

# AFRICAN CULTURAL STUDIES, PHD

The mission of the Department of African Cultural Studies is to provide research and teaching in the languages and expressive cultures of Africa and Africans around the world. Our faculty specialize in literature, music, film, critical applied linguistics, drama, critical theory, diaspora studies, and new media.

The department is the only one of its kind in the United States. For those learning to conduct research in African expressive cultures, it offers curricula leading to both the master of arts degree and the doctor of philosophy degree. Our students come from all over the world, including many African countries.

## ADMISSIONS

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Please consult the table below for key information about this degree program's admissions requirements. The program may have more detailed admissions requirements, which can be found below the table or on the program's website.

Graduate admissions is a two-step process between academic programs and the Graduate School. **Applicants must meet the minimum requirements (<https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/requirements/>) of the Graduate School as well as the program(s).** Once you have researched the graduate program(s) you are interested in, apply online (<https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/>).

Requirements	Detail
Fall Deadline	December 15
Spring Deadline	This program does not admit in the spring.
Summer Deadline	This program does not admit in the summer.
GRE (Graduate Record Examinations)	Not required.
English Proficiency Test	Refer to the Graduate School: Minimum Requirements for Admission policy: <a href="https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241">https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241</a> ( <a href="https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241/">https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241/</a> ).
Other Test(s) (e.g., GMAT, MCAT)	n/a
Letters of Recommendation Required	3

### PREREQUISITES

Admission to the graduate program requires a bachelor's degree with substantial coursework related to the expressive cultures of Africa. Admitted applicants with an insufficient background in African cultural studies may be asked to complete additional coursework beyond the regular degree requirements. Applicants should have a minimum 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 grading scale or equivalent academic performance on other scales. The department will consider special cases, however, for probationary admission.

Admission into the PhD program **requires** a master of arts in a closely related field (with the thesis or other substantive piece of graduate-level writing submitted as a writing sample).

### APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

All applicants to the program must apply online (<https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/>) by the deadline. The department cannot review an applicant who has not met all Graduate School admissions requirements (<https://grad.wisc.edu/admissions/requirements/>). Carefully review the instructions and other information the Graduate School provides; most of the admissions questions received are related to the Graduate School's requirements, which are answered in their documentation.

As part of the online application process, applicants will be asked supplemental questions regarding language and teaching experience and expected to **upload** the information listed below:

#### University Transcripts

Applicants must upload transcripts or academic records from **each** institution attended. Applicants may upload unofficial copies for department review. If recommended for admission to the program, the Graduate School will request official transcripts from undergraduate institutions. These must be issued directly by the institutions with all official seals, stamps, and signatures. International academic records must be in the original languages and records in languages other than English accompanied by an official English translation.

#### English Proficiency Requirement (International Applicants)

International degree-seeking applicants will need to prove English proficiency using the Graduate School's requirements (<https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/requirements/>). The online application allows applicants to self-report scores, but the program cannot consider an application until the Graduate School receives an official score report directly from the examination organization.

#### Purpose Statement

An applicant's statement of purpose should make clear that they understand the kinds of courses we offer (<https://guide.wisc.edu/courses/african/>) and the research interests of our faculty and substantiate how your own interests intersect with our faculty expertise (<https://african.wisc.edu/people/faculty-and-staff/>). Give a detailed account of the reasons and circumstances that led to an applicant's decision to undertake graduate work in the Department of African Cultural Studies. Include references to academic work, short-term and long-term goals, personal relationship to or interests in the fields we study, and knowledge of any African languages. If transcripts reflect any negative episodes in an applicant's academic career, e.g., a poor grade or a dropped course, they may explain them here.

The department will make secondary use of the purpose statement to assess the style and substance of your writing. The program recommends a length of 500-1000 words. The scope of discussion and the level of detail that an applicant chooses to provide will be part of the program's assessment.

