

**University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg and the Regents of the
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor**

**Joining theory and empiricism in the remaking of the African Humanities: A
transcontinental collaboration.**

A preliminary proposal to the Mellon Foundation, March 2012

Contents

1. Introduction

2. Program of Research

3. Existing Structures of Collaboration

4. Funding

Appendix 1: Biographical information about collaborators

Appendix 2: Explanation of Themes

Joining theory and empiricism in the remaking of the African Humanities: A transcontinental collaboration

Introduction

For most of the last half-century the interdisciplinary field of the African humanities has had two regional foci: the wealthy research universities in North America and the comparatively well-resourced institutions in South Africa. The relations between researchers in these two regions have sometimes been fraught, subject to misunderstanding and to breakdowns in scholarly communication. Over the last decade, especially, a distinct bias towards abstract theorizing has emerged in the American institutions. South African scholars have been interested primarily in empirical research, or where they have engaged with theoretical arguments they have tended to genuflect, adopting theoretical concepts derived elsewhere without subjecting them to scrutiny and criticism. In the humanities scholarship on Africa that emerges from North America, for example, theoretical concepts – like *biopolitics*, *materiality*, *neoliberalism* and *transnationalism* – are commonly used as short-hand descriptive devices to capture large and complex processes. Typically, these usages are not locally situated and they often lack explanatory power on the African side of this research dialogue. By contrast, South African researchers often have a solipsistic regard for provincial political and cultural issues whose global significance is rarely examined properly. There are significant strengths in each of these research agendas, but in many ways this division of labour has weakened research in both places.

The African Studies Center at the University of Michigan and the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research seek to convert these weaknesses into strengths through a program of vigorous collaboration between dynamic institutions and researchers at our two universities, one situated at the center of South Africa's academic life, the other the United States' leading public university. In this proposal we seek support from the Mellon Foundation to foster and strengthen innovative collaborations among scholars in the humanities and closely affiliated fields in the social sciences. Anchoring our research projects in the existing centers and institutes at the two universities, our objective is to build a broader, transcontinental community of scholars whose research addresses ambitious theoretical questions that resonate with local, regional, and global experiences.

In addition to strengthening the work of both empirical investigation and theorizing, we have two further objectives for this collaboration. The first is to explore the boundary between the humanities and the social sciences, asking questions, in particular, about the work of culture in the investigation of institutions, and in the formulation of political goals. The second is to make use of WISER's position as a point of access to the broader economy of humanities research in Africa. Typically European and American scholars are obliged to treat Africa as a field site, a location for research, not a forum where theory can be defined and elaborated. African

scholars face even more profound constraints on their time and funding, and many of them are now compelled to work almost entirely within national boundaries, while contending with overwhelming administrative and teaching workloads resulting from an upsurge in student populations. In the social sciences CODESRIA and the Makerere Institute for Social Research have worked hard recently to weaken the hold of short-term funded research. But the situation remains dire for scholars in the humanities where the pressure to source external funding has left little space for critical scholarship, confident engagement with theoretical questions, and the cultivation of critics and dissidents. In addition to strengthening the dialogue between South African and north American institutions, we view this project as part of an effort to expand WISER's capacity to engage with the continent, to open up collaborations with other African institutions, and to explore the different traditions and trajectories of humanities research in Africa.

Program of Research:

Over a five year period we propose to hold two two-week courses per annum, located alternately in Ann Arbor and Johannesburg. These will be interdisciplinary courses on significant questions that inform scholarship in the Humanities broadly conceived. The courses will be similar in structure to the Mellon-funded African Workshops program run by the American Political Science Association. Their focus will be determined through a competitive call for proposals at the UM and WISER each year. A committee jointly organized by WISER and UM will choose the best proposals, and the workshops will be jointly organized by faculty at WISER and UM. Participants will include faculty and graduate students from Wits and from UM, and graduate students and junior faculty from other African and American institutions will also be invited to participate. The workshops will combine critical readings in the literature with field-trips—as appropriate—to heritage sites and museums, and performances and art exhibits.

The African Studies Center and WISER have well-established track records of organizing scholarly workshops and symposia of this kind. The Mellon-funded courses will bring groups of North American and African scholars and graduate students together to consider important conceptual and empirical works carefully selected by the directors of the short courses. They will also focus on work in progress composed by the participants.

