



Basel, November 2016

3rd Basel Summer School in African Studies (21–28 June 2017) **African Studies and Africanists: Whence the Gaze?**

The Centre for African Studies Basel (CASB) calls for applications for the Basel Summer School in African Studies 2017. The Summer School aims at stimulating and consolidating a new perspective on African Studies with a focus on African Studies as “area studies”. It addresses themes that are theoretically, conceptually and methodologically relevant to the pursuit of reflection on the intellectual challenge of Africa as an object of knowledge on the one hand and its contribution to general scholarship, on the other. The goals of the Summer School are the following:

- Give PhD students the opportunity to engage critically with new theoretical, conceptual and methodological developments in African Studies and make them relevant to their work under the guidance of senior scholars.
- Encourage PhD students to reflect on the potential relevance of knowledge on Africa to the task of improving our theoretical, conceptual and methodological tools both in the disciplines as well as in interdisciplinary work.
- Foster among PhD students a sense of belonging to a community of scholars in pursuit of knowledge and scholarship.
- Stimulate junior scholars to work towards carving a space for African Studies in the broader field of scholarship and, in this way, helping African Studies to claim a place right at the centre of knowledge production.

The Summer School is organised by the Centre in Basel every second year alternating with the CASB-CODESRIA Summer School held on the continent.

Concept note

The aim of the Basel Summer School in African Studies 2017 is two-fold: Thematically, it allows PhD students to engage with the question of how locality and positionality frame research in African Studies and in Area Studies more generally. From the point of view of academic skills, it enables PhD students to enhance their skills in presenting their work to a scientific audience. The Summer School seizes the opportunity to integrate the participation at the 7th European Conference on African Studies (ECAS), which takes place in Basel from 29 June to 1 July 2017.

1) African Studies in Europe and Area Studies in Africa

Social Anthropology is not alone in assuming that engaging scientifically with foreign societies enables the researcher to gain new perspectives on his or her own social (and academic) environment and is, amongst others, fruitful for theory building. This requires a reflection on the researcher’s own position and his/her relationship to the society or region he/she studies. Traditionally, this assumption has been mainly based on the experience of, and reflection on a ‘one-way’ perspective from the ‘Global North’ (the researcher and

research money) to the 'Global South' (the object). African Studies and research on and in Africa are typically conducted by Western students and scholars doing research on 'the other' in 'the field', or by African scholars and students – whether based in or originating from Africa – working on their 'home' societies and regions.

The predominance of a North-to-South gaze in research in and on Africa and in African Studies generates an imbalance that is problematic for the quality and relevance of Africa-related scientific knowledge (or scientific knowledge related to the 'developing world' in general). At the same time, there is an assumed value of a gaze on 'the other' for the understanding of the 'self'; and what is more, a value of a gaze from the outside – by the other – for the understanding of the 'self'. The Summer School sets out to promote more reflection on the relationship between the position and locality of the researcher and his or her geographical area of studies. Ultimately, it suggests that researchers seek to identify approaches that allow a 'reciprocal' perspective by reflecting methodological and conceptual foundations but also, in practice, by systematically taking these issues into account in the framework of exchange and collaboration.

The Summer School reflects on the relationship between the location of the researcher and the region of his or her studies by asking several key questions: How does the origin and residence of a researcher frame his/her research on a specific society or region? To what extent does it make a difference whether a researcher is 'from there' (e.g. West African studying West Africa) or not (e.g. European studying West Africa)? What is the added value of doing research in a foreign geographical area; and what is the added value of studying one's own society or region? And how does the relationship between the location of the researcher and the region of his studies change when the typical direction of the gaze changes (i.e. from 'the South' to 'the North')?

