

# AFRICAN STUDIES, MA

*for the Master of Arts in African Studies*

The Center for African Studies administers a two-year program of area studies courses and intensive African language instruction leading to a Master of Arts degree designed to give students an interdisciplinary perspective on the study of Africa. The program provides both language and area training for three constituencies of students: those seeking to match area expertise with professional training; those proceeding to disciplinary-based doctoral work; and those for whom the degree would stand on its own. For more information about the Center's graduate programs, please visit our website (<https://afrst.illinois.edu/academics/graduate-programs/>).

## Admissions

The Center for African Studies admits students in the fall term only. Applicants to the Masters degree in African Studies should hold at least a Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in the United States or from a recognized institution of higher education abroad. All graduate college admission requirements also apply. The Center does not require the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores, but it is highly recommended for students applying for the Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowship. Successful applicants should have a grade point average of at least 3.0 (4.0=A) calculated for the last 60 semester hours of undergraduate course work. International applicants or applicants whose native language is not English must have a minimum TOEFL score of 550 on the paper-based test (PBT) -- 213 on the computer-based test (CBT) or 79 on the internet-based test (IBT). For information about the application process and to access both domestic and international student applications, start here (<https://grad.illinois.edu/admissions/apply/>).

For more information about the Center's admission requirements and procedures, and deadlines please visit our website (<https://afrst.illinois.edu/academics/graduate-programs/how-apply/>).

Students interested in the graduate minor in African Studies must be in good standing in a graduate program, have permission from the major program, and demonstrate an interest in African Studies. For more information, contact Dr. Maimouna Barro ([barro@illinois.edu](mailto:barro@illinois.edu)).

## Faculty Research

The Center for African Studies' has both core and affiliate faculty represented in over 34 units across campus encompassing various disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, as well as in professional schools. The faculty is the backbone of the Center and constitutes the most critical element of the graduate experience. They excel in teaching at all levels and have a strong commitment to innovative research. Both Center faculty and teaching assistants have received numerous college and campus teaching awards. For more information about the Center faculty, please visit our website (<https://afrst.illinois.edu/directory/faculty/>).

## Facilities and Resources

Established since 1970, the Center for African Studies is one the largest and most dynamic African National resource Centers in the country. The Center promotes excellence in research and teaching on Africa in all disciplines. The Center also exists to increase and disseminate knowledge about Africa to the larger community through various outreach activities to colleges, schools, community groups and businesses. At a time when the Illinois is expanding its international dimension, the Center for African Studies is dedicated to promoting a vibrant African Studies program and to fostering an understanding of Africa and African peoples through research, teaching and various Africa-related programs and events. The Center organizes a wide range of activities including conferences, lectures, film festivals, art exhibits, language institutes, workshops, and symposia. In addition, the Center regularly hosts visitors from the United States and abroad, namely Africa, and is strongly committed to developing linkages with individuals and institutions based in the African continent.

In 2012, the University of Illinois Library reorganized its international and area studies units into one large International and Area Studies Library (IASL) in an excellent renovated space. This new unit includes the African Studies library and other world areas library collections. The University Library has supported a full-time African Studies Bibliographer since 1969, and has provided the necessary acquisitions, cataloging, and processing staff since then.

The African Studies collection include over 354,000 items in all formats, with more than 300,000 in printed volumes and in English and French and a smaller number in Portuguese, German and other European languages. The Library adds about 900 items written in African languages each year. About 16,000 volumes written in Arabic deal with topics related to Africa, and more than 7000 are in Amharic, Bamana, Hausa, Lingala, Swahili, Tigrinya, Wolof, and Zulu. There are roughly 2,900 serials and 46,000 maps, of which 2849 have been digitized, as well as 12,000 microforms, and more than 800 audio-visual materials. The collection covers all African countries and includes materials in about 80 African languages. Priority countries for collecting include: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Sudan, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The collection is interdisciplinary and concentrated mainly in the humanities, social sciences, human rights and law, and agriculture. Our large collection of primary source materials, covering all of Africa, includes 120,000 pages of Arabic manuscripts and thousands of United States, United Kingdom, and African government documents. The Africana film collection is one of the finest in the US, and our African film database provides access to more than 800 films from or about Africa. UI's rich museum collections include the Krannert Art Museum and the Spurlock Museum and hold over 10,000 African artifacts. The museums present interesting exhibits and host African performances. Teacher kits on various African topics are also provided by the Krannert Art Museum.

The African studies bibliographer runs the Africana library and teaches IS 530, one of the Center's core courses and plays a key role in the Center's graduate program. For further information about the Africana library, please visit the library website (<http://www.library.illinois.edu/ias/africana/>).