These workshops will investigate the benefits and the problems inherent in the use of widely deployed theoretical concepts, encouraging researchers to open new lines of investigation and, importantly, to encourage the use of the results of African research to modify, correct and contradict concepts and theories that are applied globally.

The themes we have chosen are:

1. Legacies of the imperial archive in post-colonial history, museums and performance
2. Textual analysis, visual culture and the state in the making of African publics
3. Interrogating Neoliberalism as idea and explanation
4. The politics of literacy, legibility and expert knowledges in Africa
5. Narrative, visual forms and biopolitics in the medical humanities

6. Cultural studies of science and technology in Africa
7. Intellectual property and curatorship in the digital humanities
8. Public spaces, informality and infrastructures in the desegregating city
9. Vernacular literatures in the making of transnational movements and subjects
10. The Global South as an idea and a source of theory

Our reasons for these choices of theme are elaborated in the attached appendix. In general it is important to note, first, that all are critical to the understanding of African realities. And, second, that they are themes that already preoccupy the researchers at the two institutions, allowing for study of well-established works in progress, knowledgeable discussion and significant results. It will be important that the limitations and strengths of these thematic projections onto African realities be explored and noted, if genuine dialogue with theory-driven approaches (and many first world universities) is to be a product of the Mellon short courses.

Existing structures of collaboration:

This proposal builds on a number of already-existing research projects that join scholars at the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Michigan. These scholars have been exploring collaboration since 2009, when University of Michigan President Mary Sue Coleman visited Johannesburg. The institutional dialogue that she initiated has already born fruit in the publication of *The Next Twenty-five Years: Affirmative Action in Higher Education in the United States and South Africa* (Ann Arbor, 2009), a book to which faculty at Michigan and at Wits contributed. A Memorandum of Understanding between UM and Wits will be signed very shortly.

Faculty-level collaborations have flourished between the two universities; some of the key areas of collaboration are:

The cultural politics of performance and media

Professor Liz Gunner at Wits (WISER) convenes with Professors Kelly Askew and Judith Irvine at UM (Anthropology) an interdisciplinary working group on 'Performance and Social Meaning.' The group, which met in 2009 and again in 2011, includes researchers focusing on South African-produced opera, Tanzanian political laments, 'Zumania' and the performance of ethnic identity, Senegalese language ideologies, and Zulu radio forms, to give but a few examples. Additionally, UM's Communication Studies Department (led by Professor Susan Douglas) has been working with the Department of Media Studies at Wits (led by Dean Tawana Kupe) in the study of newspapers, radio and other media forms in Africa. Their collaboration bore fruit in a conference, held at Wits in February 2012, titled 'Beyond Normative Approaches: Everyday Media Culture in Africa'. The conference brought seventy scholars together for three days of discussion and debate about the social spaces in which media is produced and consumed. Their aim is to link up the study of communication technology with the study of social theory, exploring how new and old media forms constitute cultures, organize constituencies and make political action thinkable.

The cultural politics of science and technology

Professors Gabrielle Hecht and Paul Edwards of the STS Program at Michigan have been collaborating with Professor Keith Breckenridge to nurture the development of science and technology studies in South Africa. This work has already resulted in the completion of important doctoral research, and it has encouraged some South African historians (and institutions) to reconsider the social and economic history of the region. As African states, and multinationals, adopt ever more precocious forms of wireless and biometric technologies there is a growing interest in the politics of technology on the continent. Yet the field of science and technology studies in Africa has still to take scholarly form, and there is much that researchers based in North America and southern Africa have to learn from one another.

Province and diaspora in African intellectual history

Historians and the historically-minded in both institutions – Hofmeyr, Menon, Gupta, Glaser, Mbembe, Sinha, Breckenridge, Peterson, Askew and Pitcher – have been examining the ways in which the people and cities of southern and eastern Africa have been situated within international fields of culture and politics. Africa frequently features as an important site in the emergence of global forms of both imperial and anti-colonial politics in the 20th century. But in much scholarly writing Africa and its intellectual history continues to be identified as ‘local’, while European and American political theory is thought to be ‘global’, universal, and essential for the project of social theory. These scholars propose to challenge this form of academic condescension, opening up dialogue about the global history of African ideas, and commodities, over the *longue durée*. Sinha and Hofmeyr, for example, are exploring the intellectual and material connections that joined southern and eastern Africa with South Asia in the 19th and 20th centuries. Peterson is interested in how the moral vocabulary of African socialism travelled across political and cultural boundaries in the 1960s and 70s, while Askew and Pitcher examine oft-ignored post-socialist political trajectories in contemporary Africa. Pitcher is also studying the post-independence trajectory of developmentalism, showing how the role of the state, and the rights of the citizen, were conceived in a trans-continental dialogue.

