



Institute of  
**African Studies**  
CARLETON UNIVERSITY

**Issue 1**

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## Welcome to the Institute of African Studies!

### Message from Blair Rutherford, Director

This is a great honour to write these few words in the inaugural newsletter of the Institute of African Studies at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. We established this Institute because of growing interest in Africa amongst students in our various courses on Africa in different departments, the long tradition of an Africa-focus at Carleton, and the recognition that the broad expertise on Africa found at our university combined with being in the capital of Canada makes Carleton a great location for providing a forum for those interested in Africa for historical, policy or scholarly reasons.

The Institute of African Studies offers interdisciplinary B.A. programs for students interested in learning more about the continent. From courses in African politics to African history, African literature to the anthropologies of Africa, transitional justice to the study of the African diaspora, international business to African cinema, international development to African drumming, littératures caribéenne et africaine to refugee studies, and many more, the programs offer students a breadth of different disciplinary knowledges concerning the continent. With the possibilities of doing their third year abroad at one of Carleton's partner universities in Africa and the prospects of doing an intensive summer school course in Africa, the Institute of African Studies strives to develop and support various means for students to

engage with African issues on campus, locally, nationally and internationally.

We have drawn upon a long and vibrant focus on Africa at Carleton University. Professor Emeritus Doug Anglin in Political Science was a trailblazer in the study of Africa in Canada and the first Vice-Chancellor of the University of Zambia. We still draw on his wisdom and insight into Africa as well as that of Professor Carl Widstrand, the founding director of the Nordic Africa Institute in Sweden. Professor Fraser Taylor in Geography & Environmental Sciences and Professor Joe Manyoni in Sociology & Anthropology, amongst many others, helped to give Carleton a reputation for the study of Africa, attracting numerous students, including a number of African graduate students to its various programs over the decades.

*(continued on page 2)*



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## Upcoming Events

**Africa Week and our Inaugural Conference**, October 19-24: With the help of Carleton International and other units on campus, Carleton is highlighting Africa this week culminating in a day and a half inaugural conference called "Africa: New Visions in a time of Global Crisis." A number of notable scholars, filmmakers, and authors will be there, including Professor Valentin Mudimbe, Gaston Kaboré, and Lawrence Hill.

Co-organized with the South African Diplomatic Academy via the South African High Commission to Canada, we are starting an **Africa Dialogue Series** which will promote the better understanding of current policy issues facing the African continent amongst university students and the wider public in the Ottawa-Gatineau region.

We have an ongoing **monthly brownbag series** in African Studies that brings faculty, graduate students, and other experts in the region to discuss ongoing research and policies concerning Africa.

# Sackey speaks on Africa's contribution to literature

Dr. Edward Sackey, a lecturer in the English Department of University of Legon, Ghana, begins his tenure as the visiting scholar for the year 2009/2010 at the Institute of African Studies. Sackey was chosen among three



candidates shortlisted for the position in Ghana and became the second visiting scholar from the country since Carleton University started the exchange program with some universities in Africa. Sackey was born and educated in Ghana. He holds a BA in Literature-in-English and an

MPhil in 20th Century British Literature and African Literature, both from the University of Ghana. He obtained a PhD in American and Caribbean Literatures and Literary Theory from Miami University, in the United States and teaches in his alma mater. His areas of interest are in Literary Theory, the Novel Form, African Literature and the Literatures of the African Diaspora.

During the academic year, Sackey will be teaching in both the English Department and the Institute of African Studies. He will also hold public lectures on African literature, but will spend most of his time conducting research, which will form the basis of his forthcoming book on Africa's contribution to the literary form. He says the research idea is an answer to the current debate among western scholars on the contribution of African writers to the novel form. *(continued on page 3)*

*(continued from page 1)* As different units on campus kept hiring professors working on Africa, a group of faculty members started to consolidate our efforts and began to work towards setting up this Institute. Sadly, one of the main proponents of establishing the Institute of African Studies, Professor Edward Osei Kwadwo Prempeh, is not here to see it come to fruition.

We have over forty Carleton professors cross-appointed to our Institute, making our university having one of the largest concentrations of Africanist scholars of any Canadian university. The Institute of African Studies aims to build upon this existing strength. It will also play to Carleton's "Ottawa advantage," as the city is home to a large number of Africa-focused governmental and non-governmental organizations, all of the African embassies and high commissions, and other universities with numerous scholars working on Africa. We aim to work with this diverse range of experts to put on public talks and conferences, think through policy and program issues, and to help elevate the scholarly discussion and public knowledge of Africa.

