

PAS to host 25 fellows for Young African Leaders Initiative

PAS has been chosen to be a five-year host institution for President Barack Obama's Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), which aims to invest in the next generation of African leaders and strengthen partnerships between the United States and Africa.

Working with Northwestern's Farley Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, PAS will host 25 African fellows during summer 2014. Fellows will participate in a six-week program in

entrepreneurship and business that will offer in-classroom learning along with experiential learning at Chicago-area centers for entrepreneurship.

The US Department of State has supported YALI through a series of high-profile forums with youth leaders, including the President's Young African Leaders Forum (2010), the First Lady's Young African Women Leaders Forum (2011), Young African Leaders Innovation Summit and Mentoring Partnership

(2012), and more than 2,000 subsequent programs in sub-Saharan Africa.

The next phase of YALI will develop a prestigious network of leaders across critical sectors in Africa, cement ties to the United States, and offer follow-up leadership opportunities, with the goal of strengthening democratic institutions and spurring economic growth.

"Africa's future belongs to its young people... We need young Africans who are standing up and making things happen not only in their own countries but around the world."

President Barack Obama

Leading African writer Chris Abani joins English faculty

By Evan Maina Mwangi

The study of Africa at Northwestern University has received a major boost with the recruitment of one of today's most respected African writers, Chris Abani, to the English department faculty. Although other African literary heavyweights have taught at Northwestern—Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1971) and Dennis Brutus (1971–85), among others—this is the first time an African writer

will teach creative writing as a full-time faculty member. Abani is a novelist, theorist, essayist, and poet who also works across genres in film and drama.

The Nigerian author is now Board of Trustees Professor of English. One of Northwestern's most prestigious appointments, a Board of Trustees Professorship is

reserved for faculty "at the top of their game," Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences dean Sarah C. Mangelsdorf said at Abani's November 13 investiture ceremony.

Mediating between the foundational generation of African writers—such as fellow Nigerians Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka—and the emerging generation, Abani is among the most discussed African artists. His many honors include a Guggenheim fellowship (2009) and a PEN Beyond the Margins literary award (2008). Before coming to Northwestern, he taught literary criticism and creative writing at the University of California, Riverside.

Abani's arrival enhances the stature of the Program of African Studies as well as the University's ability to meet the needs of students of African literature and postcolonial theory. He makes Northwestern more attractive to students interested in cutting-edge scholarship on various African literatures. He joins faculty members Nasrin Qader, Rebecca Johnson, Brian Edwards, and Evan Mwangi, who teach the literatures of various regions of Africa as well as the Middle East.

continued on page 10

Inside

<i>PAS</i> stories	2
<i>ISITA</i> news	4
<i>Viewpoint</i>	6
<i>Community</i> news	9
<i>Events</i> calendar	11

Panofsky awardees did research in four countries

Graduate students who received Hans E. Panofsky Pre-dissertation Research Awards last summer explored a range of topics in South Africa, Ghana, Botswana, and the Democratic Republic of Congo last summer.

Priscilla Adipa conducted fieldwork at two Johannesburg theaters—the Market Theatre and Soweto Theatre—to examine how location shapes cultural production. Drawing from interviews with theater administrators, she found that the development of audiences is contingent on perceptions about a theater’s geographic setting as well as the degree to which it is embedded in a culturally rich environment.

Kofi Asante was in Ghana collecting archival data for his dissertation on African merchants of the Gold Coast from the mid-19th to mid-20th centuries and the coalitions they developed to resist colonial policy. His study challenges theories based on notions of “colonial legacy” and the imported nature of independent states. He argues that the strategies of resistance and cooperation that indigenous people adopted toward colonizers allowed them to influence the development and implementation of colonial government policies and, in so doing, shape the formation of the emergent state.

Sakhile Matlhare carried out fieldwork at two vocational schools in Maun in northern Botswana. She conducted participant observations and interviews to analyze how safari guides manage their positions as both knowledgeable leaders and accommodating servants. Her study shows how guides learn to represent themselves and other Batswana in sharing their country’s natural landscape with tourists. Her research examines the role of Botho, a Bantu principle, as both a cultural value and structuring tool for aligning the guides’ training and professional work. When professional rules and hospitality protocols fail, tour guides use Botho as a self-affirming and orienting vocabulary to guide their interactions with foreign guests.