The politics of heritage

A number of scholars at Wits and UM are already working together in the study of the heritage industry in Africa. There is an ‘African Heritage Initiative’ based at the UM African Studies Center, on which Dr. Cynthia Kros of Wits sits as a member of the International Advisory Board. Herwitz, Murray, Kros and dozens of other scholars were involved in the July 2011 conference on ‘The Politics of Heritage’, organized jointly by Wits and UM and held at Museum Africa in Johannesburg. The conference proceedings are to be published shortly by Cambridge University Press, under the title *The Politics of Heritage in Africa*.

Social History after Edward Thompson

Many of the historians in the Department at Michigan have close research links with scholars and students in South Africa. The list here is long, and it includes some researchers whose work does not cover African topics directly: Cohen, Edwards, Eley, Hecht, Hunt, Sinha, von Eschen have all collaborated with colleagues at Wits. In 2007, Geoff Eley (the current Chair of the History Department) presented the Keynote Address to the Southern African Historical Society. The Department has also supervised many South African students. Historical researchers at Wits and Michigan share a common interest in the theoretical problems of writing empirically driven social history of Thompsonian provenance. These theoretical concerns allow for a productive comparative dialogue across very diverse national contexts.

The perils and possibilities of the digital humanities in Africa

Some of the most influential critics of the recent efforts at scholarly digitization are based at Wits. These criticisms have coincided with a lull in the pace and scope of digitization in South Africa, which stands in quite dramatic contrast to the massive efforts, mostly commercially funded, in North America. The University of Michigan has played a very important part in these large projects, and it is our intention to bring that experience to bear on the South African debates. At the same time, free open source software tools, like the Mellon-funded Sakai (called C-Tools at Michigan) collaboration environment, the Zotero research manager and the Omeka publishing environment have been widely adopted in South Africa (although not yet widely used). Better support for Sakai, Zotero and Omeka would help to bolster the inter-disciplinary and international collaboration we are planning here, so that we do not run from short course to short course without ongoing project communications. And it may also help South African scholars to address the difficult and urgent problems of future proofing existing and planned projects of digital curation.

The University of Michigan is meanwhile developing a book series on Africa which will have a strong digital component and fall in part under that press's digitalculturebook series which shall be accessed by the project. In each institution a wider and unformed group of interested scholars exists in African Studies, History, Anthropology, Media Studies, Architecture, Urban Planning, Information Studies and Sociology. With support from Mellon we propose to extend these projects to draw the finely-grained work of scholars at Wits into collaboration with the more theoretically focused scholarship that is typical at Michigan. In the process we expect to strengthen humanities scholarship at both institutions (and their regions).

Funding

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Funds for scholars to travel between the US and South Africa twice/year (2 per annum x 12 individuals x 2,500 ticket)	60,000	60,000	60,000	60,000	60,000	300,000
Accommodation and meals in Ann Arbor (15 participants x 18 days x \$150)	40,500	40,500	40,500	40,500	40,500	202,500
Accommodation and meals in Johannesburg (15 participants x 18 days x \$105)	28,350	28,350	28,350	28,350	28,350	141,750
Local Arrangements (Local transport, venue rental, field trips other misc workshop expenses) (\$10K x 2 workshops)	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	100,000
Workshop Catering \$40 x 12 days x 30 people x 2 workshops	28,800	28,800	28,800	28,800	28,800	144,000
Administrative support at the University of Michigan .21 FTE Devon Keen 2.4% annual increase	11,221	11,490	11,766	12,048	12,338	58,863
UM fringe benefits @ 39%	4,363	4,467	4,575	4,684	4,797	22,886
Salary for mid-level academic program director to be based at WISER (R600,000 salary x 5 years = R3,000,000)	80,000	80,000	80,000	80,000	80,000	400,000
Funds for training and technical support for online collaboration tools (R97,500/year x 5 = R487,500)	13,000	13,000	13,000	13,000	13,000	65,000
Administrative support at WISER (R97,500 / year x 5 years = R487,500)	13,000	13,000	13,000	13,000	13,000	65,000
Total	299,234	299,608	299,991	300,383	300,784	1,500,000

A note regarding the budget

We plan to invite 24 individuals—12 from Wits, 12 from Michigan—to participate in the seminar. The first line reflects their international transport costs. In addition we hope to involve three ‘local’ participants, drawn from other universities in South Africa or the United States, who would join the seminar when it meets in their country. These three ‘local’ students will not require international transport. Their accommodation and meal costs are given in the second and third lines.

