

Mellon Sawyer Postdoctoral Fellowship on ‘Ethnicity in Africa’

The Center for Afro-American and African Studies at the University of Michigan seeks to appoint a post-doctoral scholar to a one-year fellowship on ‘Ethnicity in Africa: Historical, Comparative and Contemporary Investigations’. Scholars of any nationality working in any discipline of the social sciences or humanities are encouraged to apply. The post will extend from 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011. This fellowship is generously funded by the Mellon Foundation’s Sawyer Seminar program.

Further particulars:

We encourage applications from scholars who, in their research and writing, draw from the best of our separate disciplinary traditions, while also opening up novel approaches to the study of ethnicity in Africa. We seek, for example, scholars who embrace ethnography as a fine-grained inquiry into the lives of particular people, in particular places, at particular times, but who also work to uncover general patterns in the process of ethnic identification. We seek scholars who understand and build on the historiography of the ‘invention of tradition’, but who also explore the political and social alternatives that the inventors of tradition sought to suppress. We seek scholars who respect quantitative methods and mathematical modeling, but who are prepared to explore the subtle interplay of analytic categories with lived experience.

In the company of a larger group of Michigan scholars, the post-holder will help to organize a series of interdisciplinary seminars and conferences about ethnicity in Africa. Our aim is to encourage interdisciplinary conversations, to open up spaces where (for example) historians working on the roots of ethnic identity can interact with political scientists studying ethnicity and electioneering, where linguists can learn from musicologists studying performance, or where survey-takers can learn from ethnographers. There are to be three workshops convened as part of the Mellon Sawyer program. The first, scheduled for December 2010, will concern the theory, method, and history of the study of ethnicity. The second, slated for February 2011, will consider the growing scholarship on religion and ethnic identity; while the third, scheduled for April 2011, will explore the role of ethnicity in Africa’s contemporary politics.

There is a strong tradition of African Studies at the University of Michigan, which is home to some 160 faculty members whose research engages with Africa. The Center of Afro-American and African Studies (CAAS) coordinates much of the teaching about Africa on the undergraduate and graduate level. The African Studies Center, launched in 2008, is an interdisciplinary research center that coordinates and advances Africanists’ work at the University of Michigan. The Center each year hosts a cohort of visiting scholars from universities in Ghana, South Africa, and Liberia, who pursue their research projects while participating in the life of the University. It coordinates a program of African language teaching: in 2009-2010 Bambara, Akan, Swahili and several other languages are on offer. And it organizes conferences and symposia about all aspects of the study of Africa. Further information on the African Studies Center can be found at <<http://www.ii.umich.edu/asc/>>. Further information on CAAS is available at <<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/caas/>>.

The salary for this position will be commensurate with the post-holder’s qualifications. A small sum will be made available for research expenses. Interested scholars should apply with an

outline of the project that they wish to pursue, indicating how their research will help advance the interdisciplinary study of ethnicity in Africa. Applicants should also include a *curriculum vitae*, a list of publications and major pieces of unpublished work, the names of three academic referees, and up to 10,000 words of scholarly work, published or unpublished. Applications are due by Friday, 13 November, to the following address:

Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship Committee
African Studies Center, University of Michigan
Suite 2622, 1080 S. University Ave.
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1106
USA

Three referees should be requested to write directly to the Fellowship Committee at the above address.

Informal inquiries may be directed to the program coordinator, Prof Warren Whatley, at wwhatley@umich.edu, or to Dr Derek Peterson, the Associate Director of the African Studies Center, at drpeters@umich.edu.