



MAKERERE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL RESEARCH



MAKERERE UNIVERSITY



BIENNIAL REPORT 2023-24

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The MISR Library Extension



A well-stocked Graduate Research library



The Okot p'Bitek Pavillion



Some of the MISR Graduands 2024

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Message from the Director

I am pleased to present to you this biennial report of the MISR program spanning activities undertaken in 2023-2024. The global environment shaping higher education is one marked by increasing constraints in funding for higher education and graduate training in Africa. These shifts are a continuation of the trajectory of underfunding of universities, now spanning nearly four decades and exacerbated by de-emphasis of the humanities and social sciences. In his report titled “Ten Years of the Doctoral Programme at MISR: A Reflection,” MISR’s immediate past director, Professor Mahmood Mamdani, observes that a fundamental challenge which MISR has to continually anticipate, recognize and confront is the battle between two divergent visions of higher education: on the one hand, a corporate and bureaucratic vision and on the other, a decolonial vision shared by a growing range of forces. It is to the latter that we have continued to dedicate our efforts.

In the midst of a generational transition in the leadership of MISR early in 2023, a number of things remain a priority for the program. First, while the turn towards the taught doctoral program inaugurated in 2012 has MISR borne visible fruit as the doctoral program prepares to graduate its 14th PhD candidate and 54th MPhil candidate, the consolidation of the program remains an ongoing endeavor. There are a number of ongoing initiatives in this regard, including a curriculum review process that we successfully concluded early in 2024, as well as strengthening the interface between us and the policy world, and bridging the gap between basic research at the institute and applied research beyond it. Our fundraising efforts in support of research have been robust and we expect to continue building meaningful partnerships with our traditional and new funding partners.

The question of sustainability remains a focus for us, and as MISR settles into the second decade of its doctoral program, the granting to MISR of the status of a stand-alone school effective from January 2025 is an important step in that direction. This new status effectively moves MISR out of the college structure and grants us greater institutional autonomy. Over the coming year, we shall continue consultations with key stakeholders in the university, policy and academy at large as we implement the new structure and align it more closely with our vision for decolonized and relevant graduate education for Africa.

2023 and 2024 were marked by significant shifts and events in the global political landscape with huge and evolving implications not just for those economies and people’s that are directly affected, but also for us in the global south and especially so in Africa. Debates around decolonization are still raging in the academy and concerned scholars and intellectuals everywhere are taking stock of what the material redistribution of knowledge resources entails in the context of highly unequal distribution of resources, technologies, competencies and knowledge itself in universities, as well as in educational and activist spaces outside of the academy. Furthermore, the imperative to account for ever greater numbers of young people threatened by austerity reinstates the funding imperative for graduate studies in Africa at the same time as it raises the question regarding sustainability of donor-dependent education.

Our experience at MISR, having by this year graduated a total of 74 Mphil and 18 PhD students – all of whom have found placement in universities within the country and across Africa – continues to prove that the model of seeking to retain the best of our young intellectual talent by providing quality and subsidized graduate training on the continent remains worthwhile, and is one of the major possibilities of thinking endogenous development of Africa in the coming generations. Furthermore, it is ever more apparent that the task of institutional building and strengthening programs such as ours must remain a collective one, meaning that the model cannot be tested in one place only but has to travel across the continent and find varying interpretation in different contexts.

Last but not least, over the past year we have significantly grown our collaborative effort to include more activities with community-based and civil society actors, as well increased participation of our students and faculty in the wider life of Makerere University. We have also embarked on new areas of basic research in the thematic areas of land and agrarian studies, labour migration, and identity, with the aim of making more impactful interventions into the knowledge bases and public discourse in Uganda, East Africa and continentally. Our global focus remains with the mission of thinking the world from the vantage point of Africa, and in these efforts, we are redefining the MISR model to encompass not only the taught program as a major flagship, but also to develop it alongside a strong mentorship program between students, senior faculties and our communities of research.

I am pleased to share with you this double issue of our annual report and to express my sincerest appreciation for the support of collegiality and shared vision that makes the program possible and operational.

Lyn Ossome

Associate Professor & Director, MISR



Introduction

About MISR

Established in 1948, the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR) is a research unit under the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHUSS) at Makerere University. MISR launched its novel interdisciplinary MPhil/Ph.D in Social Studies in 2012, a program founded on the principle that tomorrow's researchers and higher education leaders need to be trained in the same conditions in which they will work, and it is only through an interdisciplinary, course-work based curriculum that new knowledge can encompass the context in which it is being produced, and thus provide novel answers to questions that are posed on the ground. MISR is committed to endogenous knowledge creation and to generating a pool of high quality and strategic thinkers for the country and the region who can think the world from various disciplinary and geographical locations.

At the heart of the MISR Programme are three key elements. These include teaching (through weekly classes, colloquiums, and seminars), research groups, and research dissemination. These elements of the institutional life at MISR are connected in such an intricate way that teaching and research are linked. Our weekly classes and seminars are consistently nourished by research conducted by staff and students of the institute. Even as we do this, we continue to ensure that research groups maintain a taught element as each research group is at the same time a reading group. Our research groups pool these seamlessly as each research group is organized around three elements - reading groups, fieldwork (archival, ethnographic and desk-based) and research dissemination through the MISR working papers, *the MISR Review journal* and other publication outlets. This connection between teaching and research is core to our work at MISR, and together constitute the MISR Model.

The MISR Model is built around a 3-Year MPhil component and a 2-Years Doctoral Research and Writing component. Students undertake full time coursework during the first two years and during their third year, take a Research Colloquium that brings together students and the entire teaching faculty. The

Colloquium is preparatory to writing Comprehensive Examinations and a doctoral proposal. As part of their overall training, 3rd Year students also conduct undergraduate tutorials in various departments in the college of Humanities and Social Sciences at Makerere. Students undertaking doctoral studies spend a fourth year doing field work and their fifth and final year on dissertation writing. As of 2024, the program has produced 18 PhD Graduates.

At MISR's core is a rigorous research agenda. Its mission is to build a sustainable research culture that seeks to move away from answering questions others have posed towards formulating the question itself. Research at MISR has been institutionalized through a process of rigorous intellectual inquiry, exchanges and debates both within and outside the classroom. Research is structured through a number of core research groups that foster collaborative research, publications and seminars between students and faculty, and between the Institute and the broader research and policy community in Uganda and beyond. Research faculty are also engaged in individual research projects, currently including: political violence and notions of justice; migration; gender and sexualities; labor organization and resource extraction. The MISR teaching and research

faculty is comprised of Research Fellows who have an exclusive appointment at MISR, Research Associates who hold joint appointments at MISR and in a disciplinary department in the College of Humanities and Social Science, Visiting Research Fellows on a semester or year-long appointment and Postdoctoral Fellows. A hallmark of MISR'S research culture is the Wednesday Seminar Series which draws participation from the scholarly and research communities at MISR, Makerere, civil society and the wider public.

Strategic Objectives

MISR's overall objective is to promote interdisciplinary research as a means of understanding the articulation of local and global processes from the vantage point of Africa. To accomplish this, the program seeks to:

- ❑ Develop an interdisciplinary postgraduate program that produces researcher and research that is contextually grounded and socially relevant;
- ❑ Broaden the parameters of social debate on key issues of scholarly significance and societal concern;
- ❑ Expand and strengthen the information, translation and publication system that can extend the flow of information of socially critical issues in the major languages spoken in Uganda;
- ❑ Broaden MISR's outreach services and thereby develop organic linkages with the local policy, activist and research communities;
- ❑ Strengthen the organizational and management structures of MISR in line with its expanding human and physical resources;
- ❑ Strengthen internal mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.

Research and Teaching Community

Full-time Research/Teaching Staff:

MISR has 14 established positions (new structure) in its permanent faculty: Currently MISR has; 1 Associate Professor, 2 Senior Research Fellows, and 3 Research Fellows.

Research Associates:

There are a number of Lecturers and Professors drawn from other units of Makerere University and other universities who teach part-time in the program in the various disciplinary fields.

Research Associates hold annual appointments that may be renewed subject to the changing needs of the academic programme and resource availability. MISR Currently has 5 Research Associates.

Visiting Scholars Programme:

MISR has an active Visiting Scholars programme through which well-established scholars from around the world spend a semester or a year teaching, researching and broadly engaging the scholarly community at MISR.

Research Affiliates:

MISR's Research Affiliate programme enables national and international scholars conducting research in Uganda to contribute to and gain from the Institute's intellectual life and academic production.

Accreditation of the MISR MPhil/PhD Program

The MISR Interdisciplinary MPhil/PhD Program, which is in its 12th Year, received approval from the Office of the Director of Quality Assurance and the Makerere University Senate in November 2011. The Makerere University Council further approved the program in December 2011. The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) accredited the program in July 2012, and the interdisciplinary MPhil/PhD program was formally launched in January 2012. In December 2023, the MISR curriculum underwent a review and was presented to the Makerere University Directorate of Research Graduate Training (DRGT) Senate for approval. Following DRGT/Senate approval, it was then submitted to NCHE for the renewal of accreditation.