We note that the balance between 'international' and 'local' participants is likely to shift from year to year, and expenditure is likely therefore to vary between lines one, two and three.

Financial Administration

This grant will be held and administered in its entirety by the African Studies Center at the University of Michigan. Subject to Mellon's arrangements for the grant, the ASC will transfer the funds required for the five year appointments of the Program Director, Administrator and Technical Support Officer at WISER. The disbursement of the funds will be in accord with the broad categories laid out in the budget, and will be overseen by the Program Director, the Director of the ASC, and the Director of WISER. The accounts will be kept at the International Institute of the University of Michigan, which will provide administrative oversight and expert assistance in financial management. The ASC will prepare annual financial reports to the Mellon Foundation.

Appendix 1: Biographical Information about Collaborators

Adam Ashforth

Adam Ashforth is Professor of Afroamerican and African Studies at the University of Michigan. Ashforth is known for his work on witchcraft and spiritual insecurity in Africa, based on more than a decade's fieldwork in Soweto, South Africa. He has been associated with the University of the Witwatersrand since 1981, when he was a visiting fellow at the African Studies Institute while conducting doctoral research. For the past seven years he has also been researching issues regarding witchcraft, particularly in relation to the AIDS epidemic, in Malawi and Botswana. Ashforth has published three books and numerous articles in leading journals. His last book, *Witchcraft, Violence, and Democracy in South Africa* (published by the University of Chicago Press) was awarded the 2005 Herskovits Prize for the best book on Africa, the premier award in African Studies, and the Toyin Falola Award of 2006. His book *Madumo, A Man Bewitched* (Chicago, 2000) is a staple in university courses on Africa, anthropology, religion, and many other disciplines.

Kelly Askew

Kelly M. Askew is Director of the African Studies Center and Associate Professor of Anthropology and Afroamerican/African Studies at the University of Michigan. Her publications include *Performing the Nation: Swahili Music and Cultural Production in Tanzania* (University of Chicago Press, 2002), which was a finalist for the 2003 African Studies Association Herskovits Award for best scholarly work on Africa; two edited volumes, *African Postsocialisms* (co-edited with M. Anne Pitcher, Edinburgh University Press, 2006) and *The Anthropology of Media: A Reader* (co-edited with Richard R. Wilk, Blackwell Publishers, 2002); and articles on topics ranging from nationalism to gender relations to Hollywood film production. She is also a filmmaker, most recently having premiered the documentary film *Poetry in Motion: 100 Years of Zanzibar's Nadi Ikhwan Safaa* (Jahazi Media, 2012) on the history of Zanzibar's oldest *taarab* orchestra. She is currently in post-production on a new documentary film about land rights in a Maasai village. She was awarded fellowships from the Berlin Institute of Advanced Studies, the National Science Foundation, Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Ford Foundation and Fulbright Association and is Co-Principal Investigator on a \$1.5 million grant from USAID to strengthen engineering education in Liberia, a collaboration involving the University of Michigan, Rutgers University, North Carolina State, Kwame Nkrumah University for Science and Technology, and RTI International.

Belinda Bozzoli

Formerly the Head of the School of Social Sciences and then Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) of the University of the Witwatersrand, Belinda Bozzoli is the author of three single-authored, internationally published books, editor or co-editor of a further four and the author of 26 articles. In 2006 she was awarded an A-rating from the National research Foundation making her the first sociologist to be honoured in this way. In addition to being Acting Director of

WISER, she is now also Senior Adviser to the Vice-Chancellor in which capacity she is working on a major research development project for the University.

Keith Breckenridge

Keith Breckenridge is an Associate Professor at WISER. He is currently preoccupied with the idea that South Africa serves as a global laboratory for forms of biometric government, and he has published widely on this theme with important papers in *Africa, History Workshop, Journal of Southern African Studies, Public Culture* and anthologies on identification and biometrics. With Simon Szreter of St Johns College Cambridge he has just finished editing a volume of essays for the British Academy entitled *Registration and Recognition: Documenting the Person in World History* which subjects the ideas of governmentality and legibility to intense international historical scrutiny.

