. Nigeria in World politics.

For participation in the examination, students must fulfil the 75% class attendance.

CAT I- 20%

CAT II- 10%

Exam- 70%

GNS 202: ELEMENTS OF POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT (1 Units)

INTRODUCTION

This course focuses on the following areas of politics and government: examination of man in a political society; the meaning and nature of politics; the idea, nature, origin and the role of the state; political ideologies and institutions; Meaning and nature of government; the various arms of government and types of government; basic principles in government; constitution and constitutional development in Nigeria; Nigeria and the world. At the end of the class, students would have been groomed in understanding their political environment and making decisions that will benefit the society. In essence, without government, the society is in, hocus-pocus, higgery jiggery, pandemonium and chaos.

TOPIC 1

MEANING, NATURE AND SCOPE OF POLITICS

Man in a political society

The word “politics” is derived from the Greek word, *polis*, which means city-state. In his treatise on Human Associations, Aristotle (384 322 BC) stated that the most sovereign and inclusive association is the polis, as it is called, whose essence is the establishment of government, law-making, enforcement and eliciting obedience from the members of the society. Aristotle observed that Man is, by nature, a political animal. This means that politics come naturally to all human beings. The activities of politics can be seen in the day-to-day living of man and it encompasses all forms of human endeavor. Even as students, we often partake in politics without knowing, e.g. through gossip.

SOME DEFINITIONS OF POLITICS

1. Robert Dahl views politics as the interplay of contending actors in which one actor always attempts to gain a relative advantage over the other.
2. According to Heinz Eulau, politics is concerned with the conditions and consequences of human action.
3. Obafemi Awolowo defines politics as the science of the art of government
4. Harold D. Lasswell defines it as who gets what, when and how.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF POLITICS

The various views on the meaning of politics can be grouped as follows:

- Politics as the operation of state.
- Politics as the implementation and execution of public policy.
- Politics as the pursuit of public interest.
- Politics as the authoritative allocation of values

TOPIC II

POWER, AUTHORITY, LEGITIMACY, INFLUENCE

Power is the ability to control the sanction of other people. There are forms of power; physical, economic, social, political etc. It is the currency of world politics/international relations. It is measured by certain features which include: will, leadership traits, resources, etc

Authority is the right to exercise power. Unlike brigands, who do not rely on any to exercise power. There is traditional authority, charismatic and legal.

Legitimacy is the popular acceptance of an entity and body of persons as authority. It is either de jure or de facto. While the former is derived from the constitution, the latter is usually by force.

Influence is a way to make people or entity do what they never intend to do. This could be achieved by diplomacy, coercion, force, sanctions etc.

TOPIC III

THE MEANING AND NATURE OF GOVERNMENT

Some Conceptions of Government

- i Government is a form or method of ruling
- ii Government is the agency, through which the will of the state is realized
- iii. Government is a body of people or institutes that make and execute the laws of the state, make and implement policies, conduct its public affairs and maintain law and order thing its territory.
- iv. Government is the structure and system by which decision and rules are determined and enforced for all members of the society.

ORGANS OF GOVERNMENT

The three organs of government are:

1. Legislative
2. Executive
3. Judiciary

The Legislative: This is the arm of government whose primary function is to make laws.

Types of Legislative

A legislative can either be unicameral (Single chamber or House), like Greece, Yugoslavia Bulgaria or Bicameral (two chambers or House), like Nigeria, USA, Britain etc . For instance in Nigeria the two chambers are the House of Senate and the House of Representatives..

The Executive: The Executive arm of government has the power to carry out government decisions and laws.

Composition of the Executive

The executive includes politicians elected or nominated to the executive arm of government. This includes the president and his ministers in the presidential system of government and the prime minister and his cabinet as in the parliamentary system of government.

Judiciary: The judiciary of any country is that organ of the government which interprets the constitution and laws of the land. This arm of government is made of legal experts divided into members of the bench and bar.

Characteristics of Judiciary

These include the following: Professionalism, Neutrality, Permanent Existent, Arbitration, etc.

TOPIC IV

CONSTITUTION AND CONSTITUTIONALISM

A constitution is a body of rules and regulations which show the structure of government and at the same time defining the power of the government as well as describing the right and duties of citizens.

Sources of constitution are: Charter, Statues, Customs and Judicial decisions

Factors to be considered when drawing up a constitution include: Culture of the people, type of government, ethnic group, history of the people, geographical location

and the size of the country, available material & human resources, etc. A constitution could be Written, Unwritten Rigid or Flexible.

