2009-2010 KSU Africanist Faculty Learning Community

FINAL REPORT

Brandon D. Lundy, Coordinator

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Submitted to: CETL Executive Director
A. Report Narrative

As Kennesaw State University (KSU) continues to grow, some faculty with interests and expertise in Africa and the African Diaspora remain outside the purview of the African and African Diaspora Studies (AADS) program. Therefore, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) sponsored the KSUAfricanist Faculty Learning Community (FLC) in FY2010, which was coordinated by Dr. Brandon D. Lundy, an Assistant Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Geography and Anthropology. This model FLC has developed stronger cohesion among Africanist faculty at KSU and it has developed professional ties beyond KSU in order to strengthen the university’s visibility and reputation in African Studies. KSUAfricanist’s multidisciplinary core of seven faculty are able to disperse information, activities, and resources university-wide. In addition, the accompanying travel stipend in FY2011 will allow these participants to continue to disseminate the fruits of their collaboration at professional conferences in a wide variety of academic disciplines. KSUAfricanist FLC’s aims and achievements are consistent with the KSU’s mission to enhance teaching, scholarship, and service.

The KSUAfricanist FLC held its first meeting on September 25, 2009 with six members in attendance: (1) Brandon Lundy (Anthropology), FLC Coordinator, (2) Sam Abaidoo (Sociology), (3) Nuru Akinyemi (Political Science), (4) Bill Allen (History), (5) Solomon Negash (CSIS), and (6) Jessica Stephenson (Visual Arts). Subsequent meetings took place on October 16, 2009, November 20, 2009, January 22, 2010, February 11, 2010, March 26, 2010, and April 16, 2010. All meetings of the FLC were held in SO
Outcomes

First, the names and contact information of KSU Africanists (35 total) were collected to facilitate more efficient and effective communication through the development of a KSUAfricanist listserv ([KSUAFRICANIST@list.kennesaw.edu](mailto:KSUAFRICANIST@list.kennesaw.edu)). The listserv is intended to build cohesion university-wide among Africanist faculty and help promote a network of colleagues that will share similar interests. The list is intended to distribute information about upcoming talks, presentations, successful classroom activities, and other relevant information geared toward Africa and its diasporic communities. In addition, faculty can use this list to distribute and review educational and scholarly materials about Africa. Second, the FLC developed a wiki where scholarly work on/about Africa can be posted and peer reviewed by KSU colleagues ([http://ksuafricanist.pbworks.com/](http://ksuafricanist.pbworks.com/)).

Third, the most valuable endeavor of the KSUAfricanist FLC were the monthly meetings at which time group members led sessions on topics of their expertise based on their personal and professional experiences. The following are several topics that were covered over these seven sessions: (1) Discussed several key academic resources and how they could be incorporated into the curriculum at KSU (Adebayo 2009; Alden, Lloyd, & Samatar 1994; Bastian & Parpart 1999; Keim 2009); (2) Developed an action plan for preparing an edited volume titled, “Teaching Africa in the 21st Century Classroom,” including putting out a call for papers, outlining chapters, finding a publisher, and scheduling a realistic timetable; (3) Shared members’ ongoing work for group feedback; (4) Invited the CHSS grant specialist, Deborah Smith, to a meeting to
suggest possible funding opportunities for future collaboration, research, and service; and
(5) Invited several of the potential local contributors to the edited volume to KSU to
discuss their work and how it fits in with the aims of the FLC.

The primary long-term outcome of the KSUAfricanist FLC on teaching and
learning will be the publication of the interdisciplinary, edited volume on “Teaching
Africa in the 21st Century Classroom.” For all intents and purposes, this book will be a
collection of case studies and personal essays by Africanists about the value and
importance of the teaching of Africa in university classrooms as viewed from various
disciplines. The anticipated audiences for this work are educators at all levels as well as
undergraduate students at KSU and beyond. It should also benefit the general public
interested in building bridges between Africa and America so that all people may
understand the value and benefits of learning about and strengthening the relationships
between the U.S. and the African continent.

