African Cultural Studies, Ph.D.

The mission of the Department of African Cultural Studies is to provide research and teaching in the languages and expressive cultures of Africa and Africans around the world.

The department is the only one of its kind in the United States. For those learning to conduct research in African expressive cultures, it offers curricula leading to both the master of arts degree and the doctor of philosophy degree. For those learning to teach African languages, it offers a terminal master of arts degree with an emphasis on pedagogy. Its students come from all over the world, including many African countries.

Admissions

Prerequisites

Admission to the graduate program requires a bachelor’s degree with substantial coursework related to the expressive cultures of Africa. Admitted students with an insufficient background in African cultural studies may be asked to complete additional coursework beyond the regular degree requirements. Applicants should have a minimum 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 grading scale or equivalent academic performance on other scales. The department will consider special cases, however, for probationary admission. If you have questions about your eligibility, contact the chair of the Admissions committee, Dr. Katrina Daly Thompson, at katrina.daly.thompson@wisc.edu

Admission into the Ph.D. program requires a master of arts in a closely related field (with the thesis or other substantive piece of graduate-level writing submitted as a writing sample).

Application Requirements

All applicants to the program must apply online (https://grad.wisc.edu/apply) by 15 November. Please note, the $75 application fee is due at the time of application (an additional $6 will be charged to international students to cover processing). The department cannot review an applicant who has not met all Graduate School admissions requirements (https://grad.wisc.edu/admissions/requirements). Carefully review the instructions and other information the Graduate School provides; most of the admissions questions we receive relate to the Graduate School’s requirements and are answered in their documentation.

As part of the online application process, you will be asked supplemental questions regarding your language and teaching experience and expected to upload the information listed below:

- University Transcripts

You must upload transcripts or academic records from each institution attended. You may upload unofficial copies for department review. If you are offered admission to the program, the Graduate School will request that you provide official copies of transcripts or academic records from each institution you have attended. These must be issued directly by the institutions with all official seals, stamps, and signatures. International academic records must be in the original languages and records in languages other than English accompanied by an official English translation. An accepted student may not matriculate or enroll for courses until the Graduate School has documented official transcript(s) matching or updating the application transcript(s).

- TOEFL or IELTS Scores (international applicants)

If your undergraduate institution did not conduct courses in English, you must complete either the Test Of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System exam (IELTS). The online application allows you to self-report scores, but we cannot consider your application until the Graduate School receives your official score report directly from the examination organization. Students who do not meet Graduate School guidelines for English proficiency (https://grad.wisc.edu/admissions/requirements) may be considered for admission, but will be required to complete assigned English language courses during their first year of study.

- Purpose Statement

Your statement of purpose should make clear that you understand the kinds of courses we offer (http://african.wisc.edu/courses) and the research interests of our faculty and substantiate how your own interests intersect with our faculty expertise (http://african.wisc.edu/people/faculty). Give a detailed account of the reasons and circumstances that led to your decision to undertake graduate work in the Department of African Cultural Studies. Include references to your academic work, your short-term and long-term goals, your personal relationship to or interests in the fields we study, and your knowledge of any African languages. If your transcripts reflect any negative episodes in your academic career, e.g., a poor grade or a dropped course, you may explain them here.

If your primary interest is in our pedagogy track (http://african.wisc.edu/content/ma-pedagogy-track), please make that clear in your statement of purpose. Otherwise, we look for evidence of your developing research interests and how they relate to the research interests of our faculty. (Until further notice, applications are no longer being accepted for this track)

The department will make secondary use of your purpose statement to assess the style and substance of your writing. We recommend a length of 500-1000 words. The scope of your discussion and the level of detail that you choose to provide will be part of our assessment. You may wish to review resources such as the UW–Madison Writer’s Handbook and the extensive Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl) for writing guidance.

- CV or Résumé

Curriculum vitae or résumé listing language experience, awards, honors, or publications. For more information on CV or résumé writing, please consult these resources:

Writing the Curriculum Vitae (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/641/1) (Purdue Online Writing Lab) and Résumé Writing Tips (http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Resume.html) (UW–Madison’s Writing Center)

- Letters of Recommendation (3)

We require three letters of recommendation, submitted directly by the referees. You must submit your requests to all three of your references as part of the online application. Recommenders will receive a notice via email and will submit their letters accordingly. We do accept letters by post and email (see Application Contacts below). We do not accept letters...
sent by the candidate unless they are sealed and the seal is proofed in some form (e.g., with the letter writer’s signature over the seal).

