Proposal for the Creation of an Interdisciplinary Minor in African Studies

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The Interdisciplinary Minor in African Studies

African Studies is a broad-ranging field that is committed to an interdisciplinary approach to the study of African peoples and their complex histories, cultures and languages. Drawn the Schools of Social Science and Humanities, African Studies at Rice University has strengths in archaeological and anthropological research, historical studies, African religions and theology, African arts, global health technologies, as well as potential collaborative research in business. These foci provide a unique opportunity for students broadly interested in historical, cultural, African diaspora studies and contemporary issues and will attract students preparing for career fields related to their interest in Africa, including academia (potential applicants to graduate school, Fulbright, or other competitive scholarships), development, diplomacy, business and finance, governance, global health, law and others.

The African Studies Minor at Rice will benefit undergraduate students by providing a course of study to explore the richness and complexity of the continent and its place in issues of wider global concern and import. The interdisciplinary course will allow students to traverse departments and schools, creating links between diverse intellectual trajectories. Through study in the African Studies Minor, students can also begin to appreciate the relationship contemporary Africa has with the large African Diaspora. Finally, the Minor will help students to understand not only the place of Africa in global histories and networks, but the crucial role that it has played in them.

The time is right for an interdisciplinary Minor in African Studies, based on both student and faculty interest. Student interest in Africa has grown in recent years (with students independently creating a BA track in African Studies) through courses on the subject and overseas study in African countries (Mali, Lesotho, Tanzania, to name a just a few). With recent hires in History and Anthropology, key developments in Beyond Traditional Borders and Rice 360, there is now a critical mass of faculty that focuses on topics in African history, culture, language, and religion. Finally, while the Rice student body continues to diversify, there is a growing need to create interdisciplinary programs through which students can explore diverse histories and cultures.

Although the Minor in African Studies will provide a strong complement to any major at Rice, there are particular student constituencies that will be attracted to the program. For students in Social Sciences, Humanities, and Bioengineering departments that already teach courses on African subjects (History, Anthropology, Religious Studies, Bioengineering), the Minor will offer them a way to broaden their interests across disciplines. It should be emphasized that students involved in Rice 360° will find in the Minor a crucial course for contextualizing the historical and cultural dimensions of the health initiatives they develop. Thus, the Minor has the potential to draw together students from across the university, from Humanities and Social Sciences to Engineering and Business to students with interests in medicine and health policy.

There are many successful interdisciplinary Minor programs in African Studies at peer institutions, some offered alongside a Major in African Studies (University of Pennsylvania, University of Virginia, Northwestern University), and some where only a Minor is offered (Stanford University). In addition, some schools that do not offer African
studies as a discipline, have a council on African studies which coordinates research and yearly African seminars that also feature Rice faculty members as guest lecturers.

The Minor is easily sustainable, through the contributions of courses from the faculty listed below. Most of the faculty involved in the Minor are tenured, and those untenured faculty are in lines long associated with African Studies (de Luna, History; Fleisher, Anthropology). Thus, although a departure by one of the African Studies faculty would temporarily reduce the courses offered, they would likely be replaced by additional African Studies-focused faculty. Nonetheless, the Minor is sustainable even with the departure of one of the African Studies faculty members.

At present, we do not anticipate any problems with enrollment space in African Studies courses and therefore will not provide enrollment preferences to students in the Minor. Although most courses in the Minor are capped at between 20-25 students, there is ample space for student interest that will be generated by the development of the minor. This issue will be revisited once the Minor is launched.

**Minor in African Studies: Proposed Curriculum**

The degree requirements for the Minor in African Studies are as follows:

- Students must complete at least six courses (18 credit hours)
- Students must take at least one core course
- At least three courses must be at the 300-level or higher.
- Students must take at least four courses with 100% African content; the remaining two courses must have at least 25% Africa content.
- No more than three courses can apply from transfer credits.
- Up to two courses of transfer credit in African languages from other universities (overseas or otherwise) may be applied to the Minor; this may include courses on African languages or other individualized study in African languages with advisor approval. 'African languages’ does not include the languages of European colonial powers or Arabic. Other languages spoken on the continent, including Afrikaans, will be accepted. Together, all African language courses count toward one of the three required departments for the minor. They are considered to have 100% African content.
- Courses must be taken over at least three different departments.