Sally Nuamah conducted surveys, interviews, and classroom observations in Accra, Ghana, for her study of how education policies are shaping disadvantaged female students in the country. Her preliminary findings indicate that the success of female students is related not only to structural factors such as



Panofsky awardee Sally Nuamah (right) interviews a student at an Accra school.

access to resources (commonly cited by previous research) but also to internal factors—specifically, spirituality and discipline. Going beyond a narrow look at the barriers that girls face, her research looks at the conditions under which girls from disadvantaged backgrounds enter, stay in, and do well in school.

David Peyton traveled to the Democratic Republic of Congo to conduct interviews and collect official records to understand how conflict affects local politics and spatial development in cities. Departing from conventional wisdom that holds that warfare has a singular destructive effect, Peyton explores how protracted conflict in eastern Congo has quadrupled the population of the city of Goma, expanded its boundaries, and built its infrastructure over the past two decades. His research shows how conflict-driven urbanization results in large-scale informal settlements, wealthy enclaves inhabited by international aid workers, and increased political and economic competition among elites.

Nikki Yeboah conducted ethnographic research in Ghana with African American repatriate communities who migrated to the country in search of their roots. She also had access to data in the national archives and the personal archives of renowned Ghanaian playwright Efua T. Sutherland. She is now investigating discourses of timelessness that have long shaped African-descended people’s relationship to Western intellectualism.

Students sought for global health case competition

Northwestern students from across the University's undergraduate, graduate, and professional schools are being recruited to participate in the first annual Northwestern Global Health Case Competition February 14–15, 2014. The competition aims to provide the next generation of leaders unique training in confronting a real-world challenge.

At the event, teams of three to five undergraduate and graduate students from at least three different academic disciplines will be challenged to develop a multidisciplinary approach to a global health problem. Each team will present its solutions to a panel of judges. The winning team will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to Atlanta

over spring break to compete in the Emory Global Health Case Competition. The top two Northwestern teams will also receive cash prizes.

The competition at Northwestern is being cosponsored by PAS, the Office for International Program Development, the Center for Global Engagement, the Buffett Center for International and Comparative Studies, and the Center for Global Health.

Students may register individually or in teams at globalhealth.northwestern.edu/announcements/GHCaseCompetition2014.html. For more information, please contact nughcc@gmail.com.

Northwestern well represented at African Studies Association meeting

Several Northwestern scholars presented papers or participated in roundtables and panel discussions at the African Studies Association Meeting in Baltimore in November.

Faculty member and director of international studies **Galya Ruffer** presented her paper, "A View of Conflict and Displacement in Eastern Congo through a Genealogy of Rape."

The following graduate students presented papers:

Olateju Adesida (performance studies), "Yoruba Parties in Diaspora and the Performance of Emcee: The Case of Orijaogun."

Priscilla Adipa (sociology), "Cultural Spaces as Political Spaces: Place and the Politics of Cultural Production in Johannesburg."

Ariel Bookman (English), "A Good Thing Sells Itself: Branding and the Politics of Literary Culture in Kenya."

Elise Dufief (political science), "Politics and Governance Reconfigured: The Case of the European Union and Ethiopia."

Sally Nuamah (sociology), "Education as a Socializing Institution for Constructing Achievement-Oriented Identities for Female Students in Ghana."

Andrea Felber Seligman (history), "How to Encircle Value? Bracelets, Long-Distance Trade, and the Multiple Aspirations of Inland Ruvuma Societies of Southern Tanzania, c. 1500–1700 CE."

Nicholas Smith (history), "Red Sea 'Pirates': Illicit Mobility in the Colonial Era."

Rachel Taylor (history), "The Caravan as Mobile Technology: Nyamwezi Long-Distance Caravans in German East Africa."

Marlous van Waijenburg (history), "Endogenous Colonial Institutions: Lessons from Fiscal Capacity-Building in British and French Africa, 1880–1940."

Nikki Yeboah (performance studies), "The Sankofa Project: The Performative Practice of African Diasporan Repatriation to Africa."

