

IN AND OUT OF AFRICA

27th Annual Boston University
Graduate Student Conference
In African Studies

Friday, March 29th - Saturday, March 30th, 2019

CALL FOR PAPERS

please submit an abstract to
buascgsconf2019@gmail.com
by Tuesday, January 22, 2019.

> Modest travel grants available for participants
who are citizens of an African country <

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Location: Boston University, Pardee School of Global Studies and African Studies Center

Submission Deadline: Tuesday, January 22nd, 2019

Contact: buascgsconf2019@gmail.com

Overview

In Renaissance Europe, a supposedly ancient observation about Africa became a widely circulating bit of proverbial wisdom: *ex Africa semper aliquid novi* - “out of Africa, always something new.” The phrase was probably a mistaken reading of a classical Greek adage about African wildlife. But however it came to be, the saying neatly anticipated ways of treating and thinking about Africa as a source of intercontinentally consequential developments that resonate into the present. Today, for example, paleoanthropologists speak of the origin of modern human beings in terms of the “Out of Africa” theory. Like rubber and uranium before them, coltan and other minerals mined in the Democratic Republic of Congo are key to the manufacture of cutting-edge technologies. Club-goers and DJs incline their ears toward Lagos or Accra to catch the latest in Afrobeats that will soon pump through sound systems from London to New York to Goa. And as Jean and John Comaroff have argued (2012), neoliberalism’s course in the Global North looks poised to follow tracks laid down by experience in Africa and the rest of the Global South.

At the same time, the continent’s history and present are equally characterized by influxes, importations, or indigenizations of objects and entities from elsewhere; the emphasis here is not on movement “out of,” but rather “into,” Africa. This is the shape of the careers of the so-called “world religions” in Africa—Islam and Christianity especially, but also others. In a different register, the continentally-popular game of football provides another example, as Senegal’s much-watched campaign in the 2018 World Cup reminds us. Likewise, as the work of James McCann (2005) has explored, one of Africa’s most important cereal crops, maize, was a sixteenth-century import from Mexico. Even the enormity of colonialism may be glossed in these terms—as invasion, intrusion, incursion—a view which frames decolonization as the emphatic putting out of imperial powers and their trappings, and one that suggests a dialectical relationship between “in” and “out” in the continent’s history.

The 2019 Boston University African Studies Center Graduate Student Conference will explore the theme “in and out of Africa.” It seeks, on one hand, to contemplate Africa as a place of transit: as an origin, waypoint, or destination for global-scale flows, circulations, and transmissions. This angle emphasizes the flux and mobility of people, non-human organisms, capital, cultures, languages, philosophies and more. But by another light the conference theme also points to boundaries and borders, lines marking what is “in” and what is “out.” It raises again perennial questions about authenticity, indigeneity, and belonging. Ultimately, considering what is, has been, and will be “in and out of Africa” raises the question of what ought to be “in and out” of African Studies itself.

CONTACT: www.bu.edu/africa/gradconference

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Invitation

The program committee invites graduate students to submit proposals for papers, presentations, or performances attending to any aspect of the theme “in and out of Africa.” We welcome submissions from any disciplinary, interdisciplinary, or undisciplined perspective, and particularly encourage the participation of scholars of underrepresented backgrounds and identities. We further welcome proposals that engage with experimental or exploratory modes of (re)presentation and practice. Selected papers from the conference will be published in the Boston University African Studies Center series Working Papers in African Studies.

Possibilities for approaching the conference’s theme include, but are not limited to:

- Human mobilities in and out of Africa: flows, (im)migration, diaspora
- Extraction and injection of value and commodities: natural resources, capital, remittances, markets
- Circulation and exchange of epistemologies, ideologies, religions, and spiritualities
- Studies of health, disease, and environment: factors and outcomes in and out of Africa
- Export and import of aesthetic values, artistic practices, and cultural priorities in various media: visual and plastic arts, music, literature, film, theater
- Food and agriculture: crops, cuisines, and tastes in transit
- Africa “in and out” of global history, modernity, and futures, including perspectives such as Afrocentrism, Afrofuturism, and Afropessimism
- Heteroglossic practices and Ajamization
- Ideologies and performances of gender and sexuality in and out of tradition and modernity
- Studies of empire, colonialism, decolonization, or neocolonialism as formations that have moved in and out of Africa
- Inter- and outer-nationalisms in Africa
- Ways of simultaneous being in and out of Africa: diasporic consciousness, transnational families, multinational industries

Submission Requirements

Please submit an abstract (no more than 300 words in .pdf or .doc format) to **buascgsconf2019@gmail.com** by **Tuesday, January 22, 2019**. Note that the abstract should outline a presentation of twenty minutes to be followed by ten minutes of questions and discussion. Those interested in proposing presentations in alternate formats are welcome to contact the program committee to discuss their ideas at any time before the submission deadline. Modest travel grants (of up to 500USD) are available to help defray the cost of conference attendance for accepted participants who are citizens of an African country. If you are interested in applying for a travel grant, please submit an itinerary and budget, noting any other additional sources of travel funding available to you, along with your abstract.