Finally, discussions remain ongoing about KSU’s future access to Merlot.org /
Community – Merlot Africa Network (MAN) (http://man.merlot.org/) under the direction
of group member Solomon Negash where relevant syllabi, teaching tools, and other
classroom materials from KSU Africanists can be posted as a peer-reviewed electronic
database. Although still in the planning stages, these materials would be available
university-wide for any faculty to incorporate into their classrooms both thematically and
anecdotally.

September 25, 2009

At the September meeting, the CETL Book Club’s discussion of Adebayo’s edited
volume, Globalization and Transnational Migrations: Africa and Africans in the
Contemporary Global System (2009) was announced and all members of the FLC were encouraged to attend. Dr. Lundy updated the group on the new KSUAfricanist listserv that was launched in conjunction with the development of the FLC. The group brainstormed appropriate book selections for the FLC to read and discuss as well as potential guest speakers for a mini-symposium to be held in April 2010. The possibility of establishing an African Resources Database accessible to KSU faculty and staff here at KSU was also brought up. We considered www.teachpsych.org as a model for this database. The group also talked about the development of a call-for-papers for an edited volume that the FLC is hoping to develop and publish. Finally, the schedule for the FLC meetings was updated.

October 16, 2009

At this meeting we finalized the call-for-papers for the edited volume titled Teaching Africa in the 21st Century Classroom (see attached). Subsequently, this call was sent out to Africanists through a number of appropriate listservs. The FLC agreed to read Bastian and Parpart’s edited work, Great Ideas for Teaching About Africa (1999). In addition, we ordered Curtis Keim’s Mistaking Africa: Curiosities and Inventions of the American Mind. Second Edition (2008) through CETL ($224). During this meeting, the KSUAfricanist FLC updated the list of potential guest speakers for the April 9, 2010 mini-symposium also titled “Teaching Africa in the 21st Century Classroom” and brainstormed potential publishers for the edited volume. Initial contact was made with: (1) Lynne Rienner, (2) Indiana University Press, (3) Westview Press, and (4) UNISA.
November 20, 2009

During this meeting, the KSUAfricanist FLC met with CHSS grant specialist Deborah Smith about possible funding opportunities. Dr. Negash updated us about possibly using Merlot.org / Community – MAN to host Africa-related teaching materials collected by our group. Discussions with Barry Morris at IGI and the library are underway about paying for an account for KSU to use this database. Indiana University Press and UNISA had positive initial responses about our potential edited volume. We discussed Keim’s *Mistaking Africa* at this meeting and how it relates to our current project. Invitations for the mini-symposium were sent to: (1) Abayomi Ola (Art History – Spelman); (2) Haile Larebo (History – Morehouse); (3) Renée Schatteman (English – GSU); (4) Jean Kidula (Music – UGA); and (5) Karim Traore (Comparative Literature – UGA). We also discussed the response to our initial call-for-papers, which netted interest from eight authors.

January 22, 2010

At the January meeting, the group discussed the potential for a KSUAfricanist “Working Papers” series. Also at this meeting, through PBworks, a Wiki was set up where KSU Africanist works-in-progress could be posted and then commented on by members through a discussion board. The group reviewed the 40 abstract submissions for the edited volume. Nine were rejected in the initial round of consideration. The remaining authors were contacted about submitting their full papers by the May 1, 2010 deadline. A contact list of KSU student groups was created at this meeting as well for future collaboration: (1) African American Student Alliance (AASA); (2) African and African Diaspora Studies Student Organization (AADSSO); and (3) African Student Association.
(AfriSA). Finally, an update on the guest speakers for the mini-symposium (16 April 2010, 12:00 – 5:00 PM) was announced at which time the following speakers agreed to participate: (1) Renée Schatteman, Associate Professor of English at Georgia State University; and (2) Jean Kidula, Assistant Professor of Music at University of Georgia.

**February 11, 2010**

During the February meeting, the KSUAfricanist group discussed the updated budget and how the remainder of the CETL FLC funds would be spent. It was decided that the group would use the remainder of the funds toward marketing and travel expenses for the mini-symposium.