#### Curriculum Vitae or Résumé

Submit a curriculum vitae or résumé listing language experience, awards, honors, or publications. For more information on curriculum vitae or résumé writing, consult the UW-Madison Writing Center's tips (<https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/assignments/cv/>).

### Letters of Recommendation (3)

The program requires three letters of recommendation, submitted directly by the referees. Applicants must submit requests to all three references as part of the online application. Recommenders will receive a notice via email and will submit their letters accordingly.

Recommendation letters should discuss an applicant's overall scholarly ability. Ask referees to include specific examples of the applicant's academic achievements; independent thinking, analytical and critical thinking skills; papers and presentations given in their courses; and an applicant's merits relative to other students. For international applicants, the letters should also address English proficiency.

If recommenders submit letters via the Graduate School's online application system, they will be asked to provide class rank information; if they do not submit their letters through this system, they should include this information in the letter itself.

Strong letters of recommendation will provide the department with evidence that applicants will succeed in the study of African languages and expressive cultures at the graduate level. While the program will accept letters from faculty in any discipline, it will give greater weight to letters from faculty whose scholarship is related to the fields the program studies.

All letters must be received by the application deadline to consider your application.

### AFTER THE APPLICATION

Once an applicant submits an application, they will receive an email with a link to set up a UW-Madison NetID. Use the information to track application progress.

## FUNDING

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### GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

[The Bursar's Office provides information about tuition and fees associated with being a graduate student.](#) [Resources to help you afford graduate study might include assistantships, fellowships, traineeships, and financial aid.](#) [Further funding information is available from the Graduate School.](#)

Be sure to check with your program for individual policies and restrictions related to funding.

### PROGRAM RESOURCES

The department automatically considers all applicants for support through teaching assistantships and various UW-Madison fellowships. All admitted students are guaranteed five years of funding, typically in the form of TAships, as long as they are making satisfactory progress.

Our top domestic students are typically nominated for, and often receive, Advanced Opportunity Fellowships (<https://grad.wisc.edu/diversity/oeid/>) (AOF). Read more about Graduate School inclusion efforts (<https://grad.wisc.edu/diversity/>).

All domestic students are also encouraged to apply for Foreign Language Area Studies (<https://flas.wisc.edu/>) (FLAS) fellowships.

Many of our graduate students also pursue outside funding as their career progresses. Details are listed below.

### Teaching Assistantships

The department regularly funds teaching assistantships for both our language and literature/culture courses. Opportunities and assignments vary by semester. All continuing graduate students in good academic standing must apply by December 15 to be considered for positions for the following academic year. All new applicants are automatically considered. Teaching assistants earn tuition remission, a stipend, and benefits.

Please consult our website (<https://african.wisc.edu/graduate-programs/funding/>) for the most up-to-date information regarding teaching assistantships.

### Ebrahim Hussein Fellowship

The Ebrahim Hussein Endowment for research in African expressive cultures was established in the College of Letters & Science in 2003 thanks to the generosity of Robert M. Philipson, alumnus of the College of Letters & Science (PhD 1989). The college will award \$7,500 each year to one or more full-time graduate students in L&S to carry out research on African expressive cultures in Africa and/or archives outside of the United States. The research must lead to a PhD dissertation, an MA thesis, or a publishable-quality paper. Doctoral students may receive up to \$7,500 each; MA level students may receive up to \$3,750 each.

#### Selection Criteria:

- Excellence of research proposal
- Demonstrated commitment to researching African expressive cultures
- General academic record
- Strong recommendations from faculty
- Timing of the proposed research in relation to degree requirements

### Other Funding Resources

The Graduate School provides additional information helpful to graduate students in need of funding.