In this inaugural issue, we will introduce you to some of the people and activities involved in African Studies at Carleton. We are pleased to introduce you to Professor Ed Sackey, our Visiting Scholar from the University of Ghana. Professor Sackey is our fourth African Visiting Scholar, following Professors Amos Mhina and Sam Maghimbi from the University of Dar es Salaam, and Professor Abeeku Essuman-Johnson also from the University of Ghana. They have brought their great insight, rich experience, and vitality to our students and our colleagues on campus, helping to concretize Carleton's relationships with African institutions. We also will introduce you to two faculty members, something which we will do with

each biannual issue of the newsletter. Although the Institute of African Studies currently does not have a graduate program, Carleton has a number of students doing exciting graduate research on Africa in various other units. We are pleased to also introduce you to some of the currently enrolled or recently graduated graduate students and their work. These brief sketches will help indicate some of the important scholarly work on Africa being accomplished at Carleton.

**"The IAS aims to build upon Carleton's existing strength."**

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the immense work being done by numerous people to make the Institute flourish. Innumerable colleagues have been putting much, much time into our various activities while June Payne, our administrator, has been ensuring everything flows smoothly and actually gets done. A number of students have volunteered, bringing their energy and insight into our collective efforts. This is illustrated by this newsletter itself, where most of it has been done by two students in Carleton's School of Journalism and Communication, where thanks largely to the efforts by Professor Allan Thompson, there is a strong focus on Africa, particularly through the Rwanda Initiative. Many thanks to Ebere Ahanihu and Harmeet Singh, whose skills and hard-work have made this newsletter come together. This is but a small example of the convergence of energy and expertise which the Institute of African Studies seeks to channel in bringing the study of Africa to diverse publics at Carleton University, in Ottawa, and beyond.

# 'Ghana enriched my knowledge about Africa'

The African Studies program at Carleton University is the perfect program for me because my main interest lies in learning about African; the culture, people, and history. For some reason, Africa has always caught my attention. At the end of my studies, my goal is to work in the continent, whether it is through an international organization or with a governmental organization.

I developed interest in Africa when at High School, when I began to meet African students. Their culture and family life intrigued me. I loved their love for life. Their life's stories were so enchanting and different from those of Canadians. Meeting Africans, who have different cultures and traditions, was fun and

an eye-opening experience for me. Since then, I have been interested in learning more about this unique continent and its people.

The African Studies program helped me to develop a strong knowledge about the continent through the wide variety of courses offered. The good thing is that the program has a variety of courses from music, literature, politics, film, religion and history. As I am more interested in the humanitarian and development issues, I intend to take more of the history and political science courses.

The program also offers opportunities to study abroad at one of its three partner universities in Africa, as well as a placement course which

allows students to find jobs with international organizations, non-governmental organizations or governmental departments that work in African countries, and gain experience in the work field, while still obtaining a grade mark for doing so.



(continued from page 2) "There is a debate on-going, that the novel form, as an art, is alien to Africa," he says. "In the book, I am trying to say that the debate is not helpful, because there are recognised African novelists who are writing and will continue to write." The question, in his opinion, should be whether African novelists have contributed anything or nothing. "What we must be doing is to recognise African novels, read them and see what the writers have brought to the novel form."

In the views of Sackey, one has to go back in history to understand why this argument is being made. "When Chinua Achebe was at the University of Ibadan, he read Joyce Cary's 'Mister Johnson', Joseph Conrad's 'The Heart of Darkness' and Graham

Greene's 'The Heart of the Matter', all Western novelists who, in these novels, portrayed the African in bad light."

According to Sackey, readings these books, Chinua Achebe felt disturbed and decided that it was time the story of Africa was told from the inside, with the conviction that failing to do so, outsiders will continue to tell the story the way it suits their purpose. "That was how he started 'Things Fall Apart', which he conceived to reverse Western colonial perception of the African", says Sackey. "In literature," argues Sackey,

"there are two things: what is said and how it is said. In 'Things Fall Apart', it is not so much Achebe's art that interests people, but what Achebe is saying. The beauty of 'Things Fall Apart' is that it was written, not with literary devices

borrowed from the West, but with oral literary devices indigenous to Africa."