Catherine Burns

Catherine Burns is based at WISER and her research focuses on medical and health history, the history and ethnography of reproduction and sex, ethics in biomedical research, and the history of gender in southern Africa. She has published, taught, and supervised research, across these themes. From 2002 to 2008 she ran a programme of exchange between the University of Michigan and a South African university drawing in 25 senior undergraduate students per year for a concentrated 7-week course. In 2008 she was invited to design and teach an intensive short course on the History of Sexuality in Africa at the University of Michigan. In August 2012 she is launching a jointly authored book on the history of a major health institution in the region, started by American missionaries. She has inaugurated a major "Project on Sex Histories" (POSH) in 2012. She is completing a biography of a herbalist and midwife who lived and practised in South Africa from 1880 to 1940 titled *A Little Women's Advice to the Public on the Cure of Various Diseases: the life and times of Louisa Mvemve*. Catherine has been commissioned to write a book, tentatively titled *The History of Sex in South Africa*, for a special series in 2013.

Paul Edwards

Paul N. Edwards is Professor of Information and History at the University of Michigan. He writes and teaches about the history, politics, and culture of information infrastructures. Edwards is the author of *A Vast Machine: Computer Models, Climate Data, and the Politics of Global Warming* (MIT Press, 2010) and *The Closed World: Computers and the Politics of Discourse in Cold War America* (MIT Press, 1996), as well as numerous articles and two co-edited books. *A Vast Machine* won the Computer History Museum Book Prize and was named a Best Book of 2010 by *The Economist*. He has been a Carnegie Scholar and a Guggenheim Fellow, and has held visiting positions at the University of Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa; the Technische Universiteit Eindhoven, Netherlands; the University of Melbourne; and SciencesPo, Paris, France (2012-13). Edwards's research on information technology in South Africa during and after apartheid is part of a book project with Gabrielle Hecht and Keith Breckenridge, tentatively titled *The Technopolitics of Apartheid in Southern Africa*.

Geoff Eley

Geoff Eley is Karl Pohrt Distinguished University Professor of Contemporary History and Department Chair at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Most recently he is the author of *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000* (2002); *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society* (2005); and (with Keith Nield) *The Future of Class in History: What's Left of the Social?* (2007).

Elizabeth Gunner

Liz Gunner, based at WISER, has recently co-edited a book on Radio in Africa, and is currently completing a monograph on the subject which is entitled "Sounding the Present: Radio in Difficult Times." She has been working under the rubric of 'Passages of Culture', a project in terms of which she supervises two doctoral students. Liz convenes an annual, international workshop on the subject of Performance and Social Meaning. She has recently gained funding from SANPAD to work on a collaborative project which investigates the culture of xenophobia; she will be working on xenophobia in the Johannesburg township of Alexandra. Liz is also part of a collaborative project on the Politics of Faith and Nationalism. A further project on the horizon for Liz is a comparative study of South Africa and Chile under the rubric of Economies of Conflict.

Pamila Gupta

Pamila Gupta is a Senior Researcher at WISER. Her current research looks at Goan migration and Portuguese decolonization as well as islands and cosmopolitanism in the Indian Ocean. She also works on Portuguese colonial nostalgia and heritage tourism in Mozambique; a special project under this rubric examines the photography of Ricardo Rangel (Mozambique). Pamila is also interested in class, community and whiteness among the Portuguese (Angolan and Madeiran) diaspora in Johannesburg. She has published in *African Studies*, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, *Journal of South African History*, and *Public Culture* and has co-edited *Eyes Across the Water: Navigating the Indian Ocean* (UNISA Press, 2010) with Isabel Hofmeyr and Michael Pearson. She is currently completing a book manuscript based on her fieldwork over the past 3 years on postcolonial Mozambique and developing a new project on Goan and Indian photographers in Zanzibar.

Gabrielle Hecht

Gabrielle Hecht is Professor of History at the University of Michigan. Her work focuses on how technologies shape, limit, embody, and enact power. She recently edited *Entangled Geographies: Empire and Technopolitics in the Global Cold War* (MIT Press, 2011). Hecht's first book, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II* (MIT Press, 1998, 2009), received the AHA's Henry Baxter Adams Prize and the Edelstein Prize from the Society for the History of Technology. Her new monograph, *Being Nuclear: Africans and the Global Uranium Trade* (MIT Press and Wits University Press, 2012), remakes understandings of both the nuclear age and modern Africa by looking at the colonial, transnational, and postcolonial histories of uranium production in five African countries. Hecht was an ACLS Burkhardt Fellow, and her research has received support from the National Endowment for the

Humanities and the National Science Foundation. Her research on nuclear technopolitics in South Africa is part of a book project with Paul Edwards and Keith Breckenridge, tentatively titled *The Technopolitics of Apartheid in Southern Africa*.