Research Infrastructure and Built Environment

MISR has fully functioning research and teaching facilities, which include a well-stocked graduate research library, three seminar rooms and a study lounge for students. The library is dedicated to consistently meeting the information requirements of its users. To enhance support for the MISR research community, the library acquired over 301 new titles in 2023 and more are coming. Looking ahead, we are committed to adapting to the changing needs of our MISR community and exploring innovative approaches to improve information access and facilitate academic success. In addition to our print resources, users can conveniently access online resources through the MYLOFT application by signing up through <https://mulib.mak.ac.ug/>. Furthermore, the recent installation of WiFi in the library extension has made it fully operational and specifically tailored to support fourth and fifth-year MISR Ph.D. students in the final stages of completing their theses.

To ensure continued relevance to MISR's diverse research community, library staff are investing in their professional development. The head librarian and assistant Librarian are working towards a Ph.D. and a Master's degree in Library and Information Science respectively. Another member also enrolled in a Master's Programme in 2024. These developments signify our ongoing commitment to supporting the academic endeavors of the MISR research community. As we move forward, we will continue to evolve in response to the changing needs of our users, ensuring that our resources and services remain relevant and accessible. By investing in the professional development of our staff, we are strengthening our capacity to provide high-quality assistance and expertise to library users. We are confident that these

initiatives will further enhance our ability to fulfill our mission of fostering research excellence and academic success within the MISR community and beyond.

Other facilities at MISR include living quarters for academic staff and first-year students. A group of dedicated Administrative and Accounts staff provide and ensure the efficient and effective delivery of services to the program, including in-house library services, admissions, maintenance, and scholarship administration. MISR has a seminar room that can seat 50 persons comfortably. Recent renovations and additions have also added more seminar space and conference room facilities at the Okot p'Bitek Pavilion. Seminars and other workshops can be comfortably organized to seat more than 200 people.



MISR library extension (inside)



The MISR Library Extension (outside)



The Okot p'Bitek Pavillion

MISR MPhil/PhD Program

Understanding the World from the Vantage Point of Africa

MISR began its interdisciplinary MPhil/PhD program in January 2012. The 5-year program includes two years of intensive full-time coursework, during which students are required to take a set of core interdisciplinary courses, ranging from theory to history and historiography. Four broad thematic clusters define the program's intellectual focus: Political Studies, Political Economy, Historical Studies, and Literary and Cultural Studies. Students specialize in one field but take classes across all four. This allows students to gain theoretical grounding while giving them a broad foundation in historically informed debates in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Curriculum

The curriculum of the MISR MPhil/PhD program seeks to ensure that each student's course of study is driven forward by academic debates and not by orthodoxy or re-learning default assumptions. To accomplish this, the curriculum has a distinct feature: it combines an interdisciplinary focus

with distinct disciplinary training in four different clusters: (a) Political Economy; (b) Political Studies; (c) Historical Studies; (d) Literary and Cultural Studies. On the basis of interdisciplinarity, the MPhil/Ph.D program has several dimensions. First, an interdisciplinary focus is cultivated through a set of core courses on social and political theory and historiography. Second, students are required to identify a primary cluster as their major field and a secondary cluster as their minor field, thereby ensuring they take courses from more than one disciplinary cluster. Third, each cluster includes a study of themes, such as gender, ethnicity, or the environment, that call for a cross-disciplinary focus. Students are required to attend a Research Colloquium in the two first semesters of the third year of study, during which they present draft versions of their thematic and place-specific bibliographies. The entire academic faculty in the program participates in the Colloquium as discussants of students' work. During the second semester of their third year, students write two bibliographical essays, one thematic and the other place-specific, in preparation for Comprehensive Examinations and development of a research proposal. During that same year, third-

year students teach two tutorials, one per semester, for Makerere University undergraduate classes in the social sciences. The students are awarded an MPhil Degree upon successful completion of Year 3. In addition, every student is required to demonstrate research competence in two languages other than English, the language of instruction. For students with mother tongue proficiency in a language other than English, this is effectively a single language requirement. Year 4 is devoted to field research and Year 5 to dissertation writing. Courses are taught by MISR faculty (Research Fellows), faculty from other Makerere University departments (Research Associates), and pre-eminent visiting scholars through MISR'S Global Scholars Program (Research Affiliates). All MISR-based faculty are required to divide their time equally between teaching and research, a course-load which translates into teaching two courses per year. Each course is organized as a seminar. Every seminar meets once a week, three hours at a time. The academic year calendar comprises two regular semesters per year, the first from early January to mid-April, and the second from mid-May to end-August. MISR provides full fellowships to all and funding for the MPhil/Ph.D program is essential. While every student admitted into the program is on a full scholarship, successful completion of the MPhil and the writing of a successful research proposal in three years is a prerequisite for PhD funding for the remaining two years of doctoral studies. A student is awarded an MPhil degree upon successful completion of comprehensive examinations in their third year. The award of the PhD follows the successful completion of the PhD dissertation at the end of the fifth year of study.

Applications and Admissions

The MISR MPhil/PhD Scholarship follows a two-tier process of admission. The process begins with a public advert to which intending students respond by submitting their applications. The applications are reviewed and a longlist made. The longlisted candidates are invited for interviews from which a shortlist is finalized. The shortlisted candidates receive admission on scholarship.

Courses

YEAR ONE: SEMESTER I

Core Courses

SSR7104: Major Debates in the Study of Africa
SSR7105: Pre-modern and modern Political Thought
SSR7106: The History of Economic Theory

YEAR ONE: SEMESTER II

Core Courses

SSR7205: Africa Before Western Hegemony
SSR7206: Theories of Culture and Society
SSR7207: Feminist Political Economy
Electives (*None*)

YEAR TWO: SEMESTER I

Core Course

SSR8102: Colonialism, Post-Colonialism, and Decolonization

Electives (Choose at least two courses)

SSC8103: Thematic Seminar: Cultural Studies
SSE8104: Statistical Methods
SSE8103: International Political Economy
SSE8105: Late Industrialization
SSH8103: Gender in History
SSH8104: Slavery and Slave Trade
SSH8105: Thematic Seminar: Historical Studies
SSH8106: Historical Research and Sources in African History
SSP8104: Power, Society and Custom before and after Colonialism
SSP8102: Contemporary Western Social and Political Thought
SSP8103: Human Rights and Politics

YEAR TWO: SEMESTER II

Core Course

SSR8201: Research language (Any language e.g. Kiswahili, Luganda, Arabic, Geez, French, Luo etc.)

Electives Courses (Choose at least two course)

SSC8204: Studies in contemporary African Popular Arts and Cultures
SSC8205: Development, Culture and Social Change
SSC8206: Gender, Culture and Modernity
SSC8207: Ethnographic and interdisciplinary Methods in Social Studies
SSC8203: African Literature and the Critical traditions
SSE8203: Thematic Seminar: Political Economy
SSE8205: The Agrarian Question in Modern History
SSH8204: History and Historicism
SSP8204: The Modern State and Colonial Subject
SSP8205: Thematic Seminar: Political Studies

YEAR THREE: SEMESTER I

Core Courses

SSR8102: Research Colloquium
SSR8103: Comprehensive Examinations 1 (Thematic Bibliographies)
Electives (*None*)

YEAR THREE: SEMESTER II**Core Courses**

SST8201: Taught Tutorial

SSR8203: Research Colloquium

SSR8204: Comprehensive Examinations 2 (Place specific)

Electives (None)

YEAR FOUR: SEMESTER I & II**Core Course**

SSR9101: Fieldwork Report

Electives (None)

YEAR FIVE: SEMESTER I**Core Course**

SSR9102: Research Colloquium

Electives (None)

YEAR FIVE: SEMESTER II**Core Course**

SSR9202: Research Colloquium

SSR 9203: Final Dissertation

Course Descriptions**SSR7104: Major Debates in the Study of Africa**

This course focuses on six key debates that have shaped the study of Africa in the post-colonial African academy. (1) Africa between geography and history (2) Slavery, global history of slavery, and the historicization of slave trade in relation to market and state formation (3) the relationship between colonialism and pre-colonialism, colonial modernity and pre-colonial tradition in different periods of colonial rule, particularly those identified as direct and indirect rule (4) The relationship between underdevelopment locally and development globally in the modern period (5) The nexus between culture and politics in the formation of nationalist thought and mobilization (6) The role of violence in the making of political communities in different post-colonial contexts.

SSC 7105: Pre-modern and modern political thought

This course surveys key themes and approaches in the history of pre modern to modern political thought. After clarifying the nexus between political theory and political philosophy, and presenting core questions in political theory, the course inquiries into some of the major themes of political thought, analytically dividing them into two paired broad categories: 'what is right' is 'what is good'; 'what is right/what is power'; 'what is power/what is willed; and what is good/what is rational.

SSR7106: The History of Economic Theory

This course will introduce the student to key schools of economic thought through an intensive reading of key texts and primary source documents of economic theory. The student will be encouraged to evaluate major economic theories in their own right and understand the key points of difference, methodological and conceptual, between schools of thought. The student will also be encouraged to formulate contemporary economic problems from the standpoint of different schools, thereby understanding the contemporary significance of each school of thought.

SSR 7205: Africa before Western Hegemony

This course aims to dispel the European idea of Africa as 'a continent without a history' by exploring the history of North, East, South, and West Africa before the emergence of European power. It describes key states and the relations they had within the African continent. By exploring the oceanic history of Africa and the historical dynamics that relate it to the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Mediterranean Sea, the course will also explore the ways in which African history is marked by continental dynamics and states that function inside and outside the continent.

