African Languages and Literature, M.A.

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.

Pedagogy Track

The M.A. in African languages and literature with pedagogy track is designed to prepare future college-level instructors of African languages and directors of African language programs. This track is meant to prepare future professionals to think critically and knowledgeably about the teaching of African languages and to train and supervise teachers of African languages. It aims to address the goals identified above by allowing students to focus on teaching and interpreting research, and drawing on the strengths of our African languages coordinator to work closely with these students to prepare them for the language-teaching job market.

Master's Degrees

M.A., with available pedagogy track

Requirements

Minimum Degree Requirements and Satisfactory Progress

To make progress toward a graduate degree, students must meet the Graduate School Minimum Degree Requirements and Satisfactory Progress (http://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policiesandrequirementstext) in addition to the requirements of the program.

Minimum Graduate Degree Credit Requirement

30 credits

Minimum Graduate Residence Credit Requirement

24 credits

Minimum Graduate Coursework (50%) Requirement

Half of degree coursework (15 credits out of 30 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 (http://my.wisc.edu/CourseGuideRedirect/BrowseByTitle).

Prior Coursework Requirements: Graduate Work from Other Institutions

With program approval, students are allowed to count no more than 6 credits of graduate coursework from other institutions. Coursework earned five or more years prior to admission to a master’s degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

Prior Coursework Requirements: UW–Madison Undergraduate

With program approval, students are allowed to count no more than 7 credits of coursework numbered 300 or above from a UW–Madison undergraduate degree.

Prior Coursework Requirements: UW–Madison University Special

With program approval, students are allowed to count no more than 15 credits of coursework numbered 400 or above taken as a UW–Madison Special University students. Coursework earned five or more years prior to admission to a master’s degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

Credits per Term Allowed

15 credits

Program-Specific Courses Required

M.A.

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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFRICAN 402</td>
<td>Theory of African Literature</td>
<td>3-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFRICAN 501</td>
<td>Structure and Analysis of African Languages</td>
<td>3-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFRICAN 702</td>
<td>African Verbal Stylistics</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>One of the following:</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFRICAN 703</td>
<td>Topics in Teaching African Languages</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFRICAN 705</td>
<td>Teaching Portfolio</td>
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Total Credits 9-11

M.A. with Pedagogy Track

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<tr>
<td>ENGL 318</td>
<td>Second Language Acquisition</td>
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One graduate-level culture-focused course in the department with emphasis in final paper on culture in language pedagogy
A graduate-level linguistics-focused course in the department, chosen in consultation with the graduate advisor
Portfolio preparation course taken with the African languages coordinator

Overall Graduate GPA Requirement

3.00 GPA required.

Other Grade Requirements

Students must earn a B or above in all core curriculum coursework.
PROBATION POLICY
The status of a student can be one of three options:

1. Good standing (progressing according to standards; any funding guarantee remains in place).
2. Probation (not progressing according to standards but permitted to enroll; loss of funding guarantee; specific plan with dates and deadlines in place in regard to removal of probationary status).
3. Unsatisfactory progress (not progressing according to standards; not permitted to enroll, dismissal, leave of absence or change of advisor or program).

ADVISOR / COMMITTEE
All students are required to conduct a yearly progress report meeting with their advisor, scheduled by December 17 and completed by April 30. Failure to do so will result in a hold being placed on the student’s registration.

ASSESSMENTS AND EXAMINATIONS
M.A. thesis defense required.

TIME CONSTRAINTS
M.A.: The thesis, written in consultation with the major professor, must be completed no later than two semesters after thesis work begins.

M.A. with pedagogy track: master’s exam, supervised by the African languages coordinator, must be completed no later than one semester after completion of the portfolio preparation course.

Master’s degree students who have been absent for five or more consecutive years lose all credits that they have earned before their absence. Individual programs may count the coursework students completed prior to their absence for meeting program requirements; that coursework may not count toward Graduate School credit requirements.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS
M.A. students must complete two years study of African language. Students may petition for an exemption if they have received comparable African language training or have native fluency of an African language.