Two graduate students also participated in panel discussions: **Elise Dufief**, "New Actors in Africa? China and Turkey"; and **Sally Nuamah**, "Politics, Knowledge Production, and Personhood in Education and Educational Media."

Additionally, **Esmeralda M. Kale** (Herskovits Library) participated in the roundtable "Telling Our Story, Part II: Cross-Dialogue for Strategies to Sustain Area Studies—Libraries, Archives, and Scholarship," and ISITA sponsored the roundtable "The Islamic Archive of Africa."

Nigerian Arabic manuscript expert visits



Amidu Olalekan Sanni (above, center), professor of Arabic and Middle Eastern studies at Lagos State University, visited the Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa in October. He examined the Herskovits Library's collection of Arabic manuscripts from West Africa, including Kano scholar Umar Falke's personal library comprising more than 3,000 handwritten manuscripts from the 19th and early 20th centuries. Scott Devine (above, left) and Tonia Graffakos (above, right) of the library's preservation department were eager to show Sanni the preservation and rehousing process under way for the Falke collection.

Sanni also met with Rebecca Sherekis, ISITA interim director; Charles Stewart, ISITA visiting scholar; and DePaul University faculty members Mark DeLancey (history of art and architecture) and Babacar Mbengue (Islamic world studies) to discuss a new manuscript project at Lagos State University and to explore possibilities to collaborate with ISITA.

An expert in the Arabic literary traditions of Nigeria, particularly among Yoruba-speaking populations, Sanni also writes and comments regularly on Islam in contemporary Nigeria. He has contributed his expertise to numerous preservation and digitization initiatives in Nigeria and beyond, including the University of Cape Town's Tombouctou Manuscripts Project.



Street scene in Timbuktu. Courtesy of Emilio Labrador on Flickr (CC-BY-NC-SA 2.0).

Handbook on Mali crisis published

"A Handbook on Mali's 2012–2013 Crisis," published as part of the ISITA Working Paper Series through Northwestern's Buffett Center for International and Comparative Studies, is now available for free download at www.bcics.northwestern.edu/documents/workingpapers/ISITA-13-001-Thurston-Lebovich.pdf.

Written by Northwestern alumnus Alexander Thurston and Columbia University PhD student Andrew Lebovich, the handbook provides resources—such as historical timelines, demographic information, glossaries, translated documents, maps, and a bibliography—that help contextualize Mali's intersecting crises in 2012–13, which included a rebellion by Tuareg separatists, a coup by junior officers, and the violence of Muslim militants. Interspersed throughout are historical narratives on past rebellions in Mali as well as information about contemporary Malian society and detailed analysis of the actors in recent events. Presenting Mali's past and present in their complexity, the handbook casts doubt on reductionist narratives about the conflict and provides the nuance necessary to understand the country and its problems.

Alexander Thurston received his PhD in religious studies from Northwestern in September and currently holds an international affairs fellowship at the Council on Foreign Relations. His research focuses on Muslim intellectuals in colonial and independent West Africa, with particular reference to Nigeria. His writing has appeared in *Islamic Africa*, *Foreign Policy*, *World Politics Review*, and his own website, Sahel Blog. Andrew Lebovich is a PhD student in African history at Columbia University. He recently completed a six-month consultancy with the Open Society Initiative for West Africa in Dakar, Senegal, which entailed field research in Mali and Niger. He has written extensively about political and security affairs in Mali.

Fulfulde poetry in translation published—and more forthcoming

Poetry from Mallam M. Bashir Abubakar's collection of Fulfulde poetry will appear in an anthology on Muslim responses to colonial rule in West Africa being edited by former ISITA director M. Sani Umar as part of the Ford Foundation's "Constituting Bodies of Islamic Knowledge" grant to ISITA.