**March 26, 2010**

During the March KSUAfricanist FLC meeting, a sample table of contents for the edited volume was distributed: (1) Introduction (Brandon Lundy, Kennesaw State U); (2) From African History to African histories: Teaching interdisciplinary method, philosophy, and ethics in the participatory classroom (Trevor R. Getz, San Francisco State U); (3) “Africa: Which Way Forward?”: An Interdisciplinary Approach (Todd Cleveland, Augustana College); (4) A Case Study of Study Abroad in Africa: From Independence through the Cold War (Dan Paracka, Kennesaw State U); (5) An African PhD Program in Information Systems: The Case of Addis Ababa U, Ethiopia (Solomon Negash, Kennesaw State U; Richard T. Watson, U of Georgia; & Detmar Straub, Georgia State U); (6) Tarzan, Tim Russert and Me: Teaching and Learning About Africa in the United States (Jack Parson, The College of Charleston); (7) Reciprocating Globalism: The Model AU as Pedagogical Methodology of teaching American Students about Africa (Babacar M’Baye, Kent State U); (8) Exploring and Representing African Experiences
through a Community Radio Partnership (Debra Spitulnik, Emory U); (9) Pan-Africanism: The Ties that Bind Ghana and the United States (Harry Nii Koney Odamtten, Michigan State U); (10) Postcolonial Perspectives: Teaching African Politics in Wales and Ireland (Carl Death, Aberystwyth); (11) Unthinking “The Country of Africa”: Teaching Sub-Saharan Africa in a First-Year World Geography Course (Elizabeth Lunstrum, York U); (12) Imagining Community in African History (Carolyn Vieira-Martinez & Karlsten Yago, Chapman U); (13) A Transtextual Approach to African Literatures (Oumar Cherif Diop, Kennesaw State U); (14) African Literature: Violence and Conflict Management (L. Johnston & O. C. Diop, Kennesaw State U); (15) The Encounter: Studying African Literatures in the Context of Twentieth Century World Literatures (Oumar Cherif Diop, Kennesaw State U); (16) Making the Nigerian Social Studies Curriculum Work for Sustainable Global Citizenship (O. E. Ojedokun, Obafemi Awolowo U); (17) Answering the “So What?” Question: Making African History Relevant in the Provincial College Classroom (Gary Marquardt, Westminster College); (18) The Importance of the Regional Concept: The Case for an Undergraduate Regional Geography Course of Sub-Saharan Africa (Matthew T. Waller, Kennesaw State U); (19) Contextualizing the Teaching of Africa in the 21st century: A pluralistic Pedagogical Approach to Demystify Africa as the “Heart of Darkness” (Lucie Viakinnou-Brinson, Kennesaw State U); (20) Teaching African Worldview through Oral History Projects (Caleb Corkery, Millersville U of Pennsylvania); (21) Teaching Culture, Health, and Political Economy in the Field: Ground-level Perspectives on Africa in the 21st Century (James Ellison, Dickinson College); (22) Inversion Rituals: The African Novel Speaking to the Global North (Catherine Kroll, Sonoma State U); (23) Beyond the Biologic Basis
of Disease: Jointly Teaching Ugandan and U.S Medical Students about the Social and Economic Causation of Disease in Africa (Amy Finnegan, Boston College; & Michael Westerhaus, Brigham and Women’s Hospital); (24) Teaching the American South and South Africa: A Comparative Pedagogy (Renée Schatteman, Georgia State U); (25) Getting at “Africa” (Jennifer Coffman James Madison U); (26) Shaping US-Based Activism Towards Africa: The Role of Critical Pedagogies (Amy C. Finnegan, Boston College); (27) Stereotypes, myths, and realities about African music in the American and African Academy (Jean Ngoya Kidula, U of Georgia); (28) Teaching about Individual Agency and State Power in Africa: Case Studies from Kenya and Rwanda (Susan Thomson, U of Ottawa); (29) Teach Me About Africa: A Social Justice Approach to Training K-12 Teacher (Durene I. Wheeler & Jeanine Ntihirageza, Northeastern Illinois U); (30) Defamiliarizing Africa: Teaching Leila Aboulela’s “The Museum” (Kerry Vincent, Acadia U); (31) Teaching Africa: Bissau-Guineans and the Classroom (Brandon Lundy, Kennesaw State U); and (32) Conclusion (Brandon Lundy, Kennesaw State U).