To those who wonder why this perception of Africa has persisted over time, Sackey cautions that "we must not think that, just because 'Things Fall Apart' is a reply to the colonial novel, the West is listening to us. There appears to be a fixed mentality about Africa.

"Can we deny the fact that, once upon a time, Africa was colonised? Can we honestly say that the beast, called colonialism, is dead and buried? When we talk about independence, there are people who laugh at us as Africans. Where is Chinua Achebe today? Where is Ngugi wa Thiong'o? They both live in the United States. As I speak to you there are more Ghanaian doctors practicing in New York than in the whole of Ghana."

—Written and photographed by Ebere Ahanihu

**The question should be whether African novelists have contributed anything or nothing.**



# Rediscovering Africa through film

Upon arriving at Carleton, Abou-bakar Sanogo, assistant professor of film studies, quickly became involved with the initiative to create and Institute of African Studies. "I came when it was already in the works! I only got off the boat last year!" he laughs.

But that didn't stop him from becoming an integral part of the Institute's development.

Sanogo has taught in the United States at Georgetown University, among others, and in Europe. Before coming to Carleton, he completed his research in Paris, on his thesis topic, the history of documentary in Africa. Originally from Burkina Faso, Sanogo has gained worldwide experience in the arts, which has helped make him a valuable asset to the IAS.

For him, it's all about bringing together academics and individuals

from all specialities and all African nations to contribute to the IAS. Screening African films and bringing African speakers for events will also be important for the Institute, he says.

Film, he says, will be an important part of the Institute for many reasons. A lot of intellectual and artistic production takes place in film these days, he says. Film is the art of all the arts, he says, and this helps integrate film studies into the other subjects included in the African Studies program. "There's art history in

film, there's music in film, there's narrative in film. So there are links we'd like to develop."

"There is a very vibrant film culture that has always existed in Africa and is increasingly expanding." Now, he says, we are also witnessing the strengthening of film industries in African countries that were not tradi-

tionally big film producers, like Nigeria. When he visited Burkina Faso recently, one of Sanogo's friends told him that he doesn't watch Hollywood anymore, but rather Nigerian films. "Africans are very interested in film and telling their stories through film." (continued on page 5).

**"There is a very vibrant film culture in Africa"**



*(continued from page 3)*

In May 2009, I volunteered to work in Ghana, Africa. I worked and lived in an orphanage in a town called Ofaakor, about an hour drive from the capital, Accra. On the weekends, the other volunteers and I visited historical sites in the country. Most memorable were the sites on slave trade at Cape Coast Castle and Elmina Castle, which opened my mind to the horrible experiences the people endured in the days of slave trade.

My trip to Ghana enriched my knowledge about Africa both inside and outside of classroom. It helped me to be more opinionated about the issues, especially on the myths circulating among some Westerners about the continent. Visiting Ghana

was also motivational and reassuring. I hope to visit many more African countries in the future, as each country has so many different things to offer.

I am currently working on finalizing a placement for the winter term through the placement course opportunity at Carleton, and hope it will lead to a career in the future. Meanwhile, I am working as the Canadian Representative for Volunteer Corps, a non-governmental organization that provides volunteer placement opportunities throughout Ghana for foreigners in humanitarian work in Africa. — Written by Megan Malone and edited by Ebere Ahanihu.

**For more information or to get involved, please contact Megan at [volunteercorpsgh.ca@gmail.com](mailto:volunteercorpsgh.ca@gmail.com).**



Megan and one of the orphans, Quarshie, at the Good Shepherd Orphanage in Ofaakor, Ghana. Photo courtesy of Megan Malone.

# Learning from Africans, teaching Canadians

In the mid-1970s, Chris Brown had never even heard of Botswana. Fresh out of his economics degree, he visited a CUSO recruiting office and asked if there was anything useful he could do. When the opportunity to work in Botswana came up, he took it and spent two years as a development planner in a Botswana village, where his interest in Africa began.

"It was, for me, revolutionary," he says. "It raised the most profound questions about development." Being in southern Africa during apartheid, many political refugees he met were around his own age. "While I was politically naïve, these people were political veterans. It was the most intellectually invigorating time of my life."

Now an associate professor of political science, Brown has been at Carleton for 23 years. He returned to Africa for his graduate research in the 1980s and also worked for Botswana's Ministry of Finance in the 1990s. Among many other projects over the years, Brown has also headed work in Ghana for the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

Brown was an important part of the

original group aiming to create the IAS. "We've got good colleagues with a shared passion," he says. His extensive experience at Carleton was instrumental in getting the Institute off the ground.