ECAS 2017 is an opportunity to address these questions. It offers a framework that *per se* deals with such issues. African Studies have a long tradition in Europe. The position of European scholars of Africa – the relation between their location and the area of their studies – has been reflected before, and it is crucial that this reflection continues. Another important question, which has increasingly been addressed in recent years, concerns the position of African scholars in the diaspora, their relation to their 'home societies' and the meaning of this relationship to their studies. Of equal importance is that students and scholars based in Africa reflect their relation to the geographical areas they study along similar lines – whether they work on their own societies or regions, on other countries and regions in Africa or on areas outside of the continent. Participants in the Summer School will discuss these questions against the background of inputs from senior scholars and selected literature, and will reflect on their own situation. The discussion is structured along the following three major themes:

Normativity? The motivation of the scholar, the choice of the subject and the role of interests and values

Research design and process... The formulation of research questions, the collection and analysis of data, the choice and use of concepts, methods and theories

Output! The presentation and publication of research results and its perception by the scientific community, by decision makers and by a wider public

As a requirement, all participants in the Summer School have submitted a paper for presentation at ECAS 2017. Within the Summer School's three thematic workshops, participants will give an input based on their papers and put their own research in relation to the overall topic. Groups of students will define a set of specific questions, which guide the discussions in the workshops but shall also be kept in mind as they participate in the ECAS conference.

Goals: *The participants*

- a) *develop the competence to reflect on their own position within their present and future academic environment,*
- b) *are aware of the importance of doing so for the relevance and content of their work, and*
- c) *develop approaches that allow for a more reflected and reciprocal perspective in their research.*

2) Advanced Study Skills

All participants prepare and present posters introducing themselves and their PhD projects from the perspective of the relationship between the location of the scholar and the geographic area of research. The design of their posters and their presentation skills are reviewed by respective experts. Based on the experts' general input as well as on direct feedback and recommendations within small working groups, participants re-design their posters and develop strategies to improve their presentation skills. The posters will be on display at the ECAS 2017.

Goals: *The participants*

- a) *develop their ability to present their research to a scientific audience, and*
- b) *develop the skills to design an adequate scientific poster.*

Preparation

In preparation to the Summer School, participants

- read the preparatory readings
- prepare a 5-minute presentation of their project
- design a poster to be presented at the Summer School
- read and comment the papers written by other participants in their thematic group

Experts

Rose-Marie Beck, Professor of African Languages and Literatures at the University of Leipzig (Germany)

Teresa Cruz e Silva, Associate Professor at the Centre for African Studies (CEA) and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo (Mozambique)

Mamadou Diawara, Professor for Anthropology at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University, Frankfurt am Main (Germany)/Founding Director of Point Sud, Bamako (Mali)

Elísio Macamo (*convenor*), Associate Professor of African Studies at the University of Basel (Switzerland)

Giorgio Miescher, Carl Schlettwein Foundation Senior Lecturer and Research Fellow in Namibian and Southern African Studies at the Centre for African Studies Basel (Switzerland)

Noor Niefertgodien, Associate Professor and Chair of the History Workshop at the University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa)

Advanced Study Skills are taught by experienced external coaches who are also engaged in the further training programme for PhD students, postdocs and faculty at the University of Basel:

- Sibylle Sommerer (media coach, communication expert, journalist)
- Martina Schradi (psychologist, communication designer)

Application procedure

The application for participation in the Summer School is **tied to the submission of a paper to the ECAS 7**. Only applicants who submit a paper to be presented at the ECAS will be considered for the Summer School.

Participants will be selected on the strength and merits of a five-page application in which they explain

- (a) what they are working on, and
- (b) how their work relates to the topic of the Summer School.

In addition, applications should include a CV of the applicant and be supported by two letters of recommendation.

Applications must be submitted via the online application form:
www.zasb.unibas.ch/summer_school/apply

The deadline for application is 19 January 2017

Practical information

The summer school is open for PhD students enrolled in Switzerland and abroad. We encourage the application of PhD students enrolled at African institutions.

The maximum number of participating PhD students is 18.

The fee for participation is CHF 300. It includes snacks and lunch at the course days and participation in the accompanying social programme.

Accommodation is not included; rooms are available for CHF 85.- per night.

The fee for participation in the ECAS is not included.

PhD students enrolled at African Universities have the possibility to apply for funding for travel and accommodation as well as a fee waiver. Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis.

Contact: pascal.schmid@unibas.ch