Daniel Herwitz

Daniel Herwitz directs the Institute for the Humanities at the University of Michigan and holds an honorary position at the University of Cape Town. He has written widely in the fields of media, aesthetics, politics, and philosophy, and his most recent book is *The Star as Icon: Celebrity in the Age of Mass Consumption* which was named an Outstanding Publication by Choice Scholarly Reviews. He is also the author, with Lydia Goehr, of *The Don Giovanni Moment: Essays on the Legacy of an Opera* and the editor, with Michael Kelly, of *Action, Art, History: Engagements with Arthur C. Danto*. From 1996 to 2002, Herwitz served as chair in philosophy at the University of Natal, Durban, and was embroiled in the South African political transition, which led to his book *Race and Reconciliation: Essays from the New South Africa*. Long involved with modern Indian art, his 1987 book, *Husain*, won that country's National Book Award.

Nancy Rose Hunt

Nancy Rose Hunt is Professor of History at Michigan. She is a historian of health, medicine, objects, violence, security, and public healing in central Africa who has worked in Burundi, Ghana, and Democratic Republic of the Congo. Her historical ethnography of childbirth and colonial objects, *A Colonial Lexicon: Of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo* (Duke 1999) received the Herskovits Prize in 1999; and her *A Nervous State: Violence, Remedies, and Reverie* is forthcoming, also from Duke.

Cynthia Kros

Cynthia Kros is the Head of the Division of Arts, Culture and Heritage Management in the Wits School of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand. She is the author of *The Seeds of Separate Development: Origins of Bantu Education* (Unisa Press, 2010) and of several journal articles and book chapters about post-1994 heritage in South Africa, including the resilience of the Voortrekker Monument, oral history and heritage construction in the province of Mpumalanga. She has journal articles on autobiography in South Africa and on public and monumental art in Pretoria in press. She also published a series of books on South African heritage for Grade 9 students, co-authored with Lauren Segal – *Great People. Great Places* (Jacana 2009). Cynthia has worked with colleagues at Michigan on a series of conferences under the rubric of 'The Politics of Heritage'.

Achille Mbembe

Achille Mbembe is a Research Professor in History and Politics at the University of the Witwatersrand. He is the author of many books, including *Afriques indociles* (Paris, Karthala, 1988), *La naissance du maquis dans le Sud-Cameroun* (Paris, Karthala, 1996), and *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001). His latest book is *Sortir de la grande nuit. Essai sur l'Afrique decolonisee* (Paris, La Decouverte, 2010). He is a contributing editor to *Public Culture*, the editor of the online magazine *The Johannesburg Salon*, and a co-Convenor of *The Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism* (JWTCT).

Martin Murray

Martin J. Murray is Professor of Urban Planning, Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, and Adjunct Professor in the Department of Afroamerican and African Studies (DAAS) at University of Michigan. Besides earlier scholarly work on agrarian studies and the politics of the transition to democracy in South Africa, he has written two books on Johannesburg – *Taming the Disorderly City: The Spatial Landscape of Johannesburg after Apartheid* (Cornell University Press, 2008), and *City of Extremes: Spatial Politics in Johannesburg* (Duke University Press, 2011). His next book is tentatively called *Memoryscapes: The Cultural Politics of Remembering and Forgetting in the 'New South Africa'* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming).

Ashlee Nesor

Ashlee Nesor is a Researcher at WISER. She has published on performance forms in South Africa, and her book, *Stranger at Home: The Praise Poet in Apartheid South Africa*, considers the limits of a political performance genre under apartheid. Her current work is in the medical humanities. She has published on the writing of HIV/AIDS memoirs in South Africa, and is presently working with novels, autobiographies, and political and philosophical writings by twentieth century South African surgeons and other medical specialists in order to begin to chart a history of South Africa's medical modernity in the world.