## Financial Aid

Students must apply and be admitted according to the set deadlines to be considered for assistantships and fellowships. The Center

evaluates and ranks entering students on the basis of academic promise. This ranking becomes part of the basis for financial aid decisions. Funding is generally awarded to cover the fall and spring semesters and occasionally on a semester-by-semester basis. Multiple years of funding cannot be guaranteed, but the Center considers it a priority to fund students and see them through the program. Continued funding is based on academic (in the case of Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships) and job performance (in the case of assistantships), the availability of positions, and the Center's budget in a given year or US Department of Education Title VI funding cycle.

Students are encouraged to check the Graduate College's website (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/>) for funding opportunities—whether they are fellowships or assistantships.

For information about available awards and application deadlines, visit this website (<https://afirst.illinois.edu/academics/fellowship-opportunities/>).

*for the Master of Arts in African Studies*

For additional details and requirements refer to the department's Graduate Programs (<https://afirst.illinois.edu/academics/graduate-programs/>) and the Graduate College Handbook (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/gradhandbook/>).

## Thesis Option

Code	Title	Hours
IS 451	Bibliography of Africa	4
AFST 515	Practicum in African Studies (recommended)	2
AFST 522	Development of African Studies	4
Elective area studies courses, drawn from at least three different academic units		12-18
Independent Study (Optional; 4 max applied toward degree)		0-4
Language Requirement: Must study or demonstrate proficiency in a language indigenous to Africa at the advanced (third-year) level, but these hours cannot count toward the degree requirements.		0
AFST 599	Thesis Research (8 hours max applied toward degree)	8
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>34</b>

## Other Requirements

Requirement
Other requirements may overlap
Minimum 500-level Hours Required Overall: 16
Minimum GPA: 3.25

## Non-Thesis Option

Code	Title	Hours
IS 451	Bibliography of Africa	4
AFST 515	Practicum in African Studies (recommended)	0 or 2
AFST 522	Development of African Studies	4
Elective area studies courses, drawn from at least three different academic units		20-26
Independent Study (Optional; 4 max applied toward degree)		0-4

Language Requirement: Must study or demonstrate proficiency in a language indigenous to Africa at the advanced (third-year) level, but these hours cannot count toward the degree requirements. 0

**Total Hours** 34

## Other Requirements

Requirement
Other requirements may overlap
Minimum 500-level Hours Required Overall: 16
Minimum GPA: 3.25

*for the Master of Arts in African Studies*

- Strong interdisciplinary knowledge of African area studies, of Africa and its cultures and societies in a broader international and global context
  - Students should have a good understanding of the various historical, cultural, social, economic and political conditions that shaped the development of the continent
  - Students should be able to place their knowledge of Africa and African studies in a broader world context and from a multidisciplinary perspective.
- Proficiency in African language and a solid knowledge of research methodologies
  - Students should develop appropriate expertise in a region or country in African, acquire proficiency in a language of a particular region/country and equip themselves with a good understanding of the appropriate research tools to study that region/country.
- Although international experience is not a requirement for the MA program, experience through study abroad is an integral part of the graduate experience, especially when fellowship opportunities for African language study do exist. Students should demonstrate commitment to conduct fieldwork whenever opportunities for study abroad are available.
- Students should be able to demonstrate strong research skills. Completion of an MA thesis by the end of the second year is a good indication that they have acquired good research skills. However, participation in conferences will also be a good assessment of students' ability to conduct research.
- Students should be able to make a practical contribution to the center and to African Studies through participation in internships. The Center for African Studies has strong partnerships with organizations and institutions of higher education based on the African continent and can help students identify international internship programs. In case a student is not able to do an internship by the time they graduate, an alternative option would be for them to complete our practicum course (AFST 515). Students enrolled in this course will complete independent projects and will be able to demonstrate their knowledge and practice their skills in real-world settings.

## Graduate Degree Programs in African Studies

- African Studies, MA (p. 1)
- African Studies Graduate Minor (<http://catalog.illinois.edu/graduate/las/minors/african-studies/>)
- Joint Degree Program:
  - African Studies, MA and Library and Information Science, MS ([http://catalog.illinois.edu/graduate/is\\_las/joint-degree/african-studies-ma-library-information-science-ms/](http://catalog.illinois.edu/graduate/is_las/joint-degree/african-studies-ma-library-information-science-ms/))

*for the Master of Arts in African Studies*

---

## Center for African Studies

Director: Teresa Barnes

Center for African Studies website (<https://afrst.illinois.edu/>)

210 International Studies Building, 910 South Fifth Street, Champaign, IL 61820

(217) 333-6335, fax: (217) 244-2429

[african@illinois.edu](mailto:african@illinois.edu)

## College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences website (<https://las.illinois.edu/>)

## Admissions

Center for African Studies Overview of Admissions & Requirements

(<https://afrst.illinois.edu/academics/graduate-programs/how-apply/>)

Graduate College Admissions & Requirements (<https://grad.illinois.edu/admissions/apply/>)