

American Political Science Association: Elections and Democracy Workshop in Ghana

DANIEL SMITH

For three weeks this summer, I coordinated a workshop on the broad topic of Elections and Democracy in Ghana with 2005 UF Political Science alumnus Kevin Fridy (University of Tampa), Beatrix Allah-Mensah (University of Ghana) and Ukoha Ukiwo (University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria). The workshop, which was underwritten by a generous grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and spearheaded by the American Political Science Foundation, brought together two-dozen African political scientists from across the continent and four American-based Ph.D. students. The workshop took place at the Institute for African Studies at the University of Ghana in Legon and was intended to increase research linkages between U.S.-based scholars and their African colleagues.

The workshop was quite intense. In addition to our informal discussions during meals and on our excursions, each workshop participant presented his or her ongoing research in the plenary sessions.

In the mornings, we broke into small groups to critically engage a large body of scholarly readings on political democratic development, elections, political parties, and campaigns. Participants also actively interacted with a number of guest speakers who were experts on Ghanaian politics and elections. During breaks, participants sought out new collaborative research efforts with one another.

As workshop co-leaders, we organized several site visits for the participants, including a trip to meet with the Deputy Commissioner of Ghana's National Electoral Commission and officials from the national headquarters of Ghana's two major political parties. We also took participants to visit Ghana's most prestigious think tank, the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), and had the opportunity to question representatives of the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers as well as the staff members

of the AfroBarometer survey. During the last week of the workshop, we headed to Parliament, meeting and with the Minority Leader for nearly two hours. Finally, we took weekend excursions to Kumasi, the heart of the Asante Kingdom, and to Elmina, where we toured a slave castle on the Atlantic coast. Participants also got to test their mettle by walking over a canopy bridge suspended 150 feet in the Kakum National Park rain forest.

In addition to getting critical feedback on their research projects during the workshop, each participant will have his or her research précis published in a forthcoming issue of the journal, *PS: Political Science and Politics*.

Daniel A. Smith is an associate professor in the Department of Political Science and affiliate faculty with the Center for African Studies. The workshop was made possible by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation through the American Political Science Foundation.