Derek Peterson

Derek R. Peterson teaches African history at the University of Michigan. He is the author of *Creative Writing: Translation, Bookkeeping, and the Work of Imagination in Colonial Kenya* (2004), and editor of several books, including *Recasting the Past: History Writing and Political Work in Modern Africa* (2009), *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa and the Atlantic* (2010) and *The Invention of Religion: Rethinking Belief in Politics and History* (2002). He was formerly Director of African Studies at the University of Cambridge. Peterson is a recipient of the Philip Leverhulme Prize for Modern History and a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

Anne Pitcher

Anne Pitcher is a Professor in the Departments of Afroamerican and African Studies and Political Science at the University of Michigan. In 2006, she co-edited a book with Kelly Askew entitled *African Postsocialisms* (Edinburgh University Press) and she has a forthcoming book with Cambridge University Press called *Party Politics and Economic Reform in Africa's Democracies*. Her recent work has examined socialism and post-socialism in Mozambique; criticized the concepts of neo-patrimonialism and the developmental state; and analyzed the politics of private sector development in Africa.

Raymond Silverman

In 2002, Raymond Silverman joined the faculty at the University of Michigan where he is Professor of History of Art and Afroamerican & African Studies, and serves as Director of the Museum Studies Program. Silverman's research and writing has examined a variety of subjects concerning the movement of material/visual tradition through time and space in Africa,

particularly in Ghana and Ethiopia. Most recently he has been exploring “museum culture” in Africa, specifically how local knowledge is translated in national and community-based cultural institutions. In addition to teaching courses in African art history and museum studies, he has curated a number of exhibitions dealing with various aspects of African visual culture.

Mrinalini Sinha

Mrinalini Sinha is Alice Freeman Palmer Professor in the Department of History and Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature (by courtesy) at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She has written on various aspects of the political history of colonial India, with a focus on anti-colonialism, gender, and transnational approaches. She has collaborated with Professor Isabel Hofmeyr, past Chair of the Center for Indian Studies at the University of Witwatersrand, and she hopes to continue to build links with the Center under its new chair, Professor Dilip Menon.

Appendix 2: Explanation of Themes

1 Legacies of the imperial archive in post-colonial history, museums and performance

There is a broad body of research in South Africa and at Michigan on the varied politics of the official archive in shaping contemporary humanities scholarship. Many works in South Africa – by Carolyn Hamilton, Premesh Lalu, Verne Harris, Sifiso Ndlovu, Vukile Khumalo, Uma Dhupelia–Mesthrie – deploy the idea of The Archive as a more or less tainted well. This research is influenced by theoretical work by Cohen, Derrida, Dirks, Cohn, Stoler and many others – much of it developed at Michigan. But it has tended not to investigate the actual work of the archives; that work is done by scholars with a much more provincial interest, which is what makes this potentially an area of very interesting discussion.

2 Textual analysis, visual culture and the state in the making of African publics

In the study of public art and ideas, South African scholars have been elaborating on the tools of textual analysis of culture and performance made famous by Geertz. At Michigan, Historians, Historians of Art and Anthropologists are drawn to the study of visual forms, routes of circulation and, especially, to the physical qualities of objects. A broad interdisciplinary theoretical turn is underway that stresses the agency of objects, under the influence of Appadurai, Gell and Latour. There is real value in both of these approaches, and the criticisms that each can make of the other. In addition this theme will carefully explore the ongoing (and to some degree exceptional) interest amongst South African scholars in the political importance of the public sphere and rational public debate in the making of citizenship.

3 The politics of literacy, legibility and expert knowledges in Africa

James Scott's arguments about the authoritarian consequences of writing and Timothy Mitchell's work on the politics of expert knowledge have had very strong effects in both regions on intellectual history and the inter-disciplinary study of state institutions. Both are widely and often uncritically used by younger researchers. There is a parallel body of local work emerging (mostly disengaged from Scott and Mitchell) that examines the intellectual history of science and scientific projects and the place of experts in the formation of post-Apartheid policy. And there is a third, rich body of research into the often fraught social and intellectual history of African literary scholars and communities. The moment seems right for a careful engagement between these emerging fields, the politics of literacy and the wider theories of expert knowledge, particularly under conditions of colonial rule. The grand ambitions of the 20th century state in South Africa, the difficulties of social engineering in the post-Apartheid period, and the critical importance of de-racialising science and expertise in the present, make this an especially promising theme.

4 Interrogating Neoliberalism as idea and explanation

This theme will critically investigate the concept that is used in very widely cited studies by Bond, Comaroff and Comaroff, Ferguson, Hart, and many others. Some African scholars engage critically with the work of David Harvey and other theorists, but for the great majority the

concept of neoliberalism works almost as a fetish object, repeatedly deployed without anything in the way of critical evaluation. In this theme we will reconstruct the global intellectual history of the idea neoliberalism, its particular South African history and usages, exploring its value as a description of social and cultural events and movements.