SSR7206 Theories of Culture and Society

The seminar introduces students to the theoretical study of modern culture, drawing from different disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Our aim is to explore various understandings and approaches to the ways in which culture is fundamentally implicated in questions of power, ideology, language, identity, gender, media, representation and knowledge production. While the course is broad in scope, particular attention will be devoted, when possible, to writers from Africa and writing about Africa. Covering a variety of schools of thought and authors, our explorations will be primarily guided by theoretical concerns arising out of the experience of colonialism and its afterlife.

SSR7207: Feminist Political Economy

This course illuminates the role of gender in determining and influencing social/political relationships and structures of power, and the differential economic effects that result from these structures and relationships. Methodological in nature, it brings feminist pedagogical tools into the deconstruction and reframing of basic neoliberal assumptions, illuminating the contribution of Feminist Political Economy to the political economy approach in the study of society and social

reproduction. Focusing on women, feminist political economy also extends its critiques to society as a whole and reinstates a gendered focus on the politics of everyday life. Topics and debates explored include: feminist agrarian relations; the state/household/market nexus in relation to gendered/reproductive labour; shifts in labour regimes under capitalism; social welfare regimes, transnational activism, social movements and feminist resistance.

SSR8102: Colonialism, Post-colonialism and Decolonisation

This course explores theoretical perspectives on decolonisation as articulated in anti-colonial, postcolonial and decolonial thought. It aims at providing some basic understandings of themes, ideas and approaches of a variety of responses to colonialism and its legacy, from different geopolitical contexts and cultural traditions. We will focus in particular on thought emerging from anticolonial and decolonization struggles in Africa, the Americas, Middle East and South-East Asia.

SSC8103: Thematic Seminar: Cultural Studies

This seminar will be crafted and presented by a visiting scholar. Its subject matter and thus the reading list will correspond to the specialization of the scholar in question and will be formulated by the visiting scholar in consultation with the Curriculum Committee of MISR. It will thus change every time a new scholar is invited to visit and teach at MISR.

SSE8104: Statistical Methods

The course is focused on how to design and conduct statistical enquiries and developing appropriate statistical research designs for various types of studies. It also focuses on how to develop and apply various sampling methods and techniques, various data collection methods and techniques, construction of various types of data collection tools, and basic skills in quantitative data analysis, interpretation and presentation. It explores mainstream literature in the quantitatively oriented social sciences.

SSE8103: International Political Economy

The course is a survey of classic and emerging research in International/Global Political Economy (IPE/GPE). Key areas will include: Theories of IPE; Globalization and new constitutionalisms; Transnational corporations (TNCs), Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and global restructuring of production; global trade and changing dynamics; international financial institutions and the debt regime; national fiscal policies; International

labor regimes; Gender and race in IPE; Climate change and climate justice; and global development trends. Broadly, the course deals with an overview of the history of the field and introduces the main analytical frameworks and methods of inquiry, and is concerned with the dominant substantive issues that concern IPE theorists and students in politics, trade, finance, investment, sovereignty, environment, development.

SSE8105: Late Industrialization

This course examines the uneven process of industrialization at different historical times and geographical spaces of the world. Using as a launch pad the classic British industrialization, its various understanding and theorization, the course addresses exogenous and indigenous environments that were responsible for the late industrialization in such countries as Germany, Japan, India and China. It also examines varied experiences of the East Asian 'Tigers', Latin America and Africa. In the case of Africa, focus is on the varied historical industrialization experiences of countries informed by the nature of their economies, principally; mineral revenue, peasant, and settler economies. Topics explored include: markets, property rights regimes, and the state, foreign versus local sources of capital, education, and agriculture.

SSH8103: Gender in History

This course introduces students to the study of gender in history through an interdisciplinary array of theoretical, literary, feminist, historical, and methodological debates on gender ideologies and practices in Africa over different historical moments. Thematically, the course is divided into two parts: the first part, focuses on intellectual genealogies and critiques of feminist theoretical perspectives and writings; discusses the tensions between Western Feminisms and "Third World" Feminisms; and consider issues of colonialism and postcolonialism, situated knowledge and differences. The second half of the course analyses case studies on gender in Africa, paying attention to discourses, successes, challenges and methodologies that women from Africa have used to negotiate and resist patriarchy.

SSH8104: Slavery and Slave Trade

The course traces the origin, development and expansion of slavery and slave trade and consider their implications on a global scale. It examines different forms of slavery including household, military and plantation slaveries, and different forms of slave trades such as African, trans-Saharan, Trans-Atlantic, and trans-Indian Ocean. In doing so, it introduces

students to the methodological significance of thinking of the slave trade in geographical (the Sahara, the Atlantic, and the Indian Ocean) as well as temporal terms (modern vs. pre-modern, capitalist vs. pre-capitalist, state-based vs. market-based).

SSH8105: Thematic Seminar in Historical Studies

This seminar will be given by a visiting scholar. Its subject matter and thus the reading list will correspond to the specialization of the scholar in question and will be formulated by the visiting scholar in consultation with the Curriculum Committee of MISR. It will thus change every time a new scholar is invited to visit and teach at MISR.

SSH8109: Historical Research and Sources in African History

This course introduces students to the debates in the writing of history focusing in particular on questions of historical evidence, approaches and narratives. It explores the connection between historical contexts and the constitution of particular sources, and how these inform historical production. Each week the focus will be on a different type of source and on the debates around theory collection and use. Exploring the political implications of historical work and the struggle over knowledge, power, the production of history and its decolonization, the course will pay attention to the role contingency plays in the creation of historical sources and their use, as well as the politics of power embedded in any given history.

SSH8106: Historical Research and Sources in African History

This course introduces students to the debates in the writing of history focusing in particular on questions of historical evidence, approaches and narratives. It explores the connection between historical contexts and the constitution of particular sources, and how these inform historical production. Each week the focus will be on a different type of source and on the debates around theory collection and use. Exploring the political implications of historical work and the struggle over knowledge, power, the production of history and its decolonization, the course will pay attention to the role contingency plays in the creation of historical sources and their use, as well as the politics of power embedded in any given history.

SSP8104: Power, Society and Custom Before and After Colonialism

This course introduces to students how African

customs and societies have been structured by the colonial encounter through the use of bureaucracies, customs, laws, religion, race, gender, ethnicity and African hierarchies to shape African societies. The course will also look at how Africa customs and societies in general have been invented, examining the role of Western social science disciplines such as Anthropology, History and Demography. The last two sections of the course will focus on Africans' resistance to categories created by colonial powers and the legacy that the colonial restructuring of Africa has for state-society interaction in contemporary Africa.

SSP 8102 Contemporary Western Social and Political Thought

The seminar introduces students to key questions and issues that have shaped critiques of modernity internal to Western social and political theory in the modern and contemporary periods. We will start by reflecting on methods, exploring such issues as the nature of meaning and interpretation, in the traditions of historicism, genealogy, hermeneutics, and deconstruction. After introducing social contract theory and its relevance to the justification of the modern state, we shall then consider how understandings of politics, society, economy, culture, history, and gender came to be articulated in positions within the West that are, in different ways, critical of modernity.

SSP8103: Human Rights and Politics

This course introduces students to critiques and debates foregrounding the political rather than the normative framing of human rights. It intervenes in two epistemological directions: one covering the philosophical basis of human right discourse and the Euro-modern assumptions underpinning it, and another covering a Third World decolonial critique of rights. The course adopts structural analytics. Students shall gain an understanding of the primacy of human rights as both an organizing discourse and hegemonic order in the context of shifting state sovereignties, and will develop an understanding of the political economy of human rights in Africa. Through a thematic focus on power, morality, ethics, difference, sovereignty, and universalism, the readings critically examine liberal assumptions underlying rights in particular relation to emancipatory possibilities in postcolonial Africa.

SSR8201: Research Language

MISR requires that a student attain research competence in one language other than the language of instruction, English. This may be demonstrated by an examination or by a qualification from another

institution or school. MISR is committed to the fundamental importance of language skills for research, whether for primary research, for gaining access to secondary literatures in a language other than English, or to utilize works in other intellectual traditions. Language training is considered integral to a student's program of graduate training.

SSC8204: Studies in Contemporary African Popular Arts and Cultures

This course examines scholarly literature in contemporary Africa popular arts and cultural forms, paying close attention to artistic, social, and cultural expressions of individuals and their communities variously defined. It also analyzes how production, expression, mediation, and channels are pertinent in these forms and expressions for the artists and their communities at the local, national, and global levels. A related issue will concern the designation of these forms as African arts and popular cultures and the current intellectual and scholarly interest in African popular arts and cultures that draw from a range of expressive fields and media: literature, art, music, film, theater, architecture, among others.

SSC8205: Development, Culture & Social Change

This course interrogates major development programs and projects through which governments and other actors in the 'development industry' have intended to induce social change in colonial and post-colonial societies in the developing world, with a particular focus on Africa. It will begin by looking at how societies were socially, culturally and politically constituted prior to colonial rule to understand the impact of colonial attempts at "modernization." Its focus will then shift to the post-colonial period and the numerous similar attempts that have been made and continue to be made to transform societies from 'backwardness' to 'modernity'.

SSC8206 Gender, Culture and Modernity

This course analyzes the intersections between gender, culture and modernity. It also aims at interrogating how gender has been understood in different cultures in Africa and in the 'Third World' 55 and how modernism, modernity, and the processes and outcome of modernization have affected the debate on gender. Discussions will consider how modernity grapples with the effects of globalization, multiculturalism, alternative modernities, and traditional gender norms.