Planning for the upcoming mini-symposium on “Teaching Africa in the 21st Century Classroom” continued as well. It was decided to hold the symposium from 12:00 to 5:00 PM at CETL. Flyers and programs were printed at CETL. The logo was agreed upon (see Final Report cover page) by the group members. The list of presenters was finalized (See the attached program).

April 16, 2010

The KSUAfricanist FLC hosted a mini-symposium around the theme “Teaching Africa in the 21st Century Classroom” on Friday, April 16, 2010 from 12:00 PM to 6:30 PM at the CETL House #54 conference room. Topics included politics, technology, literature,
conflict management, geography, comparative pedagogy, music, economics, and critical thinking (see attached Program). Wine, light refreshments, and dinner were served. The mini-symposium was open to the public. There were eight presenters with 19 people in attendance throughout the day. Feedback for the symposium (out of 5) was as follows: (1) I will be able to use the feedback from this symposium – 4.5; (2) The symposium was useful and informative – 4.75; (3) The facilitator was helpful and knowledgeable – 5; (4) There was appropriate time and opportunity for discussion – 4; (5) I was able to get my questions answered – 4.75; and (6) Overall satisfaction with this symposium – 4.75. Dean Richard Vengroff had this to say about the symposium, “Thanks to you and your colleagues for putting on this excellent workshop on so vital a topic. The segments I was able to attend were outstanding. I only wish I could have broken free for the whole afternoon. Congratulations to you all on a very exciting, productive day.” Other comments included, “This workshop continued my thinking and provided further rationale to include Africa for the courses I teach … All the papers were enlightening. Hope you will hold similar symposiums at least once a year. I was glad I stayed to the end to hear everyone’s papers.” “We could have made this a whole day.” And, “The discussion was very engaging and informative. I really appreciated hearing the perspective of people from other disciplines. The presentation on Violence in African Literature and Conflict Resolution was particularly useful. And, of course, the food was outstanding.” The symposium flyer and program are attached.
B. Ongoing or Follow-up Activities

Introduction
The KSU Africanist FLC is developing an edited volume that can be used in a range of university courses dedicated to global initiatives. This project primarily has two aims: (1) to expand the course curriculum, and (2) to contribute to scholarship through the development of an edited volume. In order to continue this endeavor, the KSU Africanist FLC has applied for the 2010 Holder Award.

I. Expand Course Curriculum
This edited-book project begun in 2009 through the support of CETL will expand the course curriculum by researching and publishing specific practices and experiences about teaching Africa in the classroom.

II. Contributes to Scholarship
By reviewing the relevant literature on teaching Africa in Western colleges and universities, the KSU Africanists quickly realized that, while a growing literature documents African history, cultural diversity, and contemporary trends, there is a glaring lack of accessible multidisciplinary work on the initiatives of individuals and institutions currently tackling problems of Afro-pessimism and Afro-ignorance among much of the Western populace.

Most works and university programs aimed at teaching Africa in the West are routinely sponsored by the African Studies Association (ASA). The focus of these undertakings are primarily on issues of cultural studies and the viability of African Studies programs in the United States after World War II largely in response to the subsequent era of African independence. KSU Africanist’s edited volume will...
beyond these undertakings by creating an experiential roadmap to approaching the African continent, which is developed by educators for educators, students, and the community at large.

The two most comprehensive works to date on the topic of teaching Africa to Western undergraduates both reviewed by the KSUAfricanist FLC are Curtis Keim’s *Mistaking Africa: Curiosities and Inventions of the American Mind* (2009) and Misty L. Bastian and Jane L. Parpart’s edited volume, *Great Ideas for Teaching about Africa* (1999). Keim’s book was primarily dedicated to discussing what Africa is not. This deconstructivist agenda is an important first step in teaching about Africa. Our project, however, will begin to address what Africa is through essays about the continent’s history, diversity, and contemporary global trends.