5 Narrative, visual forms and biopolitics in the medical humanities

The medical humanities is a new field in South Africa, emerging in part from the recognition that clinical interventions have had little success in the absence of a detailed ethnographic and historical understanding of health systems. Most South African scholars in this field have approached it using the tools of oral history and textual analysis, relying on interviews and archival materials to provide interpretive data. Established scholars in this field at Michigan, like Nancy Hunt, (under the influence of the wider turn to the consideration of materiality) have argued for close attention to visual forms in the study of the cultural work of medicines. Here again a black-box concept derived from the work of Michel Foucault has been very widely used, and requires careful critical consideration.

6 Cultural studies of science and technology in Africa

Science and Technology Studies (or STS as it is known in the United States) is another new field in South Africa, one in which graduate supervision is difficult to find. As the descriptions of the themes here show theoretical work from STS, such as Latourian actor-network theory, has gained increasing prominence in many areas of the humanities in the US and it is beginning to be applied in South Africa. The results are, to date, mixed. South African scholars have also begun to turn to the history and cultures of science, and technological institutions, with renewed interest, but the field is certainly still in its early years, lacking comparative studies and theoretical models. The study of science and technology also promises to produce significant theoretical work of its own, with special attention (in contrast to the big-budget subjects in the US and Europe) to work of technology in the lives of ordinary people. The very rapid and extensive adoption of wireless media in many fields and sophisticated banking instruments on the continent adds special significance to this theme.

7 Intellectual property in the digital humanities and the remaking of archives

In addition to the collaboration workshops, WISER and ASC have in mind an ongoing program for the digitization of important research materials for the African humanities. This workshop will take up the criticisms of digitization in South Africa, but it will focus on equipping humanities scholars with insights into the legal and intellectual histories of archival copyright and curatorship. It will also review projects currently under way and recently completed at Michigan in order to chart a new programme for the urgent practical work of digitization and classification in South Africa. Expanding the existing scholarly understanding of digital curatorship is urgent in part because South African universities seem to be falling behind their northern hemisphere peers in this respect, but also because institutions like Wits increasingly find themselves as the custodians of last resort of very valuable hard-copy collections.

8 Public spaces, informality and infrastructure in the study of the Desegregating

Scholars of architecture and urban social life in South Africa have produced important work on the political effects of built forms of urban public life. There is also a lot of related writing on the politics and cultures of unregulated settlement. The theoretical work on new forms of digitally supported segregation, most famously associated with *Splintering Urbanism* by Graham and Marvin, has started to have important effects on the study of public space and art, but the work is not yet widely known in the humanities. Interest in the intellectual and cultural work of infrastructure is especially strong in technology studies, which is producing a substantial body of both theory and empirical analysis of such questions as the relationships between nature and infrastructure; how infrastructure shapes experiences, work lives, and life chances; and the many cultural and political tensions surrounding new infrastructure projects. Again, this is potentially a very productive area, covering researchers in many different fields, and very well suited to the character of urban life in contemporary Johannesburg and Detroit.

9 Vernacular knowledge in the study of transnational movements and subjects

South Africa features prominently in studies of transnational intellectual history and literary studies. And there is certainly much to be learned about the history and culture of Africa from a close examination of these highly comparative and broad studies. But there is risk of oversimplification, and of misunderstanding. Here we seek to bring the fine-grained research of local politics, allegiances and languages that is typical on the African continent into dialogue with the broad scope of global studies. Given the influence of transnationalism in the global humanities, this seems an especially promising opportunity for theoretical interventions from the African humanities.

10 The global south as a source of theory about the global humanities

Recently Jean and John Comaroff have argued that a global realignment is taking place, bringing the political and intellectual concerns of what they call “Euro-America” closer to the social realities that are familiar in Africa. This movement, they argue, presents opportunities for the global application of theoretical ideas that are derived outside of Europe and North America. This is undeniably an interesting and attractive prospect for scholars in and of Africa. Yet the political (and scholarly) domain of the “global south” is itself conflicted and unstable – linking countries as diverse, and dissimilar as Australia, South Africa and Nigeria – and it is unlikely to provide any easy solution to the difficulties that Africanist scholars face in addressing the global academy.