SSC8207: Ethnographic and Interdisciplinary Methods in Social Studies

This course introduces students to ethnographic and other methods of the social sciences, connecting core methodological issues to their philosophical roots. After critically engaging the foundational issues in both general philosophy of science and philosophy of the social sciences, the course reviews selected methods and techniques that researchers could employ at varied levels, ranging from formulation of hypotheses through data collection to the write-up stage. It then proceeds to address the connection between modern methods and theories on the one hand, and the cultural presuppositions linked to the colonial experience that inform them, exploring the potential of decolonizing methodologies.

SSC8203: African Literature and the Critical Traditions

This course introduces students to the critical discourses that have shaped the scholarship of African literature from Enlightenment and empire to the present. Students will engage with the question of African literature, through examination of questions of author and authorship, orality and literacy, text and textuality, as well as genre, institution, and tradition. Likewise, they will attend to the ways in which African and Africanist academies and institutions, from colonial times, have shaped the critical discourses of African literature - empire, colonialism and decolonization in the context of Western hegemony.

SSE8203: Thematic Seminar in Political Economy

This seminar will be crafted and presented by a visiting scholar. Its subject matter and thus the reading list will correspond to the specialization of the scholar in question and will be formulated by the visiting scholar in consultation with the Curriculum Committee of MISR. It will thus change every time a new scholar is invited to visit and teach at MISR.

SSE8205: The Agrarian Question in Modern History

Through a political economy perspective, the course addresses the main theoretical and historical debates around the Agrarian Questions and explores different trajectories of agrarian change in the modern era. Debates explored are situated mainly in Africa but also in Latin America, India and China. Key distinctions elaborated include agrarian transitions from above versus from below, and those based on large plantation or capitalist agriculture versus

those based on small peasant or community-based agriculture. The course also assesses the impact of colonialism and post-independence agrarian policies on the nature of social relations and forces of production, as well as on the modes of political organization of land-based social relations and contemporary agrarian structures in the Global South.

SSH8204: History and Historicism

This course will introduce students to key texts in the 18th century formation of historical thought and the late 20th century critique of historicism. It will also introduce students to key debates in contemporary historical writing on structure and agency, teleology, historical difference, orientalism, subaltern history, and decolonisation. Readings will consider theoretical/methodological texts in conjunction with illustrations of how the same event or place can be understood through the frame of different kinds of historical narratives.

SSP8204: The Modern State and the Colonial Subject

This seminar on the development of legal thought on the colonial subject will introduce the student to an intensive comparative study of the changing technologies of colonial power ranging from 1491 to apartheid in modern South Africa and Israel. It will read and discuss texts focusing on the 16th and 17th century conquest of native peoples in the New World, the conquest of southern and tropical Africa from the 17th to the 20th centuries, and the theories of power and subjection.

SSP8205: Thematic Seminar in Political Studies

This seminar will be given by a visiting scholar. Its subject matter and thus the reading list will correspond to the specialization of the scholar in question and will be formulated by the visiting scholar in consultation with the Curriculum Committee of MISR. It will thus change every time a new scholar is invited to visit and teach at MISR.

SSR8102: Research Colloquium

After completing two years of Coursework, the student will join a research Colloquium which will bring together all third-year students with the entire Ph.D. teaching team for the full third year. The student will spend the third year preparing to take two Comprehensive Exams, one thematic, and the other place-specific.

SSR8103: Comprehensive Examinations 1 (Thematic Bibliographies)

In the *thematic* exam, the student is expected to have an understanding of scholarly debates that have informed the development of literature on the student's chosen theme globally. In the place-specific exam, the student focuses on the scholarly literature on at least three themes on the country/region (e.g., Uganda, Ethiopia/Eritrea) of his/her specialization. The student is guided in this by a Reading Committee. The Reading Committee is dissolved as soon as the student passes the Comprehensive Exams and is granted the MPhil.

SST8201: Taught Tutorial

This course offers a dynamic learning experience that combines one-on-one interactions with an expert mentor, targeted readings, discussions, and skill-building activities. Through this tutorial, students will develop advanced research competencies and refine their scholarly pursuits.

SSR8103: Research Colloquium

SSR8204: Comprehensive Examinations 2: Place Specific

In the place-specific exam, the student focuses on the scholarly literature on at least three themes on the country/region (e.g., Uganda, Ethiopia/Eritrea) of his/her specialization. The student is guided in this by a Reading Committee. The Reading Committee is dissolved as soon as the student passes the Comprehensive Exams and is granted the MPhil.

2

Academic Staff Profiles

FACULTY



Associate Professor Lyn Ossome
MISR Director

Lyn Ossome is Associate Professor and Director of the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR), Makerere University. She has held various faculty positions as Associate Professor of Political Studies at Wits University, Senior Research Fellow at MISR, and Visiting Presidential Professor at Yale University and visiting scholar at the National Chiao Tung University. Her specializations are in the fields of feminist political economy and feminist political theory, with research interests in gendered labour, land and agrarian questions, the modern state, and the political economy of gendered violence. Her books include *Gender, Ethnicity and Violence in Kenya's Transitions to Democracy: States of Violence* (2018), the co-edited volume *Labour Questions in the Global South* (2021), and a forthcoming monograph titled *Democracy's Subjections: Colonial Modernity and the Gendered Subject of Violence*. She serves on the editorial boards *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy*, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, and *Feminist Africa*, among others. She is the current president of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA).



Dr. Grace-Edward Galabuzi
Senior Research Fellow

Grace-Edward Galabuzi is a Senior Research Fellow at the Makerere Institute for Social Research, Makerere University. He has served as an Associate Professor in the Politics and Public Administration Department, Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada, and a Research Associate at the Centre for Social Justice in Toronto. He is the author of *Canada's Economic Apartheid: The Social Exclusion of Racialized Groups in the New Century* (CSPI, 2006) and co-editor of *Race and Racialization: Essential Readings* (CSPI, 2007) and *Colonialism and Racism in Canada* (Nelson/Thomson, 2009). His research interests include the experiences of recent immigrants and racialized groups in the Canadian labour market; Labour union organizing in immigrant sending and receiving countries; The racialization of Poverty; Resource extraction policy; and the impact of global economic restructuring on local communities. He holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from York University.



Dr. Andrea Cassatella
Senior Research Fellow

Andrea Cassatella is a Senior Research Fellow at the Makerere Institute of Social Research, Makerere University. He obtained his Ph.D. in Political Philosophy from the University of Toronto. His teaching and research are in social and political philosophy broadly construed across different cultural traditions, with particular interests in modern European philosophy and political theory, decolonial/post-colonial thought, religion and politics, and Islamic political thought. Before joining Makerere, he was Lecturer in Social Sciences at the University of Toronto Scarborough (2015-2016), and Visiting Assistant Professor of Humanities at Al Quds University, Palestine (2017-2019). He also held a Research Fellowship at Columbia Global Centers | Amman (2019-2020), University of Cape Town (2020), Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (2020), and the Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa, University of Ghana (2021). He is the author of *Beyond The Secular: Jacques Derrida and the Theological-Political Complex* and numerous articles which appeared in such journals as *Contemporary Political Theory*, *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, *Ratio Juris*, and *Bamidbar: Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*. Prior to his scholarly career, he served as Community Service Officer for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees missions in Bosnia Herzegovina and Djibouti.



Dr. Setargew Kenaw
Research Fellow

Setargew Kenaw Fantaw is a Research Fellow at Makerere Institute of Social Research, Makerere University. He is also an Associate Professor of Philosophy at Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia. He was previously editor-in-chief of the *Ethiopian Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities*. He is the author of *Technology-Culture Dialogue: Cultural and Sociotechnical Appropriation of Mobile Phones in Ethiopia* (2016) and *Knowledge Production and Spiritual Entrepreneurship in Zar: A Study of Spirit Mediumship in Northeastern Ethiopia* (2011). Published on classical and contemporary African education, African religions, cultural translation of technology, and philosophy of science, his current research interest includes political theory and decolonizing higher education.



Dr. Yahya Sseremba
Research Fellow

Yahya Sseremba is research fellow at Makerere Institute of Social Research, Makerere University. His research is interdisciplinary, with special interest in political thought (colonial, postcolonial and decolonial thoughts), political identity (racial, ethnic, religious and gendered political identities), and political violence. His latest book is *America and the Production of Islamic Truth in Uganda*.



Dr. Joseph Kasule
Research Fellow

Joseph Kasule received his Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Social Studies from Makerere University. He is currently a Research Fellow at MISR, where he researches and convenes courses in cultural anthropology. He works on aspects of Islam, Secularism, Violence, and Coloniality/Decoloniality. His recent book *Islam in Uganda: The Muslim Minority, Nationalism & Political Power* (James Currey, 2022) provides a genealogy of the historical Muslim Question in Uganda and its relationship with non-Muslim political power. He has also published the *Historical Dictionary of Uganda* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2022). His ongoing book projects include: *Kasangwawo ne Sselwajj'okwoota*, being a Luganda translation of Mahmood Mamdani's *Citizen & Subject* (MISR, 2024); *Public Intellectualism & Decolonial Epistemologies in Contestable Political Imaginations of Bergen & Buganda*, (MISR, 2024) and *Genealogies of Monotheism: Muslim Practices in Pre-Arabic Africa* (MISR, forthcoming).

