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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. Our special topic for Fall 2017 is China–Africa engagement.

Issues in African Development Fall 2017 Seminar Series

China and Africa: Political, Cultural, and Economic Engagement

Although China–Africa engagement is not new, the engagement has increased remarkably in recent years, as highlighted by the phenomenal growth in trade and investment between China and Africa. Trade volumes between the two rose significantly, from US\$10 billion in 2000 to more than US\$198 billion in 2012. In 1996, China displaced the U.S. as Africa’s largest trading partner.

China’s impact on African economies has been diverse, depending in part on the sectoral composition of each country’s production. Overall, China’s increased engagement on the continent has generated important gains for African economies and presents a significant opportunity for Africa’s growth and integration into the global economy.

In terms of recent history, China’s trade and investment with Africa date back several decades, with most of the early investments made in railway construction (Tazara railway) and other infrastructure projects at the start of the post-colonial era. The scope and pace of China’s investment flows and engagement with Africa today is unprecedented. There are also growing cultural and educational ties.

China’s business investments reach into a range of sectors including energy, mining, and agriculture. In the education sector, China admitted 15 thousand African students to its universities in 2009 alone. According to *University World News* (June 22, 2017), China has so far established 46 Confucius Institutes across more than 30 countries on the African continent, highlighting the remarkable and visible parameters of the internationalization of higher education in Africa.

China’s fast-growing economic ties with Africa have spurred considerable attention and debate, especially in Western countries. While the expansion of trade and investment between Africa and China has been generally welcomed, there is concern about how China’s growing presence might negatively affect African development. These concerns range from debt sustainability to labor practices, governance and human rights issues, and environmental impact.

The fall seminar series is expected to provide a forum for discussion and interrogation of these and other issues related to China's rapidly growing engagement with Africa. The list of topics includes:

- The role of foreign investment in African development;
- The state of South/South cooperation: rhetoric or reality?
- Capital flows to and from Africa;
- China, land acquisitions, and contributions to food production in Africa;
- Trade enhancement and the Chinese market for African products;
- Africa/China partnership on climate change;
- China-Africa engagement in cultural and educational exchanges;
- Natural resource exploitation and China;
- Chinese FDI and the environment in Africa;
- China/Africa economic, social, and political relations;
- The oil sector and China;
- Constructing Africa, infrastructure deficit, and China;
- China's bilateral investment treaties with African states in comparative context;
- State power and agency in Sino-African relations;
- The Silk Road and its implications for African development;
- The nexus between economics and security in China and Africa Relations
- China, BRICS, and Africa
- China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative—what does it mean for Africa?

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 China's engagement with Africa.