**Core courses (3 hours):** Core courses are those that focus exclusively on Africa and African subjects (100% Africa content), and provide an introduction and overview of African religion, history, or prehistory

- RELI 111** – Introduction to African Religions (Bongmba)
- HIST 231** – Introduction to African History: North, Western and Central Africa, Early Times to the Present (de Luna)
- HIST 232** – Introduction to African History: East, Central and Southern Africa, Early Times to the Present (de Luna)
- ANTH 312** – African Prehistory (Fleisher)
**Anthropology Department**

ANTH 312** – African Prehistory (Fleisher)
ANTH 364** – African Archaeology Field Techniques
ANTH 370** – Archaeological Laboratory Techniques and Analysis
ANTH 463** – West African Prehistory (McIntosh)

**History Department**

HIST 1??** – Invention of Africa (Freshman Seminar) (de Luna)
HIST 231** – Introduction to African History: North, Western and Central Africa, Early Times to the Present (de Luna)
HIST 229** – History of South Africa
HIST 232** – Introduction to African History: East, Central and Southern Africa, Early Times to the Present (de Luna)
HIST 270* – South Africa and Indonesia: Empire to Nation (Ward)
HIST 389* – Migrations and Diasporas in the Indian Ocean World [includes Swahili] (Ward)
HIST 409** – History of East Africa (de Luna)
HIST 412** – African Political Imagination (de Luna)
HIST 439* – Comparative Slavery from Antiquity to the Present: Africa, Asia, and Europe (Byrd)
HIST 452* – Comparative History: The US and South Africa (Byrd)
HIST 4??* – Comparative Approaches to the History of Emotions (with Africa content) (de Luna)
HIST 5??** – African Slavery (de Luna)

**Religious Studies Department**

RELI 111** – Introduction to African Religions (Bongmba)
RELI 113** – Introduction to Christianity in Africa (Bongmba)
RELI 338** – The Church of Africa (Bongmba)
RELI 340** – Theology in Africa (Bongmba)
RELI 342** – New Religious Movements in Africa (Bongmba)
RELI 348** – Christianity and Islam in Africa (Bongmba)
RELI 423** – African Myths and Ritual (Bongmba)
RELI 424** – Religion and Politics in Africa (Bongmba)
RELI 425** – Africana Philosophy & Thought (Bongmba)
RELI 426** – Religion and Literature in Africa (Bongmba)

**English Department**

ENGL 379* – Introduction to Third World Literature (Joseph)
ENGL 376* – Postcolonial Studies (Clarke)

**Study Abroad:**
Courses transferred from overseas study are encouraged; however, a maximum of only 9 transfer credits (3 courses) can be counted toward the Minor. Credits for the core class cannot be transferred, however, and must be taken at Rice.

*courses with at least 25% Africa content  
**courses with 100% Africa content

**Student Learning Outcomes**

Students who complete an undergraduate minor in African Studies should be able to:

- Understand and appreciate the complexity of African history, culture, and religion.
- Compare and contrast the experiences of African peoples in different regions of the continent.
- Understand the role of Africa and African people in global histories and networks.

**Assessment**

Student Learning Outcomes will be assessed through essays, exams, and in-class presentations during the semester. The African Studies Steering Committee will meet at the end of each school year and examine a selection of essays and exams from African Studies courses, particularly those from the core and 100% Africa content courses. During this meeting, the Committee will examine whether student learning outcomes are being achieved, and propose alterations to the curriculum or outcomes based on this assessment.

**Faculty Members participating in the African Studies Minor**

**Director and Advisor**

Kerry Ward, History

**Steering Committee**

Elias Bongmba, Religious Studies  
Alexander Byrd, History  
Kathryn de Luna, History  
Susan McIntosh, Anthropology  
Jeffrey Fleisher, Anthropology

**Undergraduate Advisors**

Kathryn de Luna, History  
Jeffrey Fleisher, Anthropology

**Schools with comparable Minor Programs in African Studies**

University of Pennsylvania:  [http://www.africa.upenn.edu/asc/ugrad.html](http://www.africa.upenn.edu/asc/ugrad.html)  
Duke: http://aaas.duke.edu/undergraduate/major-minor
Emory: http://www.ias.emory.edu/undergraduate/major.cfm
Northwestern: http://www.northwestern.edu/african-studies/academics_undergrad.html
African Studies
The Schools of Humanities and Social Sciences

**Director and Advisor**
Kerry Ward

**Steering Committee**
Elias Bongmba
Alexander Byrd
Kathryn de Luna
Susan McIntosh
Kerry Ward

**Undergraduate Advisor**
Kathryn de Luna
Jeffrey Fleisher

**Degrees Offered:** None
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**Requirements for the Interdisciplinary Minor in AFST**
The following requirements apply to the Minor in African Studies:

- Students must complete at least six courses (18 credit hours)
- Students must take at least one the following core courses: RELI 111 *Introduction to African Religions*; HIST 231 *Introduction to African History: North, Western and Central Africa, Early Times to the Present*; HIST 232 *Introduction to African History: East, Central and Southern Africa, Early Times to the Present*; ANTH 312 *African Prehistory*.
- A list of non-core courses is available from AFST undergraduate advisors.
- At least three courses must be at the 300-level or higher.
- Students must take at least four courses with 100% African content; the remaining two courses must have at least 25% Africa content.
- No more than three courses can apply from transfer credits.
- Up to two courses of transfer credit in African languages may be applied to the Minor; this may include courses on African languages or other individualized study in African languages with advisor approval. ‘African languages’ does not include the languages of European colonial powers or Arabic. Other languages spoken on the continent, including Afrikaans, will be accepted. Together, all African language courses count toward one of the three required departments for the minor. They are considered to have 100% African content.
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