Research Associates



Assoc. Prof. Ernest Okello Ogwang
Senior Research Associate

Ernest Okello Ogwang is a former Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic Affairs) at Makerere University. He is a holder of a Ph.D in Literature – Folklore Major (Indiana University, Bloomington), an MA and BA (Hons) in Literature (Makerere University). His areas of teaching and research specialty include; African Literature, Folklore and Literature, Oral Literature, Folklore (Genres and Artifacts, Methods, Intellectual History, Performance), Ethnographic Field Research and Literary Theory and Criticism. He has taught various courses at Makerere University in the areas of; African Literature, Oral Literature, Literature and Folklore: fieldwork course, Caribbean Literature, Ritual and Literature, Comparative Epic Poetry, Postcolonial Literature and Criticism, Selected Authors (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Okot p'Bitek, Chinua Achebe, J. M. Coetzee, V. S. Naipaul)



Prof. Adam Branch
Senior Research Associate

Adam Branch is Professor of International Politics at the University of Cambridge and was Director of the Centre of African Studies from 2017-2022. He received his PhD in political science from Columbia University and his BA from Harvard University. He is the author of *Displacing Human Rights: War and Intervention in Northern Uganda* and *Africa Uprising: Popular Protest and Political Change*. His current research focuses on the politics of climate change and on the political ecology of wood energy in East Africa.



Dr. Lawyer Kafureeka
Research Associate

Lawyer Kafureeka is a Research Associate at MISR. He also teaches in the department of Development Studies at Makerere University.



Dr. Florence Ebila
Research Associate

Florence Ebila has Doctoral and Masters' Degrees in African Languages and Literature/ Women and Gender Studies, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a Masters' Degree in Women and Gender Studies and a Bachelor's Degree in Literature, from Makerere University. She is a lecturer in the School of Women and Gender Studies Makerere University, Kampala. Her Doctoral dissertation focused on how African women's (auto)biographies voiced gender and nationalism in Kenya, Uganda and Liberia. Her research interests are in the areas of gender, culture, feminist research and theory, feminist historiography, gender-based violence, postcolonial studies, African literature and languages.



Dr. David Ngendo-Tshimba
Research Associate

He currently heads the Centre for African Studies at Uganda Martyrs University, where he also lectures in its Department of Governance, Peace and International Studies. David holds an interdisciplinary doctorate in History and Political Studies from MISR of Makerere University. He is recipient of a great many research fellowships, including with the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) on a book project on peace and security in Africa's Great Lakes region (2014-17), with Action for Development (ACFODE) on an ethnographic fieldwork on war-related harms and violated bodies in forced displacement settings to and in Uganda (2019-22), and more recently with the Refugee Law Project (RLP) of Makerere University's School of Law in partnership with the Irish Centre for Human Rights of the University of Galway on a policy research concerned with the forced migration-human trafficking nexus in and through Uganda (2020-23). David's research interests include (political) violence, (forced) migration, and (social) justice, with particular focus on Africa's Great Lakes region.



Dr. Evarist Ngabirano
Research Associate

Dr. Evarist Ngabirano is an Associate Research Fellow at Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR), Makerere University and a Senior Lecturer in the faculty of Humanities and Social sciences at Mountains of the Moon University in Fort Portal, Uganda. He holds an MPhil/PhD in Social Studies from Makerere University, a Master of Religious Studies from KU Leuven, Belgium and a Bachelor of Divinity from

Makerere University. His areas of focus in research include religion, culture and politics. He has over the years accumulated vast experience in teaching, research and publication. Evarist has held academic leadership positions including Deanship of the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and headship of the department of Humanities, a position he currently occupies at Mountains of the Moon University.

Postdoctoral Fellows



Dr. Jacob Katumusiime (2024)

Jacob Katumusiime researches on the intersections of religion and politics. His PhD utilized political analysis to offer an alternative history of Uganda's breakaway religious group popularly known as the Kibwetere Movement, and to also contextualize the violence of the movement in which over 1000 people died in the year 2000. He is finalizing the turning of his PhD into a book, and has his fingers on the writing pad for another book project on *Nationist* ideas. Jacob also researches on Social Movements, Political Identities, Political Violence, and Decolonization. He critically engages the different debates in these areas of interest through utilizing both scholarly platforms, and the print media. Jacob has been co-teaching the course, *Theories of Culture and Society* at the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR). He is also a 2024 Fellow of the Global Scholars Academy, convened by the Harvard Law School's Institute of Global Law and Policy (IGLP) in conjunction with Stellenbosch University.



Dr. Oluwatosin Samuel Orimolade (2024)

Oluwatosin Orimolade is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Makerere Institute of Social Research. His research centers around discourses and contentions around the organization of the Postcolonial state in Africa and beyond. His areas of interest include Political Theory and Intellectual, Conceptual and Political History.



Dr. Jonathan Mugenyi (2023)

Dr. Jonathan Mugenyi is a proud alumnus of the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR), where he completed his MPhil and PhD in Social Studies by 2022 and a two-year postdoctoral fellowship by 2024. A recipient of the prestigious Carnegie Corporation of New York scholarship, he is also a researcher on the NORHED II project, "Decolonizing Epistemologies," in partnership with MISR and Bergen University in Norway.

He integrates musical expression into his scholarly work, bridging theory and praxis through decolonial, Indigenous, Afrocentric, and feminist epistemologies, alongside Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy. His research spans musical composition, performance, lyrics, and education, with a focus on community engagement. With extensive experience in Uganda's education sector as a music scholar and lecturer, he now serves as the National Curriculum Specialist for Musical Education at Uganda's Ministry of Education and Sports, proudly representing MISR in this vital role.



Dr. Theresa Auma (2023/24)

Theresa Auma is a Ugandan scholar and social activist. She is currently a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR), Makerere University and a research Fellow with The University of the Western Cape (UWC). She has a PhD in Social Studies from Makerere University and her doctoral thesis is titled: "Customary Resistance to Marketization of Land: Lango clans in northern Uganda". Her PhD research focused on how society (represented by the clan system) is deploying customary power against state power and the market, in their resistance to the expansion of (neoliberal)

land markets into the realm of customary land tenure in the Lango region of Northern Uganda. Her academic research interest spans issues around market systems, the land question and questions around social reproduction under capitalism.

Besides her academic contributions, Theresa has a vast experience in the NGO sector in Uganda, working with the land sector. She is the current Executive Director of Land and Equity Movement in Uganda (LEMU), an NGO whose work is focused on the recognition and protection of customary land rights. As a land expert, she has also offered expert services as a consultant to international organizations such as FAO- Uganda Office, GIZ Uganda, Uganda Agribusiness Alliance and Namati Inc, focusing on diverse topics such as promoting responsible investments in land, protection of community lands and resources. She has also been on the Board of Community Development Resource Network (CDRN) from 2016 to March 2024.



Nyiize monument

3

Current Research Projects & Groups

In 2023, MISR Staff and Students constituted Research Groups on Land & Agrarian Questions, Labour Migration, Identity and Gender.

❑ **Research group on Identity (Religion as Critique) – convened by Dr. Andrea Cassatella & Dr. Yahya Sseremba**

Influential social studies scholarship on Africa has devoted much attention to the colonial logic of the nation-state persisting in contemporary politics, as in the work of Mahmood Mamdani, and to imperial features of capitalism, as in the writings of Samir Amin and Samuel Moyo. In general, this scholarship has been characterised by a secular approach in both method and content: social studies as a secular epistemic endeavour, with the political and the economic domain as essentially non-religious phenomena. Thus, little attention has been paid to religion as a way of life that exceeds questions of conscience and identity as in traditional secularism, and is implicated in the foundation of knowledge and political authority, as well as the organization of economic and communal life as such African thinkers as John Mbiti, Abdulkader Tayob, Farid Esack, Laila Ahmed and Isabel Phiri, among others, have shown. Indeed, despite the extension of formal processes of secularization to Africa since colonial times, religion remains today central to socio-cultural, political and economic processes. Throughout the continent, many are the examples of religious movements within Christianity, Islam and traditional religions that articulate critical discourses about political liberation, gender, ecology, and economy. These discourses are drawn from sources, frameworks and values rooted in spiritual traditions that often question the patriarchal, capitalist and secular models of communal life dominating Africa. This research group aims to explore

interdisciplinary social studies literature on key methodological and topical debates that involve, concentrate on, or draw from religion, broadly construed across traditions and across time. The goal is not simply to push the scope of decolonisation to critically focus on the secular understandings of modern knowledge, politics and economy, and thus to question modern methods and sources about what counts as 'scientific' knowledge. It is also to expand and deepen theoretical frameworks and methodologies in social studies through a comparative understanding of non-secular epistemic frames that take moral economy, relationality, community and spirituality as central to what it means to live together.

❑ **Research group on Political Identity – convened by Dr. Yahya Sseremba**

This research group focuses on political identity and the intersection of political identities like race, ethnicity, religion, class, gender and sex. In the age of the nation state, liberalism and capitalism, such identities are central in political organization, resource distribution and social mobilization. They constitute the basis for political and socioeconomic inclusion and exclusion and define political violence. Scholarship has surely examined these identities and even studied the ways in which they intersect. Much of this scholarship, however, is either universalist or particularistic, and thus unable to explain the ways in which these varied identities form and intersect in the postcolonial African context. Postcolonial Africa presents particular though by no means peculiar experiences of state-society relations that call for rethinking political identity from the African vantage point. Sections of scholarship have recently attempted to privilege the African historical experience.