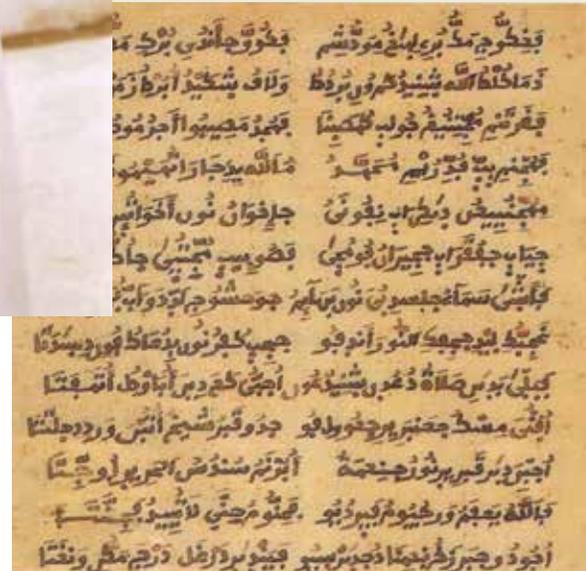
While visiting Northwestern in spring 2012 to collaborate with Umar, Abubakar enthralled audiences at PAS with his recitations of historical poetry and his own compositions. Abubakar has worked tirelessly to record and preserve the Fulfulde tradition of poetry before it disappears. His article "Muslim Responses to British Colonialism in Northern Nigeria as Expressed in Fulfulde Poems" was published last spring in *Islamic Africa* (4,1, spring 2013, pages 1–14) and was accompanied by three poems translated from Fulfulde into English. Umar hopes the publication of the three translated poems will whet appetites for more poetry from Abubakar's collection in the forthcoming anthology.

In addition to their value as examples of the Fulfulde tradition of verse, the poems provide historical details about the imposition of imperial rule in the region and insight into how African Muslims perceived and responded to the reality of rule by non-Muslims. "Keeri Dow Hawa" ("The Artificial Boundaries") by Malam Buba Jarida (see sidebar for excerpt) describes how the British and French partition of the Adamawa emirate (located in what is now eastern Nigeria and northern Cameroon) after World War I affected the daily lives and livelihoods of the residents. In "Garol Nasaara" ("The Coming of the White Man"), Malam Hamaseyo describes how the British came by the Benue River and "did not look for a host, it was at the riverside that they resided, not in town." The third poem, "Heeferbe Njabtii Ardungal" ("The Unbelievers Snatched the Leadership"), by Malam Muhammad Tukur bii Binta, reveals a Muslim community grappling with the religious implications of imperial rule: "They turned our religion to be their ownership, they hid it in pocket, when brought out it was not the same."

Although difficult to date with precision, the poems were composed in the early 20th century and recited orally for decades. In the 1980s and 1990s, Abubakar recorded several renowned reciters in Adamawa and transcribed the verses, resulting in a rich collection of poems on various topics.



Mallam Mohammed Bashir Abubakar (left) and a sample of a Fulfulde Ajami manuscript from his collection (below)



KEERI DOW HAWA (THE ARTIFICIAL BOUNDARIES)

I heard that my grandfather used to take
cattle to pasture in the vast land,
And return with cattle in the evening
and have supper.
The French fenced one part,
They claimed that where my grand-
father was living with his cattle
became a different country,
And the pastureland where he used to
take his cattle for pasture
also became a different country.
Imaginary divisions were created
in the air,
Just to create difficulties for the
cattle herders.

—Malam Buba Jarida

Combating vertical HIV transmission in Ethiopia

By Kate Klein

Many theories attempt to explain how Ethiopia has kept HIV prevalence low—1.4 percent of the population is infected—when other countries in sub-Saharan Africa have much higher rates.

Under the auspices of USAID, I spent two months traveling to five regions of Ethiopia interviewing health workers and HIV-positive pregnant and lactating women. I saw firsthand a key difference in Ethiopia from its neighbors: the government's efforts to address mother-to-child (vertical) HIV transmission, among other public health problems.

Vertical transmission is a fast avenue of transmission and hard to combat when only 10 percent of all pregnant women in Ethiopia give birth in a health center. About three years ago the Ethiopian Ministry of Health began to increase the number of health centers and rural health posts, to improve women's access to health centers, and to provide free childbirth services to women who use them. The thinking is "If you build it, they will come."

Even as progress is being made, the government's efforts face many deterrents. Many people still live as many as five hours by foot from a center. The roads are often hard to drive, and few people own cars. If there is an ambulance, it is often out of fuel or can take hours to arrive. Many women shun the option of a "human ambulance"—about six men carrying a stretcher—because they think it makes them appear weak.



