The Institute for African Development (IAD) at Cornell University hosts a weekly seminar series under the general topic Issues in African Development, with a special topic selected for each semester. The series has become a key introductory course on African development at Cornell and is widely acclaimed as an excellent introduction to the challenges of development on the continent. In Spring 2018 we will consider how new development models might help to transform African economies in ways that will support inclusive growth on the continent.

**Issues in African Development Spring 2018 Seminar Series**  
*African Economies, Development Models, and Structural Transformation*

According to the African Development Bank (AfDB) Outlook Report 2016, Africa’s recent growth has been strong and higher-than-average globally, with growth holding firm amidst global headwinds and regional shock. Remarkably, Africa is the world’s second-fastest growing economy (after East Asia). Yet challenges to Africa’s development remain daunting and persistent, with a low per capita GDP and rapid population growth fueling continually higher numbers of people in poverty.

To overcome these challenges and achieve its potential for growth and development, Africa is in need of a full transformation of the existing colonial-legacy structures of society. Governance must be transformed from the centralized colonial legacy to a more participatory and decentralized system; constitutions must be transformed to support democracy; transportation and production systems must be transformed to support African economies.

The seminar series will seek to explore models of development and policies that can effectively achieve these transformations. The existing challenges require strong policy action to promote faster and more inclusive and sustainable growth. Africa will also need to deepen structural and regulatory reforms in order to address obstacles to the much needed structural transformation of African economies and societies. This must be coupled with investments in energy, infrastructure, education, and social sectors. The AfDB argues that, with the right policies, Africa possesses significant potential for a democratic dividend, spurred by the continent’s young population.

Some of the challenges to achieving the needed transformation include the following:

a) **low economic growth rate:** Sub-Saharan Africa’s GDP per capita (at constant 2005 prices) was $1,036.10 in 2014. At the 1.4 percent growth rate estimated for 2015, it would take Africa 50 years to double GDP per capita;

b) **stalled industrial development:** only one in five workers has a job in the wage economy. Historically, the only way to generate such jobs on a significant scale in developing countries has been by means of export-oriented manufacturing. But Africa has made little headway in growing export-oriented industries in the past four decades.

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c) **rapid population growth:** Although the poverty rate in Africa has dropped in recent years, rapid population growth means that the number of people affected by poverty continues to rise.

d) **urbanization:** About 400 million Africans lived in cities in 2010, and 60 percent of those people lived in slums with no access to basic services. By 2050 that number is expected to grow to 1.26 billion. By 2035 half of all Africans will probably live in cities.

e) **Corruption remains endemic** to the African state. It is probably one of the biggest threats to peace, development, and stability in Africa today and casts an ominous shadow over the future political, economic, and social progress of the continent;

f) **challenges of climate change:** Sub Saharan Africa suffers from serious environmental problems, including deforestation, soil erosion, desertification, and degradation. Over-exploitation of natural resources has led to widespread deforestation and soil degradation. Some argue that there is a direct link between poverty and environmental degradation.

** Recent policy debates suggest that industrialization might not be the appropriate model for development in Africa. We will also consider this question in our series. **

We hope to discuss the following topics in this series:

- The role of foreign investment in African development;
- Growth, inequality, and poverty;
- Capital flows to and from Africa;
- Regional integration and development;
- Large-scale land acquisitions and food security in Africa;
- Climate change and its impact on African development;
- Education and development;
- Growth, poverty alleviation, and natural resources;
- Financing the construction of Africa’s infrastructure;
- The challenges of meeting Africa’s energy needs;
- Industrialization as a model of development revisited;
- Corruption and its impact on development;
- Corruption and the phenomenon of state capture;
- Commodities and fiscal responsibility;
- Responding to corruption;
- The impact of regional, international, and multilateral treaties and initiatives in Africa;
- Demographic dividend and African Development;
- Climate change and poverty alleviation;
- Inclusive growth and access to sustainable economic and social opportunities;
- Spatial inequality and the colonial period.

IAD hopes that this theme will allow participants to discuss the relevant issues while considering practices that will lead to a reduction in poverty and improved livelihoods through a full transformation of the existing structures of African economies and society.