Find information about:

Types of funding available (<https://grad.wisc.edu/studentfunding/types/>)

Funding for international students (<https://iss.wisc.edu/students/new-students/funding-scholarships/>)

- African Studies Graduate Student Summer Fieldwork Award ([http://africa.wisc.edu/?page\\_id=12507](http://africa.wisc.edu/?page_id=12507))
- Dana-Allen Dissertation Fellowship (<https://irh.wisc.edu/staff-type/dana-allen-dissertation-fellowships/>)
- Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowships (<https://flas.wisc.edu/>)
- Scott Kloeck-Jenson Fellowship (<http://iris.wisc.edu/funding/students/skj/>)
- IRIS Graduate Student Summer Fieldwork Award (<http://iris.wisc.edu/funding/students/summer-fieldwork-award/>)

External funding options (<https://grad.wisc.edu/funding/fellowships/>)

- American Association of University Women (<https://www.aauw.org/resources/programs/fellowships-grants/>)
- American Council of Learned Societies (<http://www.acls.org/programs/comps/>)
- Gorgias Press (<https://www.gorgiaspress.com/awards/>)
- Aga Khan International Education Programme (<http://www.akdn.org/our-agencies/aga-khan-foundation/international-scholarship-programme/>)

- Margaret McNamara Education Grants (<http://www.mmeg.org/programs/>)

Research travel awards (<https://grad.wisc.edu/studentfunding/grantscomp/research/>)

- American Council of Learned Societies (<http://www.acls.org/programs/comps/>)
- Chateaubriand Fellowship (<https://www.chateaubriand-fellowship.org/>)
- German Academic Exchange Service (<https://www.daad.org/en/find-funding/>) (DAAD)
- Harvard Society of Fellows (<https://socfell.fas.harvard.edu/about/>)
- Royal Historical Society (<http://royalhistsoc.org/grants/research-expenses/research-expenses-for-overseas-students-guidelines/>)
  - Marshall & Centenary Fellowships ([https://royalhistsoc.org/research\\_funding/](https://royalhistsoc.org/research_funding/))

Conference presentation funds (<https://grad.wisc.edu/studentfunding/grantscomp/conference/>) (bottom of page)

## REQUIREMENTS

### MINIMUM GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Review the Graduate School minimum degree requirements (<https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#requirements-text>) and policies (<https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policies-text>), in addition to the program requirements listed below.

### MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

#### MODE OF INSTRUCTION

Face to Face	Evening/ Weekend	Online	Hybrid	Accelerated
Yes	No	No	No	No

#### Mode of Instruction Definitions

**Accelerated:** Accelerated programs are offered at a fast pace that condenses the time to completion. Students typically take enough credits aimed at completing the program in a year or two.

**Evening/Weekend:** Courses meet on the UW–Madison campus only in evenings and/or on weekends to accommodate typical business schedules. Students have the advantages of face-to-face courses with the flexibility to keep work and other life commitments.

**Face-to-Face:** Courses typically meet during weekdays on the UW–Madison Campus.

**Hybrid:** These programs combine face-to-face and online learning formats. Contact the program for more specific information.

**Online:** These programs are offered 100% online. Some programs may require an on-campus orientation or residency experience, but the courses will be facilitated in an online format.

### CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS

Requirement Detail	
Minimum Credit Requirement	51 credits
Minimum Residence Credit Requirement	45 credits
Minimum Graduate Coursework Requirement	26 credits must be graduate-level coursework. Refer to the Graduate School: Minimum Graduate Coursework (50%) Requirement policy: <a href="https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1244">https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1244</a> ( <a href="https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1244/">https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1244/</a> ).
Overall Graduate GPA Requirement	3.00 GPA required. Refer to the Graduate School: Grade Point Average (GPA) Requirement policy: <a href="https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1203">https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1203</a> ( <a href="https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1203/">https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1203/</a> ).
Other Grade Requirements	PhD candidates should maintain a 3.5 GPA in all AFRICAN department courses and may not have any more than two Incompletes on their record at any one time.
Assessments and Examinations	<p>Doctoral students must pass a preliminary written examination to become dissertators, followed by a dissertation proposal oral defense. After writing the dissertation, candidates must pass an oral defense of the completed dissertation.</p> <p>Doctoral students must submit a short statement (2–3 pages) at the end of their third semester, discussing how the courses that they have taken so far, as well as those that they plan to take in the future semester(s), relate to their area of focus and inform their dissertation research and their envisioned career path. The statement should be approved by the advisor, then submitted by the advisor at a faculty meeting for feedback.</p>
Language Requirements	PhD students must complete one year of an African language beyond second year level.
	Students may petition for an exemption if they have received comparable African language training or have intermediate or higher proficiency in an African language.
	One additional course in a language relevant to the student's doctoral research and/or geographic area of focus, other than English. The language must be chosen in consultation with the director of graduate studies.
Graduate School Breadth Requirement	All doctoral students are required to complete a doctoral minor or graduate/professional certificate. Refer to the Graduate School: Breadth Requirement in Doctoral Training policy: <a href="https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1200">https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1200</a> ( <a href="https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1200/">https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1200/</a> ).

## REQUIRED COURSES

Code	Title	Credits
<b>African Language</b>		
PhD students must complete one year of an African language beyond second year level. Students may petition for an exemption if they have received comparable African language training or have intermediate or higher proficiency in an African language. One additional course in a language relevant to the student's doctoral research and/or geographic area of focus, other than English. The language must be chosen in consultation with the director of graduate studies.		
<b>Department Courses</b>		
Four AFRICAN department graduate-level courses: in consultation with the director of graduate studies and/or the dissertation committee chair, each student is expected to define, no later than the third semester, an area of focus within African Cultural Studies, e.g., literature, music, film, critical applied linguistics, drama, critical theory, diaspora studies, new media. Within that area of study, students will take:		
<b>Graduate Seminars</b>		
Two AFRICAN graduate seminars		
<b>Additional Coursework</b>		
Two additional courses to be chosen in consultation with the director of graduate studies and/or the dissertation committee chair		
One additional course in a language relevant to the student's doctoral research and/or geographic area of focus, other than English. The language must be chosen in consultation with the director of graduate studies.		
<b>Breadth</b>		
<b>Total Credits</b>		<b>51</b>

## POLICIES

### GRADUATE SCHOOL POLICIES

The Graduate School's Academic Policies and Procedures (<https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/>) serve as the official document of record for Graduate School academic and administrative policies and procedures and are updated continuously. Note some policies redirect to entries in the official UW-Madison Policy Library (<https://policy.wisc.edu/>). Programs may set more stringent policies than the Graduate School. Policies set by the academic degree program can be found below.

### MAJOR-SPECIFIC POLICIES

#### PRIOR COURSEWORK

##### Graduate Credits Earned at Other Institutions

Up to 6 credits of prior coursework may transfer in fulfillment of degree requirements with approval.

##### Undergraduate Credits Earned at Other Institutions or UW-Madison

No credits from an undergraduate degree are allowed to transfer toward the degree.

#### Credits Earned as a Professional Student at UW-Madison (Law, Medicine, Pharmacy, and Veterinary careers)

Refer to the Graduate School: Transfer Credits for Prior Coursework (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1216/>) policy.

#### Credits Earned as a University Special student at UW-Madison

No credits from a UW-Madison University Special student career are allowed to transfer toward the degree.

### PROBATION

A semester GPA below 3.0 will result in the student being placed on academic probation. If a semester GPA of 3.0 is not attained during the subsequent semester of full-time enrollment (or 12 credits of enrollment if enrolled part-time) the student may be dismissed from the program or allowed to continue for one additional semester based on advisor appeal to the Graduate School.

### ADVISOR / COMMITTEE

All students are required to find a dissertation advisor by the beginning of the third semester in the program. The dissertation committee must consist of at least four members representing more than one graduate program, three of whom must be UW-Madison graduate faculty or former UW-Madison graduate faculty up to one year after resignation or retirement. At least one of the four members must be from outside of the Department and all doctoral committee members must be designated as readers.

### CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED

15 credit maximum. Refer to the Graduate School: Maximum Credit Loads and Overload Requests (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1228/>) policy.

### TIME LIMITS

For students who earned an MA at an external institution, coursework should be completed in six semesters. By the beginning of the sixth semester, the candidate proceeds to the preliminary examination. A student who has not attempted the written preliminary exam by the beginning of their seventh semester or passed it by the end of the seventh semester, will leave the program with a terminal MA (provided they have at least thirty credits).

For students who earned an MA at UW-Madison, coursework should be completed in four semesters. By the beginning of the fourth semester, the candidate proceeds to the preliminary examination. A student who has not attempted the written preliminary exam by the beginning of their fifth semester or passed it by the end of the fifth semester, will leave the program.

A candidate for a doctoral degree who fails to take the final oral examination and deposit the dissertation within five years after passing the preliminary examination may be required to take another preliminary examination and to be admitted to candidacy a second time.

### GRIEVANCES AND APPEALS

These resources may be helpful in addressing your concerns:

- Bias or Hate Reporting (<https://doso.students.wisc.edu/bias-or-hate-reporting/>)
- Graduate Assistantship Policies and Procedures (<https://hr.wisc.edu/policies/gapp/#grievance-procedure>)

- Hostile and Intimidating Behavior Policies and Procedures (<https://hr.wisc.edu/hib/>)
  - Office of the Provost for Faculty and Staff Affairs (<https://facstaff.provost.wisc.edu/>)
- Employee Assistance (<http://www.eao.wisc.edu/>) (for personal counseling and workplace consultation around communication and conflict involving graduate assistants and other employees, post-doctoral students, faculty and staff)
- Employee Disability Resource Office (<https://employee disabilities.wisc.edu/>) (for qualified employees or applicants with disabilities to have equal employment opportunities)
- Graduate School (<https://grad.wisc.edu/>) (for informal advice at any level of review and for official appeals of program/departmental or school/college grievance decisions)
- Office of Compliance (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/>) (for class harassment and discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence)
- Office Student Assistance and Support (OSAS) (<https://osas.wisc.edu/>) (for all students to seek grievance assistance and support)
- Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards (<https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/>) (for conflicts involving students)
- Ombuds Office for Faculty and Staff (<http://www.ombuds.wisc.edu/>) (for employed graduate students and post-docs, as well as faculty and staff)
- Title IX (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/titleix/>) (for concerns about discrimination)

## L&S POLICY FOR GRADUATE STUDENT ACADEMIC APPEALS

Graduate students have the right to appeal an academic decision related to an L&S graduate program if the student believes that the decision is inconsistent with published policy.

Academic decisions that may be appealed include:

- Dismissal from the graduate program
- Failure to pass a qualifying or preliminary examination
- Failure to achieve satisfactory academic progress
- Academic disciplinary action related to failure to meet professional conduct standards

Issues such as the following cannot be appealed using this process:

- A faculty member declining to serve as a graduate student's advisor.
- Decisions regarding the student's disciplinary knowledge, evaluation of the quality of work, or similar judgements. These are the domain of the department faculty.
- Course grades. These can be appealed instead using the L&S Policy for Grade Appeal (<https://kb.wisc.edu/lis/22258/>).
- Incidents of bias or hate, hostile and intimidating behavior (<https://hr.wisc.edu/hib/>), or discrimination (Title IX (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/titleix/>), Office of Compliance (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/eo-complaint/formal-investigations/>)). Direct these to the linked campus offices appropriate for the incident(s).

### Appeal Process for Graduate Students

A graduate student wishing to appeal an academic decision must follow the process in the order listed below. Note time limits within each step.