Midwives at a health center in the Tigray Region

In addition to the transportation difficulties, there is a long tradition of using traditional birth attendants or family members to attend to births, and opposition to change comes from families, particularly mothers-in-law. Women relatives who themselves delivered at home see no problem with it. Moreover, there is a belief that a baby born at home truly belongs to the family. It is also customary in some parts of Ethiopia to bury the placenta behind the house, but the health centers do not allow parents to take the placenta home. And in this deeply religious country, mothers fear that a delivery



Community-based Mother Support Group in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region

in a health center will not be blessed; according to Ethiopian Orthodox Christian beliefs, the Virgin Mother of God watches over births only in homes.

There are still more reasons for preference for home delivery. The health centers—built out of concrete with no heaters—can get very cold, especially those in the highlands. Women also complain that there is no privacy or waiting room during labor. Most delivery rooms have only two delivery couches in an open area. Many Ethiopian women prefer to deliver in a squatting position, which is impossible at a health center. Furthermore, it is common for the family to prepare a coffee ceremony and some porridge both before and after the birth. In a health center no food or water is provided, and many times the family is not even allowed to be with the woman giving birth. Women are allowed to stay in the health center for only about 6 hours after giving birth, or 10 hours if there is a complication. When it is time to go home, they face the transportation problem again.

When HIV infection enters the equation, these issues grow in complexity. Pregnancy in HIV-positive women is common; according to the “Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey 2011,” around 71 percent of sexually active women use no contraception.

Still, the government and its allies are persisting in their efforts. The Ministry of Health, USAID, and numerous international and local NGOs are working to reach HIV-positive women early, since prompt treatment with antiretroviral therapy, skilled delivery, and treatment of the infant within the first 45 days of life can make a great difference in stopping vertical transmission. In recent years the Ministry of Health also has begun to organize volunteer groups called the Women’s Development Army; led by traditional birth attendants and other influential women, the groups



Health center–based Mother Support Group in the Oromiya Region

go into homes to educate residents on women’s health issues. Community and religious leaders are also recruited to reach out to women and their partners.

A recent development has been the creation of Mother Support Groups—an initiative of IntraHealth International—for HIV-positive women. These groups are each led by two HIV-positive “mentor mothers” who are responsible for making sure all the members stay with the program for 52 weeks, or long enough for them to give birth and for their newborn children to undergo HIV testing. The program addresses the psychological and social needs of the mothers and teaches them about living with HIV and preventing transmission to their children. The women look up to the mentor mothers as examples of how to live successfully with HIV. Almost 95 percent of mothers in the program deliver HIV-negative babies, and after completing the program they often become involved in other community associations to create awareness about HIV.

Though there is a lot to be done, the signs are positive. By working to ensure that HIV-positive pregnant women are not lost to follow-up, that healthcare workers have the capacity to treat them, and that adequate infrastructure is available, the Ministry of Health aims to change the behavior of pregnant women in Ethiopia. If the efforts are successful, the hope is that the prevalence of HIV will be reduced to that of many developed countries across the world.

Kate Klein is assistant director of the Program of African Studies and an MPH student in the Program in Public Health, Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern.

PAS support for graduate research

Hans E. Panofsky Predissertation Research Awards

Established to honor the late curator emeritus of the Herskovits Library, these awards support Northwestern graduate students planning to do pre-dissertation fieldwork or archival research in Africa. They are normally granted for work during the summer, but exceptions may be made. The application deadline is February 28, 2014.

Morris Goodman Awards

These awards, in honor of a linguistics professor emeritus, provide approximately \$2,000 for graduate students in their second year or later to study an African language not taught at Northwestern. Awards are granted on a rolling basis.

Graduate students study an African language in preparation for applying for national dissertation research grants and for field research. Many students find a qualified tutor in the Chicago area, where the grant normally supports 20 weeks of language study for 3 hours a week. Others have used the grant for

language study abroad at a Fulbright-Hays Language Group, at a Summer Cooperative African Language Institute, or even in Europe.