Recommendation letters should discuss your overall scholarly ability. Please ask your referees to include specific examples of your academic achievements, your independent thinking, analytical and critical thinking skills; papers and presentations given in their courses; and your merits relative to other students. For international applicants, the letters should also address English proficiency. If recommenders submit their letters via the Graduate School’s online application system, they will be asked to provide class rank information; if they do not submit their letters through this system, they should include this information in the letter itself.

Strong letters of recommendation will provide the department with evidence that you will succeed in the study of African languages and expressive cultures at the graduate level. While we will accept letters from faculty in any discipline, we will give greater weight to letters from faculty whose scholarship is related to the fields we study.

All letters must be received by the 15 November deadline in order for us to consider your application.

AFTER THE APPLICATION
Following your application, the Graduate School will provide you with a link and a UW–Madison NetID and account. Use the information to track the progress of your application. Please keep in mind that materials sent by post may take some time to appear on this progress report.

GRADUATE SCHOOL ADMISSIONS
Graduate admissions is a two-step process between academic degree programs and the Graduate School. Applicants must meet requirements of both the program(s) and the Graduate School. Once you have researched the graduate program(s) you are interested in, apply online (https://grad.wisc.edu/admissions).

FUNDING
Resources to help you afford graduate study might include assistantships, fellowships, traineeships, and financial aid. Further funding information (https://grad.wisc.edu/funding) is available from the Graduate School. Be sure to check with your program for individual policies and processes related to funding.

PROGRAM RESOURCES
The department automatically considers all applicants for support through teaching assistantships and various UW–Madison fellowships. Eligibility varies by program. The process is very competitive, and we are unable to provide support for all students qualified to pursue degrees in our graduate program. However, the majority of our students do receive about five years of funding, mostly in the form of teaching assistantships. Our top domestic minority students are typically nominated for, and often receive, Advanced Opportunity Fellowships (https://grad.wisc.edu/diversity/oeid). All domestic students are encouraged to apply for Foreign Language Area Studies (https://flas.wisc.edu) (FLAS) fellowships. Many of our graduate students also pursue outside funding as their career progresses. Details are listed below.

TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS
The department regularly funds teaching assistantships for both our language and literature/culture courses. Opportunities and assignments vary by semester. All continuing graduate students in good academic standing must apply by 15 November to be considered for positions for the following academic year. All new applicants are automatically considered. Teaching assistants earn tuition remission, a stipend, and benefits.

Please consult our website (https://african.wisc.edu/programs/teaching-assistantships) for the most up-to-date information regarding teaching assistantships.

EBRAHIM HUSSEIN FELLOWSHIP
The Ebrahim Hussein Endowment for research in African literature was established in the College of Letters & Science in 2003 thanks to the generosity of Robert M. Philipson, alumnus of the College of Letters & Science (Ph.D. 1989). The College will award $7,500 each year to one or more full-time graduate students in L&S to carry out research on African literature in Africa and/or archives outside of the United States.

The research must lead to a Ph.D. dissertation, an M.A. thesis, or a publishable-quality paper. Doctoral students may receive up to $7,500 each; M.A.-level students may receive up to $3,750 each.

Applications are due in late November for award dispersal the following year.

The application must include the following materials:

- An application letter, describing the need for funding, the proposed research, and its role in the student’s career. (1–2 pages.)
- The student’s academic transcript.
- A 5-page research proposal.
- Two letters of recommendation, discussing the overall excellence of the student’s work, the nature of the student’s research, and the contribution that the work will make both to the student’s major discipline and to the humanities generally.
- Description of any other funding received or applied for.

Finalists from the application process may be interviewed by the fund committee before the final determination of the award.

Selection Criteria

- Excellence of research proposal. Proposals should include a research timeline, description of contacts overseas, if any, and a budget. Proposals giving attention to one or more African languages will receive priority.
- Demonstrated commitment to African literature.
- General academic record.
- Letters of recommendation.

OTHER FUNDING RESOURCES
The Graduate School provides additional information helpful to graduate students in need of funding.