Unfortunately, much of such scholarship still approaches political identities in a disjointed manner, paying disproportionate attention to one form of identity with little consideration of how identities relate to each other. For example, limited effort has so far been made to include gender in the conceptualizations of political identity, which (conceptualizations) largely privilege race, ethnicity and religion. Second, if political identities intersect, so do the historical processes that shape them—political, economic, cultural, etc. Even when these connections are sometimes appreciated, there is still little theorization of how the connections materialize in postcolonial Africa. For instance, how can Africa's multiple minority puzzles—racial, ethnic, religious, gender, etc.—spread over Africa's two publics (the civil and customary spheres) be understood as one multi-layered minority puzzle approachable as a whole rather than in a piecemeal manner? If patriarchy cuts across the civil sphere, the customary domain and the Muslim domain, can there be a universal feminist approach toward this phenomenon? Would such feminist efforts focus on each of these entities or would they target the structure of power that produces these entities as one multi-layered phenomenon? Much work, both in fields of activism and scholarly inquiry, continues to be conceptually and practically handicapped because of its limited ability to see the interconnectedness of these seemingly distinct spaces. To make sense of the interconnection is to avoid the trap of producing derivative solutions that reproduce the logic of the problem being addressed.

❑ **Research group on Labour Migration – convened by Prof. Lyn Ossome and Dr. Grace-Edward Galabuzi**

The proposed research project aims to address the contemporary phenomenon of labour migration from a global south vantage point, and with a specific focus on the migration of domestic workers from two labour sending countries in East Africa: Kenya and Uganda, that are mainly exporting to the Middle East/ Gulf States (labour receiving countries). The key problem we are addressing is that of labour externalization, with a specific focus on the underlying conditions that are both necessitating and driving labour migration

in the local contexts of Uganda and Kenya. Our unique contribution is to shift from the predominantly human rights lens through which this trend has been studied, towards a counternarrative that is grounded in a political economy analysis of the labour sending countries and conditions of labour therein. This is an important shift from human rights approaches that tend to abstract workers from the social contexts producing their precarization, and therefore end up addressing the effects rather than root causes of labour externalization. Human rights approaches also normatively tend to assume the effectiveness of rights in postcolonial societies marked by historical inequalities precisely because they leave the historical structure of inequality unattended. The overall objective of the project is to explore the dimensions and implications of labour migration as a response to the crisis of social reproduction and precarity in labour markets through a comparative examination of labour migration in Uganda and Kenya, two key labour sending countries in East Africa. To do this, we shall centre the analytical lenses of Political Studies and Feminist Political Economy. We explore the social, economic, and political conditions and circumstances that structure the pursuit of employment across borders, with a specific focus on domestic workers. The proposed project seeks to better understand migrant labour as an individual and structural mode of response to the economic challenges and income insecurities in the East African context, and its relationship to the unfolding crisis of social reproduction in select East African countries. The project will examine the social histories and historical conditions of migrant labour, and propose novel research and policy frameworks for understanding the contemporary problem of labour migration.

❑ **Research group on Gender (Gendered bodies and Postcolonial African Politics) – convened by Dr. Florence Ebila & Dr. Andrea Cassatella**

What is the relationship between modern politics and gendered bodies in postcolonial Africa? Much of the intellectual tradition informing African postcolonial politics is marked by the white bourgeois male as the salient historical subject undergirding abstract conceptualizations of the human that privileges the mind. This tradition has been

challenged by internal critics of modernity such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Michel Foucault, who have insisted on the importance of the body, but also by anticolonial authors such as Fanon, who theorizes the self from the embodied lived experience of the colonised subject. This tradition has also been criticised by the feminist camp, from such authors such as Judith Butler, Elisabeth Grosz, Sarah Ahmed, Silvia Federici but also Oyeronke Oyewumi, Sylvia Tamale, Saidiya Hartman, and Audre Lorde, who have emphasized that the theorisation of the body remains male, racial, and insufficiently material. Further, recent scholarship on masculinities by Amon Mwiine Ashaba, Kopano Ratele, R.W. Connell advance the feminist debate on the body by troubling patriarchy and gender further though questioning contextual, individual, and historically specific masculinities and femininities. Centring the racial, gender and materialist dimensions, this research group seeks to equip researchers with a solid knowledge about theories and approaches to the body. This is pursued by reading sources from cultural studies, anthropology, psychology, religion and political economy as the fields from which to explore the body as an object and method of investigation. The focus will be not simply on how the body is understood, experienced and constituted across contexts, but also what it offers in terms of epistemic sources to approach and understand social realities. The overall goal is for the group's members to develop a broad and solid basis from which to advance interdisciplinary methodological lenses to engage in critical analyses of various social, political, cultural and economic realities across Africa.

❑ **Research group on Land, Social Reproduction & Food Sovereignty – convened by Prof. Lyn Ossome & Dr. Theresa Auma**

The land question and by extension, the agrarian question continue to be central to African countries in general, and Uganda to be specific. Numerous studies have attempted to engage this question both in Uganda and globally. The age of (neoliberal) capitalist development has foregrounded land enclosures and land acquisitions as the most fundamental principles that support

capitalist development, coupled with the unbridled and endless exploitation of the peasantry and working-class people to the detriment of their societies. These have not only alienated the peasantry from their land and labour (by turning it into property worth owning and trading in the land market) but also, reminiscing the earlier colonial practice, they have alienated the peasantry from their conceptions of what constitutes “productive” use of land. For the most part, the people of Uganda and especially the peasantry have continued to see land as a means of subsistence and survival and this preoccupation still informs their relentless efforts to fight against alienation and dispossession. As such, the exploitation and dispossession of the masses is viewed as a dispossession of their means of survival since it conditions them into not being able to produce food and by extension, undermines their ability to reproduce themselves and their societies. Yet, this is not a concern for the neoliberal capitalist and imperial market and states since it contradicts the circuits of capitalist accumulation. These issues constitute part of the many issues that form the land and agrarian questions both in Uganda and in the larger global South. This research group seeks to explore the intersection/nexus between land – specifically, land enclosures, evictions and dispossession – food sovereignty and social reproduction. The research is informed by an understanding that just as it cannot be disentangled from the postcolonial political context within which it unfolds, the land question today cannot be divorced from discussions around food sovereignty and social reproduction which are core aspects to the material well-being of the peasantry. By locating these questions in the material and concrete conditions of the masses, especially the peasantry, the research seeks to understand the contemporary land question and contribute to scholarship by theorizing from the objective living conditions of the subject masses, and inform policy from the vantage point of the marginalized. A key objective is to contribute to the ongoing scholarly debate from the vantage point of the marginalized, based on concrete realities of the subaltern. The research is undertaken through a loose collaboration between MISR and the newly established LEMU working group on land and agrarian questions.

Doctoral Research Projects

Olive Lomokol

Shifting Perspectives on 'Pastoral' Violence: the Persistence of the 'Karamoja Problem' in Uganda.

Abstract

The research titled "Shifting perspectives on 'pastoral' violence: The persistence of the 'Karamoja problem' in Uganda," examines the states' conception and response to the "Karamoja problem" and how these have shaped the nature and character of pastoralists' responses. The study examines contemporary violence manifested through cattle-and-counterattacks abetted by use of firearms to investigate the persistence of the "Karamoja Problem" in Uganda. It studies pastoralists' violence not just as a cultural or criminal question, but as a political question. Rather than emphasize culture or individualize violence as a standalone act, the study focuses on the 'undisturbed' logic of the state. The study seeks to place society at the center of discussion which is an important aspect that scholarship have not appreciated. To ensure validity, the study establishes a comparison case-seeking out similarities and differences with the theoretical framework, and sought to congruence in alternative theories to support coherence.

Salahadin Ali Mohammed

Colonialism and the 'Customary' in Central Highlands of Eritrea: Historical Perspectives on Personal Status, Property Relations and the Local State

Abstract

Like other colonial projects in the rest of Africa, one of the early political undertakings of Italian colonialism in Eritrea was to incorporate precolonial structures of power that previously belonged to the society into the colonial state machinery. The dissertation investigates the consequences of incorporating societal customs and normative orders into the juridical-political sphere of modern Eritrean state. It zeroes in on the examination of regimes of personal status and property relations and deploys historical genealogical method to understand how the 'customary,' being a key component of modern state power, has transformed the constitution of the social and the political in central highlands of Eritrea. The study pursues two interrelated lines of inquiry – one historical and the other conceptual. Whereas, the historical analysis traces how the colonial and postcolonial states dealt with customary laws and institution; the conceptual analysis grapples with the nature of political subjectivity in areas where the state rules through the 'customary.'

Muhamed Lunyago

Kyapa mu Ngalo and the Land Question: Understanding the Politics and Dynamics of Land Reform in Uganda.

Abstract

This thesis engages narratives and contestations around the state's calls to abolish mailo land tenure and the kingdom's Kyapa mu Ngalo titling campaign to make sense of the land question in Uganda. Whereas popular narratives have explained the land question as a contest between Uganda's patronage politics and Buganda's cultural nationalism, this dissertation moves beyond the reductionist rendering of Uganda's politics and the essentialist conception of Buganda's culture which depoliticize and de-historicize the land question. Far from individualizing the land question and treating Buganda's agency as transhistorical, this thesis locates the land question in the larger political and agrarian history of Uganda. By treating it as historical, the dissertation engages the ways in which the Buganda land question has evolved under different regimes of politics and power as a way to transcend the double bind discourses of neopatrimonialism and cultural nationalism. This dissertation calls for an understanding of the historical and political contexts within which conceptions, claims and contestations over land in Buganda materialize. It contends that the land question in Buganda derives from the liberal nation-state character of Uganda, and the attendant influence of monopoly finance capital.