Constitutional history of Nigeria:

The following is the outline of major constitutional development in Nigeria: The Nigerian Council (1914), The Clifford Constitution (1922), Sir Arthur Richard Constitution (1946), The Macpherson Constitution (1951), The Lyttelton Constitution (1954), The London Constitutional Conference (1957), The Independence Constitution (1960), The Republican Constitution (1963), The Constitution of the Second Republic of Nigeria (1979) The 1989 Constitution and The 1999 Constitution.

TOPIC V

THE STATE, NATION, NATIONALISM AND NATION-STATE

THE IDEA OF A STATE

The concept of State is very vital as a political concept. Scholars have attempted to define the State in different ways.

SOME DEFINITIONS OF STATE

1. Harold Laski, in his definition, posits that the state is the supreme coercive power in any given society which is used to promote in that society, the interest of those who possess its instruments of production.

2. To Aristotle, the state can be described as the most supreme and inclusive association whose purpose is attainment of the good life.

3. Appadorai regards the state as a legal entity established for the purpose of regulating human conduct

From the above definitions, a state can be rightly described as an apparatus set up by a community of persons existing under sovereign territory for the ultimate purpose of regulation of conduct and development of that society.

ORIGIN

According to Appadorai, the origin of the state cannot be traced to a particular time or cause, but the state originated as a result of various factors operating over time. Such factors include kinship, religion, war and political consciousness. The state thus evolved from early times to the present day based on the people's acceptance of its role in society.

Theories of the State:

Several theories exist as to the origin of the state: some basic theories of the state include: The organic theory, The Evolutionary theory, The divine right theory, The social contract theory, The patriarchal theory, The matriarchal theory, The force theory.

Functions of the State:

Collectivized; Welfare; Totalitarian, etc.

TOPIC VI

POLITICAL PARTIES AND PRESSURE GROUPS

The aim of every political party is to win election and present its candidate to contend for any available political post in an election with the aim of winning. Pressure groups on the other hand aims to fight for the welfare of its members so as to enjoy welfare packages befitting of international best practices.

TOPIC VII

POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

Political ideologies are views which express the ideas, beliefs and preferences of people on the roles of government and attempt to create a followership for those people based on their various perceptions and orientations. Some of these political ideologies are: Communalism, Capitalism, Conservatism, Pan-Africanism, Socialism, Communism, Colonialism, Fascism, Totalitarianism, Liberalism, Democracy, etc

TYPES OF GOVERNMENT

Federal System

A federal system of government is one in which power is distributed between one level of government and another. For instance, in Nigeria, power is shared among federal, state and local governments.

Reasons for the adoption of federal constitutions by countries are as follow: Geographical proximity, fear of domination of the minority by the majority, desire for local autonomy, largeness of a country for a unitary system, etc.

Unitary Government

In a unitary system, the central government is supreme over other levels of government in the country. It means any state or local government exists at the pleasure of the central government and they perform such functions allocated to them by the centre. Unitary government is possible in a homogeneous society where few ethnic groups, common fronts and loyalty exists .e.g. Gambia Sierra Leone, Britain, Ghana & France.

Confederalism

This is the association of countries for a particular purpose or some purposes. In a confederalism state, the centre is weak and the component units are strong. The central government depends on the sovereign state for her existence. Reason for confederation includes the following: Economic cooperation, Socio-cultural reasons, Defense against any external aggression, etc. International organizations that are confederation in structure are: UNO, OAU, ECOWAS, League of Nations and OPEC

Presidential System

In a presidential system of government, the president is the head of state and head of government. He is voted into power through direct election as we have in Nigeria, or through an indirect election, e.g. USA (the president is voted into power through an indirect election i.e. Electoral College of the Congress). One fundamental feature of a presidential system of government is the principle of separation of power and check and balances.

Cabinet/Parliamentary System

In a cabinet or parliamentary system of government, the executive is directly responsible to the parliament. Also, there is a ceremonial head of state and head government called Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is the leader of the majority in the house.

Republic

It is a state that is completely governed by elected representatives. The head of state is a president. He is elected for a fixed term like the other representatives.

TOPIC VIII

SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNMENT

1. THE RULE OF LAW

The rule of law as explained by A.V Dicey means “the superiority of the ordinary law as administered by the ordinary court/courts of the land over any legislature”. It simply denotes that everybody must obey the law. The three basic principles underlining the idea of the rule of law are:

- i. Equality before the law
- ii. Supremacy of the regular law
- iii. Right too personal liberty

RELEVANCES OF THE RULE OF LAW

- It helps to maintain an orderly society by ensuring that the constitution, rules and regulations are maintained.
- Rule of law ensures equity and justice in the society by seeing to it that all are equal before the common law of the land.
- Rule of law ensures that arbitrary rule is not tolerated.

