**POL 3013: SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT**

**LECTURE 3: RHODES AND THE GLEN GREY ACT OF 1894**

**1.“He is a sort of Trinity”: The mineral revolution, global empire and colonial politics:** We spoke yesterday about the ambiguity of Rhodes’ legacy: on the one hand, his racial policies are questioned (by historians like Rotberg, say); on the other, his role in creating the South African mining industry is celebrated; but the two are, in reality, inseparable from each other. His commitment to the ruling-class values of the British Empire, embodied in the Rhodes scholarship and institutions like UCT, was linked to the political and economic activity. According to his sharpest critic, Olive Schreiner, Rhodes’s genius lay precisely in his breadth of vision (Plomer, *Cecil Rhodes*, pp. 119-120). The leading figure of the Cape liberalism he displaced, John X. Merriman, described Rhodes as “the only person I ever knew who combined patriotism & plunder . . . He is a sort of Trinity—Premier, Managing Director & Financier/Millionaire” (Rotberg, pp. 465-66). Rhodes became a member of parliament in 1880, before he was thirty, when he already had control of the world’s largest source of diamonds (discovered in the Cape in 1867). He added to that a large stake in gold after its discovery in the Transvaal. As prime minister of the Cape from 1890 to 1896 he used his political power to further his political and economic expansion into Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe).

**2. Transforming the Cape parliamentary system:**  Rotberg’s biography describes Rhodes’ role in creating a party system in the Cape parliament, providing large-scale funding to political allies, and paying bribes for parliamentary support (e.g., pp. 450-53).A primarily agricultural capitalism—as at the Cape before the mineral revolution—depends on relations of trust, especially among the wealthy landowners and merchants, based on personal integrity. These values were reflected in political life as well, with parliamentarians acting as independent individuals and openly stating their convictions. Hence the distaste of Merriman and his colleagues when Rhodes introduced secret caucusing to the Cape parliament around 1893. Merriman said that “he preferred to stand up and take his fighting in the House; the Premier preferred to take it in the lobby” (Rotberg, p. 451; cf. 453; also the question of Ahmed Effendi’s election to the Cape parliament, pp. 458-59). Rhodes was, in a sense, bringing the cape parliament into line with the reality of parliamentary government in Britain. Walter Bagehot in his *English Constitution* of 1867 describes cabinet government, within the party system, as creating “a committee which can dissolve the assembly which created it”. (Within US politics, Tammany Hall’s rule of New York city and state provides another parallel.)

**3. The Glen Grey Act as Rhodes’ “Native Bill for Africa”: I**n his second term as prime minister of the Cape, Rhodes took over the cabinet responsibility for “native policy”. He saw himself as “the father of the natives” (Rotberg, p. 457). But it is clear that the discovery of minerals and accompanying industrialization made vastly expanded access to African labour necessary for South African capitalism. In the diamond mines, Rhodes had 10,000 Africans “under his charge” (Rotberg, p. 456). The Glen Grey Act provided a model for a racial order to fit the needs of the mineral revolution. Rotberg describesf how the Act introduced individual tenure in a way which limited the growth of African agriculture, separated property ownership from political rights, and ensured that the landless majority would be forced into wage labour (pp. 470-71). This transition required the subjugation of remaining independent societies (in Pondoland) and various kinds of force, both private (corporal punishment by employers), public (against the Mpondo, Shona and Ndebele) and his own combination of the two (building his house where Lobengula’s kraal had stood, p. 465).