Tony Apecu Kinyera**Custom in the Neoliberal State: Understanding the Resurgence of Customary Authority in Acholi, Northern Uganda****Abstract**

This PhD study analyzes the production of customary power in Acholi in the neo-liberal space. Using ethnographic qualitative methods, this dissertation seeks to understand how and why the political authority (state) has reproduced the colonial orchestrated chiefly authority (paramount chief and lower chiefs) as the dominant symbol of Acholi customary authority in contradiction to or with the processes to which other elements of the same customary authority have been imagined and how it has been understood and responded to from below. It also examines why the recently institutionalized Acholi Cultural Institution (Ker Kwaro Acholi-KKA) has become a site for resistance, recalcitrance and contestations by chiefs themselves and the community. By analyzing the main actors and discourses shaping the resurgence of customary authority, this thesis draws the claim that given the acephalous nature of Acholi society where power is diffused, the current articulations of customary power that circumscribes chiefly authority from the other elements/power holders of the same customary is not only a site for resistance and instability but also counter-productive to the neo-liberal state-building.

Olivia Komuhangi**Politics of Satire: Comedy and Editorial cartoons as political discourse in Uganda, 1995 – 2022.****Abstract**

Satire is a fundamental element of social and political life. In this thesis, I examine political satire as a means of conveying information and inspiring socio-political action. Through analysis of editorial cartoons and comedy sketches/skits, and subsequent audience comments and discussions, political satire is presented as a means of criticizing, protesting and resisting political oppression. These genres are relayed as forms of 'applied art' whose practitioners are preoccupied with the effects and usefulness of the work, rather than art for art's sake. Their approach is critical, satirical, and humorous, but the result is serving the audience a dose of the realities staring at them. The study navigates the challenges comedians and editorial cartoonists in Uganda face in a powerful and repressive political regime under economic hardships. As they elicit laughter from the audience, these mediums upset state power by disrupting and ridiculing systems and persons whose agenda is to legitimize their authority. I argue that this kind of art does not stop at engaging people and inspiring political debate but goes ahead to model and move them into action.

Mbasughun Mackenzie Ukpi**Memory, Culture, and the Making of the Nigerian Middle Belt Consciousness****Abstract**

This study examines the Nigerian middle belt consciousness as a marginal discourse that centers on the rise of dissident histories within a post-colonial legacy. Against the production of a homogeneous Nigerian narrative to enforce cohesion across its multi-ethnic background, the study traces and reflects on fragmented memories and memory sites in the middle belt through the reminiscing of key events from the 1950s to 2023 to articulate the identity of ethno-religious minorities in the middle-belt. As a way to understand this layered tension between the national narrative and the sub-national narrative, the thesis investigates the middle belt as a memory network that is charted through the trajectories of resistance and belonging in both the private and public spheres as a way of understanding how competitive narratives in collective memory shape socio-political identity. By utilizing metaphors of imagination, narration, and performance to reminisce and critically analyze selected sites of memory in popular culture and their roles in developing middle belt consciousness, the study illustrates that memory plays a central role in the production of a complementary social archive through the circulation of the past that is central to rewriting decolonized futures and the creation of resilient group identities.

Cissy Settumba Namuddu

From “Ours” to “Mine”: Analysing Contests in Buganda’s Mailo Land System and the Politics of Land Reform in Post-British Uganda.”

Abstract

The qualitative study problematizes land reforms and silence in literature on the “underlying customary” that is politically unrecognized and obscured in Buganda. It demonstrates how the State and Buganda under-look the progressive power of pre-British customary approaches. The research begins with historicizing Buganda’s pre-British socio-political and economic organization to contextualize settled practices and analyse transformations instigated by British colonial-intervention, continuing into post-colonial era using state, society and market as broader concepts. Deploying debates on “invention of customary”, pre-British customary is distinguished from colonial-customary, including the emergence of the market-economy and how each impacted women’s access to/participation in land-matters. By questioning the efficacy of land reforms throughout different state regimes, the thesis amplifies and politically recognizes the re-emergence of customary on Mailo and how it offers potential alternatives to resolving land conflicts. The study contributes to literature that privileges customary but furthermore, questions the colonial-customary that has been naturalized to mean the pre-British customary (Ennono nansangwa). It challenges individualist approaches (kyange ssi kyaffe) that inculcate dissent from collective which considers majority and is a platform for social justice for all including women, thus offering a new perspective on land reforms and their ability to address the land question in Buganda.

Lilian Caroline Namugenyi

Pentecostalism and State Secularization in Uganda

Abstract

Far from being motivated by the cultures and exploited by the capitalist pastors, the widespread nature of pentecostalism in Uganda is a manifestation of the struggle by religious minorities in Uganda to exist and become religious majorities. Combining the approaches of history, anthropology, political science and ethnography, the thesis examines archival, oral sources, interviews, observations and performances to study the realities driving the widespread nature of pentecostalism. First, the faith is a schism from the mainstream churches whose failures to address issues of bifurcation found the marginalized constitute their own faith that was relevant to their experiences. Second, instead of the state questioning why the schism had occurred in Uganda and elsewhere in America, various states (including the Ugandan state) decided to simply oppress the religious minorities revivals during the colonial era and completely ban them during the postcolonial era. The oppression and banning of these groups by the state did not guarantee their extinction but instead enabled them to operate in areas the state could not easily influence such as the homes and underground domestic spaces. This uncritical neglect of revivals by scholarship invites us to rethink the normative secularist claims of the modern state.

Nicholas Ochieng Odoyo

Rural Land Struggles and Class Formation in Western Kenya: Contradictions of Neoliberal Land Reforms

Abstract

This thesis examines rural class formation in Kenya under neoliberalism and its implications for understanding land struggles. Although class formation is central to understanding rural socioeconomic change, it continues to receive scant attention in the literature, particularly in less researched customary tenure regions of Western Kenya. Using an empirical case study drawing on original primary and secondary sources collected from yearlong fieldwork in rural Kenya, the thesis demonstrates that rural class formation in Kenya hinges upon a history of state-promoted inequitable landholding structures evolved from colonial and postcolonial land alienations and agrarian policies, and neoliberal economic policies that marginalize the peasantry. Consequently, a complex agrarian class structure has emerged comprising rural households straddling expanded land-based subsistence, petty-commodity production, and wage labor processes. These reinforce historical trends, yet also point towards increasing pressures for social reproduction as neoliberal agrarian reforms undermine the ability of rural households to survive, highlighting the continued socio-political significance of land and agrarian questions in Kenya as manifested in proliferating land struggles.

Charles Nyakahuma**'Ebyaitu': The State and Traditional Mediation of Land Access, Use and Redistribution in Toro Kingdom.****Abstract**

This thesis examined the centrality of the state in the contested land rights of traditional institutions which, in Toro kingdom, western Uganda are known as 'Ebyaitu.' The thesis, using a political economy and ethnographic framework, historicized the agency of Toro during colonial rule and examined the centrality of the colonial state in creating historical injustices and unresolved land questions in Uganda that still manifest in the post-colonial. Fabricated under colonialism in its system of indirect rule, Ebyaitu is seen to legally privilege elite and royal land rights among Batoro rather than the community, yet the same land is traditionally understood to belong to the community of Batoro. This remains a puzzle in state-society relations and a fulcrum around which multifaced conflicts revolve. The thesis argues that the return of kingdoms and kingdom properties (Ebyaitu) was a reproduction of the historical injustice that was based on the colonial logic of using land in managing the state's crisis of legitimacy. The thesis concludes that there will be heightened land related violence in Toro as long as the understanding and use of Ebyaitu remains limited to Toro kingdom royals and elites at the expense of the community initiatives and peasants on the land.

Hamudan Ssenoga**Last Becomes First: The Politics of Mwe Abali Mu Kintu and the Nationality question in Uganda****Abstract**

Although the nation-state is the structural frame of a nation as a political community, my thesis problematizes and denaturalizes the framework itself. Mwe Abali Mu Kintu is an entry point to a larger political debate: the nationality question. Despite the relevance of juridical-legal questions such as: who is a Ugandan, public discourse of Mwe Abali Mu Kintu poses deeper questions that challenge the framing of the question itself. Does one feel like a Ugandan? Essentially, Mwe Abali Mu Kintu unravels the quotidian plight of self-belonging as a critique of the paradoxical nature of legal rights which empower in theory yet disavow in practice. Situated in Buganda (central region) and Ankole (western region), the study examines these regions as centres of political power in contemporary Uganda by placing them in dialogue. Although the perception of Mwe Abali Mu Kintu is produced in the National Resistance Movement's reign (1986 – present), the study historicizes the intricate relationship between ethnicity and the Ugandan state which reveals similar terms of ethnic favoritism from the colonial to post-independence governments of Obote I & II, and Idi Amin. The thesis mainly argues that: Mwe Abali Mu Kintu rearticulates the nationality question by highlighting the collective sentiments among nationals of alienation, disempowerment and the attempt to re-member themselves as Ugandans entitled to socio-economic and political equality just as other Ugandans.