ADMISSIONS

Applicants should have a minimum undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 (out of a possible 4.0), though special cases may be considered for probationary admission. In addition to the online application, the department requires transcripts of all previous university studies, a statement of research interests showing how these relate to the department’s areas of expertise, and three letters of recommendation. Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores are needed for fellowship applicants, but are not otherwise required for admission. There is no application deadline, but it is recommended that materials be submitted as early as possible before the intended date of entry.

The deadline to apply and be considered for funding is November 15.

Admitted applicants who are judged by the department to have insufficient background in African cultural studies may be assigned coursework in addition to the regular required coursework.

Admission to the Ph.D program is determined after successful defense of the M.A. thesis or an M.A. waiver. For those completing an M.A. in the department, admission to the Ph.D. program is determined by the M.A. committee upon successful defense of the M.A. thesis, and with consideration of performance in M.A. course work.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

CONTENT
• Students will be able to identify canonical authors and texts, historical forms, genres, and structures, and recognize aesthetic and cultural concerns in Africa and its diasporas.
• Students will develop in-depth knowledge in a subfield of specialization within African cultural studies.
• Students will demonstrate their understanding of major theories, approaches, concepts, and current and classical research findings in African and diaspora literary and cultural studies.
• Students will develop a level of proficiency in the different ways of knowing Africa and the diaspora through language, literatures, and cultures.
• Students will understand the main trends in foreign language teaching, and the specific challenges involved in teaching African languages.

RESEARCH SKILLS
• Students will 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.
• Students will effectively retrieve and comprehend primary sources in English and African languages, and secondary sources from a range of disciplines.
• Students will gain firm knowledge of existing research in their area of specialization and its gaps.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS
• Students will develop or improve speaking, listening, writing, and reading skills in an African language, and integrate these skills to communicate effectively.
• Students will communicate effectively through essays, oral presentations, and discussion, so they may share their knowledge, wisdom, and values with others across social and professional settings.
• Students will show knowledge of conventional rhetorical strategies, and integrate research by other authors while distinguishing between their own ideas and those of others.
• Students will write and speak across disciplinary boundaries with regard to existing research about Africa and the diaspora in the humanities and social sciences.
• Students will demonstrate their ability to organize a large project into logical smaller components, so that it can be addressed in depth in a multi-chapter piece of writing.
• Students will be able to design and carry out a communicative lesson plan in an African language.

ANALYTIC SKILLS
• Students will discuss cultural texts from various theoretical and critical perspectives, formulate ideas, and make connections between literary/cultural concepts and themes.
• Students will demonstrate command of the terminology and methodology of cultural studies, construct complex arguments, and use primary and secondary sources to support arguments.
• Students will articulate the place of their own research in relation to existing research on related topics.
• Students will observe and evaluate the teaching practice of a foreign language instructor and provide constructive feedback.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT
• Students will recognize and apply principles of ethical and professional conduct in teaching, research, and writing.

PEOPLE

Professors Cowell (Arabic language, linguistics, literature, and culture), Fair (media studies, popular culture, conflict and post-conflict studies), Olaniyan (African and African diaspora literature, literary theory, popular culture), Radano (U.S. and global black music, African musical diaspora, cultural theory), Schatzberg (African popular culture, African soccer, African political thought), Songolo (African and Francophone literatures, African and Francophone cinema, literary theory); Associate Professors El-Nossery (North African Middle Eastern Literatures, women's writing, visual studies), Thompson (linguistic and literary ethnography, critical discourse analysis, less commonly taught language pedagogy); Assistant Professors Brown (African screen media, African literature, literary theory), England (Classical Arabic poetry and prose, Modern Arabic literature), Nimis (Francophone Africa, Lingala language and popular music, the Global South), Sajnani (Global HipHop studies, Africana critical theory, socio-political thought and social justice).

For more information about faculty research interests, see their website (https://african.wisc.edu/people).