Applicants must submit letters that state their research plans, justify the need for language training, and describe how the training will be completed. If tutoring is proposed, information about the tutor is required, including a curriculum vitae and documentation of visa status for remuneration purposes. For other types of language study, students must provide such information as the strengths of the program, the syllabus, and evaluations.

Guyer-Virmani Awards

These awards honor former PAS director Jane Guyer and former associate director Akbar Virmani for their dedicated support of graduate students' intellectual development at PAS. They are awarded on a one-time basis to PAS graduate students in their third year or later, particularly students who have completed predissertation research and already received a Panofsky Award.

They allow students to travel to archives and participate in conferences. Funding is normally in the range of \$200–\$400. Awards are granted on a rolling basis.

Working Groups Awards

PAS will fund up to \$5,000 of a working group's budget. Working groups promote the building of communities of scholars who regularly come together around a common research interest in African studies. Groups vary in their approaches and goals; activities may include lecture series, discussions of empirical and theoretical works, collaborative research, production of a working paper series, and feedback on members' works in progress. Groups must involve at least one faculty member and must submit a final report.

Applications are due by 5 p.m. April 7, 2014. Please provide a two-page description of the purpose of the group, its plans, and a budget. If the budget is higher than \$5,000, indicate where additional funds are being sought.

John Hunwick Research Fund

Honoring professor emeritus John Hunwick (history and religious studies), whose work made significant contributions to the scholarship about Muslim societies in West Africa, this endowment supports research by Northwestern faculty and graduate students on Islam in Africa. Awards of varying amounts are given annually and may be used for the following purposes:

- To fund travel to an archive or library or to conduct field research.

TO APPLY

Complete application instructions for all awards can be found at www.northwestern.edu/african-studies/graduate-studies/awards.html. If you have questions, please call 847-491-7323 or email african-studies@northwestern.edu. All award decisions are made by the PAS Executive Committee. Attendance at Afrisem, the seminar for Africanist graduate students, counts favorably for applicants.

Community news

- To fund expenses associated with a graduate student's presenting a paper related to Islam and Africa at a conference. (Faculty members are not eligible, since they have access to departmental funds to attend conferences.)
- To organize the visit of a scholar of Islam and Africa to Northwestern to give a lecture, visit a class, or interact with students. (This is for faculty members and graduate students, but it has lower priority than the first two purposes.)

Applications must include a single-spaced two- to three-page proposal detailing research, conference participation, or plans for a visiting speaker, along with a detailed budget and a CV. Grants are awarded on a rolling basis.

PAS Travel Awards

Available to all PAS graduate students, these awards contribute \$250 toward the expenses of participating in an African-related conference, usually to present a paper. The application must be submitted before the conference, but funds may not be received until after, depending on the University pay cycle. Awards are granted on a rolling basis, and applicants may reapply each year.

Kofi Asante (sociology graduate student) has published "Nets and Nettles: Two Conceptions of Community for Two Ghanaian Migrant Businesses" (Working Paper No. 13-002, Buffett Center for International and Comparative Studies, www.bcics.northwestern.edu/documents/workingpapers/Buffett-13-002-Asante.pdf). He also gave the paper "But What Is the Money without the Necessary Honor?": How Ghanaian Merchants Shaped Colonial State Formation" at the October 12 University of North Carolina, Wilmington, African History Conference "Beyond the Boundaries: Toyin Falola and African Historiography"; and the paper "We Want Good Governors and Plenty of Good Roads': Ghanaian Merchants and Colonial State Formation" at the 38th annual meeting of the Social Science History Association in Chicago, November 21–24.

Margot Badran (2003–04 ISITA preceptor) has published "Political Islam and Gender" in the *Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2013, John Esposito and Emad Shahin, eds.); "Gendering the Secular and the Religious in Modern Egypt: Woman, Family, and Nation" in *Gendering the Divide: Religion, the Secular, and the Politics of Sexuality* (Columbia University Press, 2013, Linell Cady and Tracy Fessenden, eds.); and "Theorizing Oral History as Autobiography: A Look at the Narrative of a Woman Revolutionary in Egypt" in the *Journal of Women's History* 25(2) (2013).