Find information about:
Types of funding available (https://grad.wisc.edu/studentfunding/types)
How to search for funding (https://grad.wisc.edu/studentfunding/steps)
Funding for international students (https://iss.wisc.edu/students/new-students/funding-scholarships)

General funding resources on campus (https://grad.wisc.edu/studentfunding/resources)

- African Studies Graduate Student Summer Fieldwork Award (http://africa.wisc.edu/?page_id=12507)
- Dana-Allen Dissertation Fellowship (https://irh.wisc.edu/fellowships/dissertation)
- Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowships (https://flas.wisc.edu)
- Scott Kloeck-Jenson Fellowship (http://iris.wisc.edu/funding/students/skj)
- IRIS Graduate Student Summer Fieldwork Award (http://iris.wisc.edu/funding/students/summer-fieldwork-award)

External funding options (https://grad.wisc.edu/funding/fellowships) (near bottom of the page)

- American Association of University Women (http://www.aauw.org/what-we-do/educational-funding-and-awards)
- American Council of Learned Societies (http://www.acls.org/programs/comps)
- Gorgias Press (https://www.gorgiaspress.com/awards)
- Jacob K. Javits Fellowship Program (https://www2.ed.gov/programs/jacobjavits)
- Margaret McNamara Education Grants (http://www.mmeg.org/programs)
- Woodrow Wilson Dissertation Fellowship in Women’s Studies (http://woodrow.org/fellowships/womens-studies)

Research travel awards (https://grad.wisc.edu/studentfunding/grantscomp/research)

- American Council of Learned Societies (http://www.acls.org/programs/comps)
- Chateaubriand Fellowship (https://www.chateaubriand-fellowship.org)
- German Academic Exchange Service (https://www.daad.org/en/find-funding) (DAAD)
- Harvard Society of Fellows (https://socfell.fas.harvard.edu/about)
- Royal Historical Society (http://royalhistorsoc.org/grants/research-expenses/research-expenses-for-overseas-students-guidelines)
  - M (http://royalhistorsoc.org/grants/marshall-centenary-fellowships)

Conference presentation funds (https://grad.wisc.edu/studentfunding/grantscomp/conference)

#policiesandrequirementstext), in addition to the program requirements listed below.

## CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS

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<th>Minimum Credit Requirement</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tr>
<td>Half of degree coursework (26 credits out of 51 total credits) must be completed graduate-level coursework; courses with the Graduate Level Coursework attribute are identified and searchable in the university’s Course Guide (<a href="http://my.wisc.edu/CourseGuideRedirect/BrowseByTitle">http://my.wisc.edu/CourseGuideRedirect/BrowseByTitle</a>).</td>
<td>45 credits</td>
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<tr>
<th>Overall Graduate GPA Requirement</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<td>3.00 GPA required.</td>
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## REQUIREMENTS

### MINIMUM GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Review the Graduate School minimum academic progress and degree requirements (http://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/...
MAJOR-SPECIFIC POLICIES

GRADUATE PROGRAM HANDBOOK

A Graduate Program Handbook containing all of the program’s policies and requirements is forthcoming from the program.

PRIOR COURSEWORK

Graduate Work from Other Institutions
Up to 6 credits of prior coursework may be counted toward the Ph.D. with approval.

UW–Madison Undergraduate
No credits from a UW–Madison undergraduate degree are allowed to count toward the degree.

UW–Madison University Special
No credits from a UW–Madison University Special student career are allowed to count toward the degree.

PROBATION

A semester GPA below 3.0 will result in the student being placed on academic probation. If a semester GPA of 3.0 is not attained during the subsequent semester of full time enrollment (or 12 credits of enrollment if enrolled part-time) the student may be dismissed from the program or allowed to continue for one additional semester based on advisor appeal to the Graduate School.

ADVISOR / COMMITTEE

All students are required to find a dissertation advisor by the beginning of the third semester in the program. The dissertation committee must consist of at least four members representing more than one graduate program, three of whom must be UW–Madison graduate faculty or former UW–Madison graduate faculty and their envisioned career path. The statement should be approved by the advisor, then submitted by the advisor at a faculty meeting for feedback.

CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED

15 credits

TIME CONSTRAINTS

A student may not hold an assistantship for more than five years.

For students who earned an M.A. elsewhere, coursework should be completed in six semesters. By the beginning of the sixth semester, the candidate proceeds to the preliminary examination. A student who has not attempted the written preliminary exam by the beginning of the their seventh semester, or passed it by the end of the seventh semester, will leave the program with a terminal M.A. (provided they have at least thirty credits).