Bastian and Parpart’s edited volume on teaching about Africa is a wonderful pedagogical resource, however, it is now more than ten years old. So much has changed in Western-African relations in the last ten years including the rethinking of the neoliberal policies of the 1990s, the further advance of globalization, the rise of China, and the development of AFRICOM. KSUAfricanist’s edited volume, while similar in approach to Bastian and Parpart’s work, is updated in scope.

**III. The Edited Volume**

This project addresses Afro-ignorance and Afro-pessimism at the university level by helping students to disaggregate Africa into its highly variable nations, states, cultural groups, and institutions. In this way, students will begin to understand continental particularities that may or may not affect the entire global system and vice versa such as anti-Islamic sentiments here in the U.S. or how certain parts of Africa are growing in
strategic significance to U.S. militarism, petroleum needs, and the war on drugs just to name a few.

By 2050, one in every five people worldwide will be African. The histories of the U.S. and Africa have been interwoven for more than five centuries, and today, the U.S. is forging new partnerships on the continent. At the same time, since the mid-1990s, China has made an all out effort to gain favor in Africa with considerable success even surpassing that of the U.S. in some countries. Clearly, the continent of Africa is a major international player with global stakes. And yet, for many American students, Africa remains the “Dark Continent.”

Africa is no longer simply a journalistic prop in the United States used to convey tales of the primitive “other”. Africa is a continent on the rise in industry, technology, population, and innovation. Keim reminds us,

Africa, because of its sheer size, population, resources, and modernization, will play an increasingly important role in the world, whether for good or ill, and will have to be taken seriously. Our long-term interest in our shrinking world is to understand Africa with as little bias as possible.

[2009: 12]

To be most effective, teaching should utilize real experiences in the classroom to demonstrate how diverse cultures can inform our own understanding of ourselves. Teaching involves nurturing alternative worldviews and giving students the resources to educate themselves in a safe environment. This volume would be one of those critical resources on Africa.
These are just a few of the many reasons why the KSUAfricanist FLC is attempting to “pluralize the curriculum” (Hilliard III 1991) by completing an edited volume about teaching Africa in the 21st century classroom. This multidisciplinary undertaking builds on the work of more traditional African Studies programs by promoting the teaching of African themes in a wider array of classrooms. As the need to understand the diverse patterns and processes of African peoples increases in the U.S. in order for our students to become better global citizens who are able to engage with a global world system, this polycentric attitude toward teaching at the university level is our strongest approach. By collaborating across the disciplines and across the Atlantic, a new multi-positioned discourse allows students to draw on different perspectives that bear upon the study of Africa leading to a developed “capacity to think through these issues for [students] themselves by introducing them to competing interpretations” (Alpers 1995: 9-10).

C. Expectations Met

Overall, many of the KSUAfricanist FLC expectations have been met (see above). The coordinator and group members are extremely satisfied with the work carried out over FY2010 and hope to continue future collaboration. A proposal has been submitted to the 2010 Holder Award in an effort to continue the work started by the KSUAfricanist FLC, especially the completion of the edited volume. Those aims in the original proposal that did not materialize included the following: (1) Development of Working Papers series – although a Working Papers series has not been created, a Wiki dedicated to this project has been created. (2) Collection of classroom materials – although materials have not
been collected to date, discussions are underway to develop an African Teaching Materials Database through an internationally recognized database-website (see above); (3) Create potential guest-lecturer list – due to disparate needs throughout KSU classrooms, this task was deemed untenable; (4) Schedule “Speaker Series” – this proposed project overlapped too closely with the AADS’ Brown Bag speaker series and was therefore dropped; (5) Review and critique the Africanist curricula at KSU and other universities and colleges throughout Georgia, the United States, and Africa – just too large an undertaking with the limited amount of resources available to the FLC; (6) Brainstorm what a first-year KSU undergraduate learning community on African themes might include – it was agreed by the group that this activity is more appropriate for the AADS; and (7) Invite outside speakers from one or more of the historically black colleges of Atlanta to discuss future partnerships – invitations went out, but no responses from relevant scholars were forthcoming to date.

References


D. FLC Participants and Attendance Record

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