HOW TO ENSURE THE EXISTENCE OF THE RULE OF LAW IN A COUNTRY

The following factors must exist in a country in order to ensure the existence of the rule of law: Order of mandamus, Order of prohibition, *Habbeas Corpus*, Order of Certiorari, Independence of the Judiciary, Appointment of incorruptible judges, Entrenchment of fundamental human rights in the constitution, Provision of legal aids by government to those who cannot pay.

2. FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT

Fundamental human rights of a citizen in any country are those rights that the country has defined and is ready to protect. They are rights that are basic and essential for human existence. In Nigeria 1999 constitution the fundamental rights were described as follows: Right to life, Right to dignity of human person, Right to personal liberty, Right to fair hearing, Right to private and family life, Right to Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion, Right to Freedom of Expression and the Press, Right to Peaceful Assembly and Association, Right to Freedom of Movement, Right to Freedom from Discrimination, Compulsory Acquisition of Properties. The above stated rights of citizens can be safeguarded or restricted.

3. SEPARATION OF POWER

The principle of Separation of Power was propounded by two French philosophers namely Jean Bodin and Montesque. The idea of the principle is that the three organs of

government must operate independent of one another. The recent modification to the idea is called 'checks and balances'.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

This is the process by which the citizens involve themselves in activities affecting the process of public decision-making and decision-taking in their country.

TOPIC IX: NIGERIA AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

No nation is self-sufficient, thus countries depend on one another for survival. The interdependence in the areas of political, economic and social organizations that exist among nations has been made possible by industrial revolutions, international division of labour and the emergence of international trade. This interdependence has led to the formation of various world bodies of which Nigeria is a member. Among these bodies are UNO, ECOWAS, OPEC, OAU, Commonwealth of Nations etc.

OTHER TOPICS:

X. CITIZENSHIP: RIGHTS, DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS

Who is a citizen of a state? What are the characteristics and how can one acquire citizenship of a state, rights and obligations? It should be noted, that citizenship can also be deprived.

XI. THE MILITARY IN NIGERIAN POLITICS

The Military are primarily established to guide against external aggression. However, in Africa and other developing countries, what role have they played and why do they still pose a threat to Nigeria's nascent democracy? What must we do to avert their return or military imbroglio? What is diarchy?

XII. PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The management of the public and its machinery and institutions is important to the success of any administration or regime. Why is Nigeria's public administrative situation, this way and how has it fared? Public Policies, Policies and Models or Theories of Public Policy.

XIII. ELECTIONEERING PROCESSES

Elections are supposed to be when baton is exchanged or retained. It is a period where people vote for their preferred choice in any democratic dispensation and it is a method of hearing the people. However, in Africa and Nigeria, the case of election has been taken with fear, trepidation and apprehension. This has been the usual atmosphere of any election in the country. How do we make it work, how do we encourage participation and discourage apathy? How has previous electoral bodies handled the process in Nigeria?

XIV. THE CONCEPT OF COLONIALISM AND IMPERIALISM

One of the concepts affecting the new state or post-colonial state is the effect of colonialism and imperialism (neo-imperialism). But after many years of colonialism why do Africa still complain. Why have we not moved on but hinged our protracted problem of underdevelopment on these two twin factor?

XV. GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: ISSUES

Nigeria should be a better place especially with its human and capital resources. Despite these resources, it remains one of the poorest in the world. What could be the reason for this state of wanton poverty that pervades the land? Is it caused by bad governance or leadership or leadership process? These are what we intend to debate in the class.

XVI. TERRORISM AND COUNTER TERRORISM

If Nigeria wished for something now, it would be the end to terrorism. But who are terrorists, how did we arrive at ours, who are their sponsors, what are its effect on the country's image and socio-economic fabric? How can we counter it and what are the problems hindering this?

XVII. NATION BUILDING

The country as it is today is divided on ethnic and religious lines. These division were not too obvious in the colonial era as the nationalists fought together to attain independence. Since independence, each region, group and religion have been suspicious of one another. In that wise, pessimist are even foreseeing another war. However, this assertion can only be thwarted by nation building. What then is nation building and how can it be achieved?

PS: It should be noted that at the end of the Course, students will be able to understand some of the rudiments of politics and governance. It will also nurture them to become conscious of a Nigerian identity and nationhood. They will also be able to make analytical decisions and policies, as it concerns them or their immediate society.

Further Readings

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