"You have to get the basics done first," he says. "The first thing you need is student engagement." After the end of apartheid, however, there was a decline of student interest in Africa, he says. But in the last 10 years, this has changed and there has been more interest than ever in a whole range of African issues. While enrolment in the African Studies courses has grown, he

would like to see enrolment in the program increase as well. For the future of the Institute, Brown says he would also like to see a graduate-level program emerge.

Exchange programs are also important for the Institute, he says. "What we need to do is create those institutional linkages." The IAS currently has exchange relationships with four universities in Africa. "We want to deepen those, broaden those and see more students moving back and forth."

Indeed, travelling to Africa has been a significant part of Brown's life. While

in Botswana, Brown also met his wife, while she worked as a teacher. All three of their children now have African middle names- Moagi, Tebogo and Kagiso. This is just one testament to the importance that Africa plays in his life. For Brown, Africa has been a place of work, but also a place of immense learning. "In Canada, I'm a teacher. But in Africa, I take the stance of a student." —Written by Harmeet Singh



**"You have to get the basics done first. The first thing you need is student engagement."**

*(continued from page 4)* More affordable and efficient technology, he says is also helping filmmakers in Africa pursue their ideas. "It's really changing the map of African filmmaking." There is, he says, an increasing "democratization" of film.

"If you look at the filmmakers in Africa, they're trying to rediscover Africa." In Canada, he says, information about Africa is usually through the media or other mediated forms. But with African film, those filmmakers can get

closer to the real concerns of Africans. "There are things that only film can do. You have statistics, you have figures, but the cinema approach is really very different."

—Written by Harmeet Singh

# Graduate Research

## Highlights from different faculties

### Erin Bell, first-year MA, History



Sarah Baartman (a Khoisan woman from contemporary South Africa who was brought to Europe and displayed in London and Paris in the early 19th Century, she was known as the Hottentot Venus). Her exhibition and the images and de-

My research is on the role that ethnographic exhibitions played in the creation of racial categories in the 19th Century. In particular, I am focusing on the life of Sarah Baartman's life really like? Secondly, this work will be situated in the broader context of nineteenth and twentieth century ethnological expositions of Africans. It will focus on representations of the colonized and how these representations both reinforced and challenged the colonial order.

### Andrena Pierre, second-year Ph.D. candidate, Psychology

My research interest focuses on the association between discrimination and health among members of stigmatized groups. More specifically, I am interested in the mechanisms by which discrimination and intergroup dissension affect the physical and mental health of Blacks. Currently, I am exploring the circumstances under which receiving social support from ingroup mem-

bers or outgroup members moderate the relations between discrimination experiences and anger (an externalizing emotion), as well as depressive symptoms (reflecting internalized emotion) among Blacks. I am also conducting a related study that examines psychological and physiological reactions when exposed to the unjust treatment of Blacks in Canada.

### Amy Dempsey, second-year MJ, Journalism

I recently finished a few weeks of field research in Ghana for my Master's Research Project, which is on child trafficking in the Lake Volta region. My project follows a group of Ghanaians who are trying to rid Lake Volta of the practice of child trafficking by educating fishermen and their families about the dangers (and legal implications) of the practice and, one by one, negotiating the release of children who have been sold as labourers.

I accompanied the Ghanaian workers on several rescues and lived in a shelter with 22 of the children they rescued for about a week.

—Photo: Amy conducting her research this summer in Ghana.





# Highlights from Africa Week

## October 19-24, 2009



The Institute of African Studies was proud to host Lawrence Hill (below), author of *The Book of Negroes*, Valentin Y. Mudimbe (centre in photo to the left), and renowned filmmaker Gaston Kabore (left in photo to the left and bottom) as part of Africa Week.



Students performed West African dance as part of the launch of Africa Week this October.



For more information:



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All this information and more can be found at our website ([carleton.ca/africanstudies](http://carleton.ca/africanstudies)) and is sent out along with information about other public events on Africa in the Ottawa-Gatineau region on our listserve (please send us an email at [African\\_studies@carleton.ca](mailto:African_studies@carleton.ca) to be listed on it).

**Special Thanks:**

Prof. Edward Sackey  
Prof. Aboubakar Sanogo  
Prof. Chris Brown  
Ms. Megan Malone  
Ms. Erin Bell  
Ms. Andrena Pierre  
Ms. Amy Dempsey