Wendy Griswold (sociology), with Muhammed Bhadmus, coauthored the article "The Kano Durbar: Political Aesthetics in the Bowel of the Elephant," in the *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 1(1) (2013), 125–151.

Will Reno (PAS director; political science) presented a paper, "Somalia and the History of Fake State-Building," at Duke University November 7; gave a presentation of a research project, "End of Insurgency? The Changing Character of Civil War," at Pennsylvania State University in October; participated in a panel, "How Men Are Made: Cultures of Hypermasculinities," at the US Institute of Peace conference "Men, Peace, and Security: Agents of Change" in Washington, DC, October 28; and participated in a seminar for secondary school teachers, "African Conflicts and American Stakes," at the Newberry Library in Chicago October 31.

David Schoenbrun (history) has been invited to the "Conceptual Innovation and Major Transitions in Human Societies" workshop at the Santa Fe Institute in January 2014. He continues to work on a book manuscript, "Aftermaths: Transformative Legacies of Violence in East Africa, 900–1900."

Marlous van Waijenburg (history graduate student) received the Arthur Cole Prize for best article in the *Journal of Economic History* in 2012–2013 for "Structural Impediments to African Growth? New Evidence from Real Wages in British Africa, 1880–1965."

Abani, *continued from page 1*

Selected Abani novels—especially *Graceland*, *Becoming Abigail*, and *Song for Night*—have been taught in literature, political science, and anthropology classes at Northwestern. “We have read Abani and taught his writing,” English department chair Laurie Shannon remarked at Abani’s investiture. “Now we get to talk with him about it and so much else. . . . The transformational presence here of a writer with Chris’s global range of reference and artistic stature will hugely extend our ability to deliver post-colonial knowledge, art, and critique to 21st-century students.”

Abani previously taught as a writer in residence at Northwestern in fall 2009 and said he fell in love with the University because of the diligence of the students. He was invited by the Center for the Writing Arts, which has sponsored several African writers to teach for a term, including South African Zakes Mda, Zimbabwean Tsitsi Dangarembga, and Nigerian Sefi Atta.



Although Abani is a transnational writer respected across continents, he is unabashedly African. Born in 1966 in Afikpo (Ebonyi State) in eastern Nigeria to a Nigerian father and an English mother, he grew up against the background of the Biafra conflict of the late 1960s. The conflicts that have bedeviled his homeland have shaped his sensitivities, and he

is keenly aware of his heritage. Abani comes from a minority culture, the Egu, who are believed to be the original settlers of the Afikpo region. They may date back to BCE 5000–3000, although their culture and language have not yet been documented. They are known for their fearlessness and artistic prowess, which is captured in elegant handcraft. Abani’s writing captures the beauty and the memory of this culture.

Abani published his first novel, *Masters of the Board* (Enugu: Delta, 1985), at age 19. A thriller about a failed coup d’état, the book unfortunately was published after a real coup,

and a suspicious military government jailed the teenage novelist because of the novel’s supposedly subversive content. Abani’s most famous novel, *Graceland* (2005), paints scenes of abject poverty and violence in Africa and hit the literary scene with a bang. It is an experimental text about a boy who becomes an Elvis Presley impersonator in a Nigerian slum. Each chapter begins with recipes for Nigerian dishes. Abani’s other major novels include *The Virgin of Flames* (2007), set in Los Angeles, and his latest, *The Secret History of Las Vegas* (2013), a spy thriller that addresses the themes of identity in globalized urban spaces. In one of its most memorable sentences, the novel declares: “Las Vegas is an African city.” In addition to his novels, Abani has authored five books of poetry.

In winter quarter Abani will teach Studies in African Literature, focusing on texts that are rarely discussed even among critics of African literatures. Abani will deliver a talk at PAS during winter quarter; details will be announced on the PAS website in January.



Board of Trustee Professor medal recipients Chris Abani (center), Bryna Kra (third from left), and Kevin Boyle (second from right) with (left to right) Weinberg College dean Sarah Mangelsdorf, math department chair Jared Wunsch, English department chair Laurie Shannon, provost Daniel Linzer, and history department chair Peter Hayes

Events calendar

JANUARY

7 12:15–2 p.m.

