



# African and African American Studies (AFS) Program Newsletter

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## **African and African American Studies Program**

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### **Notes From the Assistant Director**

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The discipline of African and African American Studies continues to be an important and relevant area of academic teaching, scholarship, and inquiry. As assistant director of African and African American Studies and an associate professor in the department of English Language and Literatures at Wright State University, I greatly enjoy having the opportunity to teach, write, research, and give presentations about relevant topics. Recently I had the opportunity to speak on areas related to my teaching, research, and writing at the Kettering-Moraine Branch of the Dayton Metro Library in Kettering, Ohio on February 17, Urbana University in Urbana, Ohio on February 24, and Sinclair Community College in Dayton, Ohio on March 2.

My recent visits to various places in Ohio highlighted the significance of African Americans in the past, present, and the future. I spoke about the Harlem Renaissance at the Kettering-Moraine Branch of the Dayton Metro Library to individuals in the general public on February 17. My presentation/lecture highlighted the importance of this movement in black cultural expression during the early 1900s.





## African and African American Studies Program

I also highlighted the contributions of individuals such as Langston Hughes who played a significant role in African American literature as a writer. As part of The Big Read Initiative, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, I lectured on "Education, Change, and Redemption: Teachers and Pupils in Ernest Gaines's *A Lesson Before Dying*" on February 24 at Urbana University. I explored how the process of educating can empower individuals to change themselves and those around them in a positive way. Gaines's novel *A Lesson Before Dying* proves to be a powerful statement on how the lives of people are interconnected in the past, the present, and in the future. His novel continues to inspire readers, and its analysis of issues of race, class, and gender is meaningful to readers locally, nationally, and internationally.

I also had the opportunity on March 2 to speak at Sinclair Community College in Dayton, Ohio. I presented on images of African American women in popular culture. I emphasized the importance of being aware of how images influence us in our lives. Later that day, I gave another presentation at Sinclair Community College on the subject of Zora Neale Hurston and her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. My aforementioned presentations provided me with an opportunity to discuss relevant and timely issues to individuals in the community and/or at other institutions of higher learning, and to reiterate that African and African American Studies continue to be a vital, dynamic, and important area of academic inquiry and discourse.



## **African and African American Studies Program**

### **South Africa Summer Ambassador Program July 17— August 2, 2010**

The legacy of apartheid remains evident in the high rate of poverty and the limited capacity of many communities to move beyond meeting their most basic human needs. This 17-day service learning course exposes students to the social, psychological, economic, environmental, health and political impacts of apartheid and engages them in a project to build the capacity high school students to make a difference in their communities. The fact that the South African students participating in the project come from two culturally distinct communities, will enrich the experience for all involved.

In an effort to build community capacity, WSU students will be trained to facilitate a community-based leadership workshops designed to teach high school students to assess their communities, plan service projects, community cleanups, collecting clothing and toys of orphaned children. WSU students will help to coordinate service projects, one of which will be building solar powered stoves for residents of squatter housing.

An added benefit is that WSU Students will work in the city of Durban, once fragmented by apartheid, now unified to enhance the development opportunities for those who live on the fringes. Durban is a vibrant coastal city that offers a range of cultural experiences, interesting markets, really moderate winter temperatures, and a great laboratory for students interested in innovative community development practices.

### ***How to Apply***

An application form can be obtained from the University Center for International Education in E190 Student Union or from [www.wright.edu/ucie/studyabroad/](http://www.wright.edu/ucie/studyabroad/). Space is very limited. Students are encouraged to submit an application as soon as possible.



## **African and African American Studies Program**

### **Meet the Summer Abroad Professor**

#### **JENNIFER SUBBAN, PhD.**

**Jennifer Subban, a native of South Africa, has a PhD in Urban Studies and is an Associate Professor of Urban and Public Affairs. She has been involved in a range of community development projects in New Orleans and Dayton. Most recently she has been working to build community capacity among youth in Durban and supports local efforts for community building.**

**At Wright State, she directs the American Humanities nonprofit management and leadership program, as well as the Student Philanthropy Project which requires students to raise money and award grants to local nonprofits. Her work with the youth leadership training builds on the Points of Light Youth Leadership Institute which she delivered to Dayton Area high school students through the Wright LEAD program.**



## **African and African American Studies Program**

**Welcome to our latest AFS faculty member  
Dr. Opolot Okia**

Opolot Okia is a historian in the Department of History. His teaching interests include slavery in Africa and the trans-Atlantic and Indian Ocean slave trades, colonialism in Africa and labor in African history. He currently offers six African history courses at Wright State University. These courses include Early Africa, Modern Africa, Africa and the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Colonial Africa, Labor in African history and East Africa.

Dr. Okia earned his Ph.D. in Modern African History from West Virginia University under the noted East Africanist, Robert Maxon in 2002. He, also, has a Masters in African Studies from Ohio university and a B.A. in history from Auburn University.

Opolot Okia's research examines how forced labor became normalized and

institutionalized in colonial Kenya from 1912 to 1963. He has conducted research in Kenya and in England at the Public Records Office, Rhodes House Library in Oxford, the School of Oriental African Studies and University of Birmingham. Dr. Okia's research has appeared in the International Journal of African Historical Studies, the Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History and the Journal of Cultural Studies. In addition, he was awarded a Fulbright fellowship for research in Kenya from 2007-2009.

Prior to Wright State University, Dr. Okia worked at Alabama State University, a historically black college, University of Tennessee, Winthrop University and Moi University in Kenya.



## African and African American Studies Program



**AFS 200** (WI) What is the African and African American Experience? *TR 10:25-12:05* Marjorie Baker

**AFS 401** Senior Research Project- Paul Griffin

**AFS 403** (WI) Ideas of Race 1950- Present *TR 2:15-3:55* Paul Griffin

**AFS 499-01** Black Women: Race and Gender *TR 10:25-12:05* Dana Patterson

**AFS 499-02** Appalachia: Racial and Gender Issues *T 4:10-7:30* Theresa Myadze

**COM 104** Introduction to Human Communication (*online*) Martha Antolick

**COM 432** Race Class and Gender *MWF 12:15-1:20* Carol Morgan

**COM 457** Intercultural Communication *TR 2:15-3:55* Jung-Soo Yi

**ENG 205** African American Literature *MWF 11:00-12:05* Lynette Jones

**HIS 490** Civil Rights Movement 1955-1968 *MWF 12:15-1:20* Barbara Green

**MUS 290** (WI) HON SRV: African American Music: America/Beyond *TR 10:25-12:05* Brenda Ellis

**PLS 428** (WI) Contemporary African American Problems *TR 12:20-2:00* Tracy Snipe

**PLS 494** (WI) Black Women and Politics *TR 4:10-5:50* Tracy Snipe

**RST 271** (WI) Regional Studies: Africa *M 6:05-9:25* Frank Eguaroje

**RST 271** (WI) HON: Regional Studies: Africa *W 6:05-9:25* Frank Eguaroje

**RST 271** (WI) Regional Studies: Africa *MWF 12:15-1:20* Opolot Okia

**RST 271** (WI) Regional Studies: Africa *MWF 2:45-3:55* Opolot Okia

**SOC 341** Social Inequality *TR 2:15-3:55* Norma Shepelak

**SOC 442** Race and Ethnicity *TR 4:10-5:50* Jacqueline Bergdanl

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