1. The student should first seek informal resolution, if possible, by discussing the concern with their academic advisor, the department's Director of Graduate Studies, and/or the department chair.
2. If the program has an appeal policy listed in their graduate program handbook, the student should follow the policy as written, including adhering to any indicated deadlines. In the absence of a specific departmental process, the chair or designee will be the reviewer and decision maker, and the student should submit a written appeal to the chair within 15 business days of the academic decision. The chair or designee will notify the student in writing of their decision.
3. If the departmental process upholds the original decision, the graduate student may next initiate an appeal to L&S. To do so, the student must submit a written appeal to the L&S Assistant Dean for Graduate Student Academic Affairs within 15 business days of notification of the department's decision.
  - a. To the fullest extent possible, the written appeal should include, in a single document: a clear and concise statement of the academic decision being appealed, any relevant background on what led to the decision, the specific policies involved, the relief sought, any relevant documentation related to the departmental appeal, and the names and titles of any individuals contributing to or involved in the decision.
  - b. The Assistant Dean will work with the Academic Associate Dean of the appropriate division to consider the appeal. They may seek additional information and/or meetings related to the case.
  - c. The Assistant Dean and Academic Associate Dean will provide a written decision within 20 business days.
4. If L&S upholds the original decision, the graduate student may appeal to the Graduate School. More information can be found on their website: Grievances and Appeals (<https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/grievances-and-appeals/>) (see: Graduate School Appeal Process).

## OTHER

n/a

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

Take advantage of the Graduate School's professional development resources (<https://grad.wisc.edu/pd/>) to build skills, thrive academically, and launch your career.

### DEPARTMENT EFFORTS

We fully support and encourage our students to attend and participate in any professional development events hosted by the Graduate School. These may include everything from writing workshops to exploring careers outside of academia. We also regularly offer opportunities for professional development specific to our field, often based on student feedback. In addition, we encourage students to seek out and participate in conferences and offer funding to support these endeavors.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. (Content) Recognize canonical authors and texts, historical forms, genres, and structures, and recognize aesthetic and cultural concerns in Africa and its diasporas.
2. (Content) Develop in-depth knowledge in a sub-field of specialization within African cultural studies.
3. (Content) Demonstrate their understanding of major theories, approaches, concepts, and current and classical research findings in African and diaspora literary and cultural studies.
4. (Content) Develop a level of proficiency in the different “ways of knowing” Africa and the diaspora through language, literatures, and cultures.
5. (Content) Develop knowledge of a secondary field of research from outside the Department of African Cultural Studies.
6. (Research Skills) Understand their own learning processes and possess the capacity to intentionally seek, evaluate, and learn from information, and recognize and reduce bias in their thinking.
7. (Research Skills) Effectively retrieve and comprehend primary sources in English and African languages, and secondary sources from a range of disciplines.
8. (Research Skills) Gain firm knowledge of existing research in their area of specialization and its gaps.
9. (Research Skills) Have an understanding of professional and ethical responsibility with regard to producing original research and working with human subjects.
10. (Communication Skills) Develop or improve speaking, listening, writing, reading skills in an African language, and integrate these skills to communicate effectively.
11. (Communication Skills) Communicate effectively through essays, oral presentations, and discussion, so they may share their knowledge, wisdom, and values with others across social and professional settings.
12. (Communication Skills) Show knowledge of conventional rhetorical strategies, and integrate research by other authors while distinguishing between their own ideas and those of others.
13. (Communication Skills) Write and speak across disciplinary boundaries with regard to existing research about Africa and the diaspora in the humanities and social sciences.
14. (Communication Skills) Demonstrate their ability to organize a book-length project into logical smaller components, so that it can be addressed in depth in a multi-chapter piece of writing.
15. (Analytical Skills) Discuss cultural texts from various theoretical and critical perspectives, formulate ideas and make connections between literary/cultural concepts and themes.
16. (Analytical Skills) Demonstrate command of the terminology and methodology of cultural studies, construct complex arguments, and use primary and secondary sources to support arguments.
17. (Analytical Skills) Articulate the place of their own research in relation to existing research on related topics.