EDGES Comparative Politics Workshop. “Colluding Nationalism’ versus ‘Conflictual Nationalism’: Gold Coast Merchants and the Making of the Colonial State, 1850–1950.” **Kofi Asante** (sociology).

8 noon

“The Universal Postal Union and the Challenges of Postal Regulation and Reform in Nigeria.” **Julius Bolade Anjorin** (political science, University of Lagos).

17 noon

“Is Prebendalism Now a Global Phenomenon? Reflections on the Republication of Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria.” **Richard Joseph** (political science). Buffett Center conference room, 1902 Sheridan Road, Evanston.

22 noon

“Strong Parties, Weak Parties: Explaining Regime Outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa.” **Rachel Riedl** (political science).

24 noon

Title of talk to be announced. **Daniel Stolz** (science in human culture). Buffett Center conference room, 1902 Sheridan Road, Evanston.

FEBRUARY

5 4:30 p.m.

One Book One Northwestern keynote presentation by **Roger Thurow**, author of *The Last Hunger Season: A Year in an African Farm Community on the Brink of Change*. Harris Hall 107, 1881 Sheridan Road, Evanston.

12 6 p.m.

Reading and talk by **Chris Abani** (English). See story on page 1. Harris Hall 108, 1881 Sheridan Road, Evanston.

14 through February 15 (all-day activities)

Northwestern Intramural Global Health Case Competition.

For more information, see page 3 and visit globalhealth.northwestern.edu/announcements.

19 noon

“Development without Democracy in Africa: Responding to the Revisionist Paradigm.” **Richard Joseph** (political science).

20 7 p.m.

Lawrence Frank Lecture at Northeastern Illinois University: “The Changing Character of Conflicts in Africa.” **Will Reno** (PAS and political science). Recital Hall, Salme Harju Steinberg Fine Arts Center, 5500 North St. Louis Avenue, Chicago.

28 noon

Title of talk to be announced. **Amanda Logan** (anthropology). Buffett Center conference room, 1902 Sheridan Road, Evanston.

MARCH

3 4 p.m.

“Who Are the Swing Voters in Kenya’s Multiethnic Democracy?” **Jeremy Horowitz** (political science, Dartmouth College).

5 noon

“Electoral Politics and Reconfigured Governance: Ethiopia and the European Union.” **Elise Dufief** (political science).

6 5–7 p.m.

“Governance and Development in Africa: New Perspectives from Economics and Political Science.” **Richard Joseph** (political science), **Celestin Monga** (World Bank), and **Roger Myerson** (economics, University of Chicago; 2007 Nobel laureate). Scott Hall 212, 601 University Place, Evanston.

7 noon

“The Price of Success: Purist Salafis in the Age of Decolonization.” **Henri Lauzière** (history).

Unless otherwise noted, all events take place at PAS, 620 Library Place, Evanston. Lunch is provided at events that start at noon. For more information, please visit the PAS website or call 847-491-7323.



Program of African Studies
Northwestern University
620 Library Place
Evanston, Illinois 60208-4110 USA

Will Reno, *Director*
Kate Klein, *Assistant Director*
Rebecca Sherekis, *ISITA Interim Director*
Kelly Coffey, *Program Assistant*
LaRay Denzer, *PAS News and Events Editor*
Phone 847-491-7323
Fax 847-491-3739

african-studies@northwestern.edu
www.northwestern.edu/african-studies

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Northwestern undergraduate and graduate students attended a November 3 lecture by Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (center, with arms crossed) during the Chicago Humanities Festival. At that event she received the Chicago Tribune Heartland Prize for her widely acclaimed 2013 novel *Americanah*. Adichie belongs to a new generation of African writers who are making diverse African narratives accessible to a wider audience. Her work transcends cultural boundaries, exploring diverse themes such as race, gender, class, political instability, and patriarchy. *Americanah* is Adichie's third novel. It delves into issues related to transnationalism, the sense of detachment that comes with migration, social relations in the United States, and even the politics of hair. With its multilayered view of the lived experiences of Africans—Nigerians in particular—Adichie's writing contributes to reconstructing literary representations of the continent.

—Priscilla Adipa

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