For students who earned an M.A. at UW–Madison, coursework should be completed in four semesters. By the beginning of the fourth semester, the candidate proceeds to the preliminary examination. A student who has not attempted the written preliminary exam by the beginning of their fifth semester, or passed it by the end of the fifth semester, will leave the program.

A candidate for a doctoral degree who fails to take the final oral examination and deposit the dissertation within five years after passing the preliminary examination may be required to take...
another preliminary examination and to be admitted to candidacy a second time.

OTHER
n/a

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

Take advantage of the Graduate School’s professional development resources ([https://grad.wisc.edu/pd](https://grad.wisc.edu/pd)) to build skills, thrive academically, and launch your career.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. (Content) Recognize canonical authors and texts, historical forms, genres, and structures, and recognize aesthetic and cultural concerns in Africa and its diasporas.

2. (Content) Develop in-depth knowledge in a sub-field of specialization within African cultural studies.

3. (Content) Demonstrate their understanding of major theories, approaches, concepts, and current and classical research findings in African and diaspora literary and cultural studies.

4. (Content) Develop a level of proficiency in the different “ways of knowing” Africa and the diaspora through language, literatures, and cultures.

5. (Content) Develop knowledge of a secondary field of research from outside the Department of African Cultural Studies.

6. (Research Skills) Understand their own learning processes and possess the capacity to intentionally seek, evaluate, and learn from information, and recognize and reduce bias in their thinking.

7. (Research Skills) Effectively retrieve and comprehend primary sources in English and African languages, and secondary sources from a range of disciplines.

8. (Research Skills) Gain firm knowledge of existing research in their area of specialization and its gaps.

9. (Research Skills) Read material (primary and secondary) relevant to African cultural studies in a non-African language other than English.

10. (Research Skills) Have an understanding of professional and ethical responsivity with regard to producing original research and working with human subjects.

11. (Communication Skills) Develop or improve speaking, listening, writing, reading skills in an African language, and integrate these skills to communicate effectively.

12. (Communication Skills) Communicate effectively through essays, oral presentations, and discussion, so they may share their knowledge, wisdom, and values with others across social and professional settings.

13. (Communication Skills) Show knowledge of conventional rhetorical strategies, and integrate research by other authors while distinguishing between their own ideas and those of others.

14. (Communication Skills) Write and speak across disciplinary boundaries with regard to existing research about Africa and the diaspora in the humanities and social sciences.

15. (Communication Skills) Demonstrate their ability to organize a book-length project into logical smaller components, so that it can be addressed in depth in a multi-chapter piece of writing.


17. (Analytical Skills) Discuss cultural texts from various theoretical and critical perspectives, formulate ideas and make connections between literary/cultural concepts and themes.

18. (Analytical Skills) Demonstrate command of the terminology and methodology of cultural studies, construct complex arguments, and use primary and secondary sources to support arguments.

19. (Analytical Skills) Articulate the place of their own research in relation to existing research on related topics.

PEOPLE

FACULTY

To view full faculty profiles, visit our website ([https://african.wisc.edu/people/faculty](https://african.wisc.edu/people/faculty)).

Matthew H. Brown: African screen media (particularly "Nollywood"), oral traditions, literature

Vlad Dima: French New Wave cinema, Francophone cinemas, film theory, television studies

Ainehi Edoro: Form, theory, and history of the African novel

Névine El Nossery: Francophone & Middle Eastern literature and culture, postcolonial studies

Samuel England: Classical Arabic poetry and prose, modern Arabic literature

Colleen Hamilton: Second language acquisition

Luis Madureira: Colonial and postcolonial studies, modernism, theater and performance

Mustafa Mustafa: Arabic

Tejumola Olaniyan: African, African American, and Caribbean literature and culture

Ronald Radano: Ethnomusicology, US Black music and its transnational circulation

Damon Sajnani: Africana cultural studies, social and political theory, HipHop studies

Katrina Daly Thompson: African discourse, linguistic ethnography, language pedagogy

EMERITUS FACULTY

Patrick Bennett
Dustin Cowell
Jo Ellen Fair
Magdalena Hauner
Linda Hunter
Edris Makward
Michael Schatzberg
Harold Scheub
Aliko Songolo
ACADEMIC STAFF
Bill Bach, Department Administrator
Toni Landis, Academic Advisor/Student Services Coordinator