Yordanos Ghirmay Kidane**The state and gendered land questions: Understanding land and gender equality in the history of land Reforms in Eritrea****Abstract**

This study aims to examine the land reforms and its gendered implications in Eritrea. It questions how gender dynamics change when land is nationalized and becomes the sole property of the state. This study will problematize the land proclamation of No. 58/1994 that reformed the fragmented forms of land ownership to state ownership which aims to settle down the land-driven conflicts, boost national development, and solve inequalities across classes and gender. By banning existing customary laws, the proclamation was intended to resolve former land disparities and conflict. This research shows how customary land tenure patterns and state land policy are inconsistent, and how this affects gender-equitable land ownership and access. Historical and conceptual research will be combined in this study. The historical analysis will illustrate how customary land tenure was used during pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods. The fundamental issue addressed by the conceptual analysis is the conflicting link between the modern state and women's rights. Therefore, this study will interrogate the social and economic transformation brought by the state to gender-equity.

Freweini Tekle Kidane**Social Reproduction: The Political-Economy of State and Nation-Building in Post-independence Eritrea****Abstract**

It has been over thirty years since the Eritrean government embarked on the post-liberation project of state and nation-building. The core elements of this project have been the national-service and nationalization of land. By assuming firm control over land and labour (via aggressive mobilization of the youth in an indefinite national-service), the government has effectively established an undisputed monopoly over the two crucial elements of economic production (labour and land) to a degree that is unprecedented in any post-colonial state. To date, the impact of this political-economic monopoly on production, social reproduction and gender relation has not been studied adequately. My research aims to fill this gap by investigating the impact of the Eritrean state and nation-building project on production, social reproduction and gender relations.

Brian Junior Musenze**State and society in the modern tradition: Rethinking state formation and political power in Uganda's Busoga****Abstract**

This project deploys an interdisciplinary approach which emphasizes a political historicization in making sense of how Busoga society has imagined its narratives of state formation and development alongside the shifting contours of political power in the Ugandan state. While violence has been a critical feature of postcolonial power in Uganda, recent scholarship suggests that it is shedding off its brutish features, adopting new techniques of power and governmentality. By complicating power for the subjects, new forms of political agency from below have emerged, making it difficult for scholarship to make sense of society's evolving imagination. On one hand, the state seems to be succeeding in reconstituting its hegemony over society, yet on the other hand, society's agency in attempting to shape its own development narratives is continuously constrained, reshaped, and redefined by dominant and popular narratives. This project traces the silenced practices in Busoga's society by which it constitutes itself as a polity rekindling its imagination of statehood and autonomy. To make sense of how society is capable of constructing its own narratives from below, the project picks from a wide range of sources including archives, oral traditions and interviews, official and unofficial documents drawn from primary and secondary sources.

Stanley Elias**Theatre for Development and the Nation : Rethinking Nation - Building in "Post-Socialist Tanzania"****Abstract**

Theater for Development and the Nation: Rethinking Nation-Building in "Post-Socialist Tanzania" The narrative surrounding the University Theatre for Development movement (University Tfd) in "postsocialist Tanzania" presents a much more complicated but compelling story of how popular theater forms respond to and deconstruct official narratives in nation-building projects in Tanzania. Frameworks of resistance, appropriation, and co-option do not fully capture the complexity of power dynamics on the way actors of nation-building in "postsocialist" Tanzania relate and engage in the University Tfd. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach that emphasizes the cultural, historical, and political re-contextualization of the University Tfd, this project offers a critical rethink of nation-building in "postsocialist Tanzania" within the contexts of the University Tfd practice. It particularly discusses the logic, structure, and operation of the Tfd centre, recentre, and decentre narratives of nation-building in 'postsocialist Tanzania' — at the time of allegedly changing ideological posture. The goal of the project is to decentre the dominant state and political elites' narratives of nation-building while recentering those of non-state actors in the success story of nation-building in "postsocialist Tanzania".

Patience Itah Mbethki**Maternal Bodies, Knowledge and the Notion of Motherhood in Post-Colonial Uganda****Abstract**

The research is a field-work based phenomenological cultural study on the maternal body both as a somatic and non-somatic object and the knowledge associated with the body as a space and place of experience in relation to the notion of motherhood in post-colonial Uganda. It focuses on understanding the body both as an archival source and a space for knowledge production among peasant communities. The research is premised upon questions of the relationship between maternal bodies and existing knowledge in society, how the existing knowledge on motherhood fashion agency for maternal bodies in society, what knowledge systems and structures create subjectivity of the maternal body and what histories have shaped the knowledge on the notion of motherhood in Uganda. By engaging with peasant communities, the research attempts to understand how evolving and changing histories from the pre-colonial to the colonial and eventually to the post-colonial continue to shape narratives of culture and positionality in as far as the maternal body is concerned.

Adam Kyomuhendo**Decolonizing Law and Knowledge in the Making of Indigenous Subjectivity: The Case of Uganda****Abstract**

Most scholarship around Uganda has focused on the political side of colonialism, the effect of political structures the Empire built and used to subdue and rule the native. Indeed, this structuralist approach provides a good conceptual window through which to view and make meaning of the troublesome legacy of European colonialism in Africa. The above being as it may, the juridical-structural impact of colonialism on local life has been understudied and sometimes generalized as applying to the native as a *monolithic* group – yet colonialism impacted the category native differently. Indeed, there is no study that has treated the particularities, struggles and aspiration of Indigenous Peoples' lives within the legal and juridical specifics of the postcolonial Ugandan state except with neo-liberal lenses and the prescriptive language of human rights which is also applied with universalist and so-called developmentalist frames that are more often than not a coded language for the application of European particulars and sensibilities to global problems. This study, therefore, seeks to understand the struggles of Indigenous Peoples within the juristic structures of the Ugandan state and the epistemic possibilities which underpin those struggles.

Robert Birungi**The Nexus Between Ethnicity and Land Conflicts: A Critical Analysis of The Banyoro-Bafuruki Violence in Uganda.****Abstract**

This PhD project aims at understanding the Banyoro-Bafuruki land conflict in order to make sense of the relationship between ethnic identity and land conflicts in Uganda. Prevailing cultural and political economist explanations which have been fronted to explain this phenomenon pay simplistic attention to how crucial the colonial codification of custom and customary law was critical in shaping ethnic and land relations in Bunyoro. Therefore, this study mobilizes a historical-political approach to historicize the problem of the place and the changes witnessed overtime. It applies a decolonial lens to engage the various shifts evidenced in the politics, economy and culture of the area across time. The study will rely on Kagadi District, Western Uganda as its field site owing to its ethnic diversity. Methodologically, the research study will rely on interviews, participant observations and review of archival documentation. The results obtained will cover up gaps that have been uncaptured by academic scholarship. Furthermore, the results obtained from this study will serve as a remarkable contribution to the body of scholarship that seeks to decolonize the colonial order.

Kenechukwu P. Nwachukwu

State Power and the Production of History: Reading Nigeria's Post-Independence Political History Through the IPOB Separatist Agitation

Abstract

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is one in a series of groups agitating for the separation of Nigeria's old Eastern region from the Nigerian federation due to the war between the region (declared the sovereign Republic of Biafra) and the rest of Nigeria from July 1967 to January 1970. The study draws on IPOB's use of history and historical narratives to mobilise membership as well as drive its political agenda. IPOB's historical emphasis – including pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial histories – raises questions around the direct and indirect roles of the state in the mainstream (formal and state-sanctioned channels of learning) production of the war history. It equally points to the agency of differential subjectivities of individuals and groups who produce history on and around the events of the first ten years of Nigeria's independence. By reading the emergence and modes of expression of IPOB within the historical context of Nigeria's Fourth Republic, the study aims to tease out the varied dimensions, implications and potentials of influence political power exerts on the process of historical knowledge production in Nigeria, as it traverses the grey areas within the broad spectrum of silencing and amplification in the production of the Nigeria-Biafra war history.



MISR Gardens

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MPhil/ PhD Students

MISR Graduate Students, 2024

Fifth Year



Yordanos Ghirmay
Kidane



Hamudan Ssenoga



Freweini Tekle Kidane



Mbasughun
Mackenzie Ukpi



Olivia Komuhangi



Charles Nyakahuma



Tony Kinyera Apecu



Cissy Namuddu
Settumba



Lilian Caroline
Namugenyi



Nicholas Ochieng
Odoyo

Fourth Year



Adam Kyomuhendo



Brian Junior Musenze



Peace Nwachukwu
Kenechukwu



Patience Itah Mbethis



Robert Birungi



Stanley Elias



Ayanda Wiseman
Nombila

Third Year



Ashiraf Mugalula



Astelia Mihayo



Baker Batte



Brenda Judith Amaido



**Derrick Wintergreen
Kitto**



Rebecca Wembabazi



Sulaiman Kakaire



Paul Kabonge



**Tseboat Melaku
Kalemework**



Philip Atiba

Second Year



Annet Nannungi



Nelson Lwanga



Samuel Nyende



Phionah Alanyo



Shakirah Nalutaya



Everlyne Achan



**Beyene Robiel
Yosief**



Bosco Bwambale



Henry Okidi Okoth

First Year



Dickson Mdugala



Derrick Kiyonga



Abdu Yimer Abegaz



Ruth Kitamirike



Nuru Shonde



Lamol Rhainer Kolyang



Hafitha Issa



Adrian Kayamba



Tabara Korka Ndiyaye



**Waha Ibrahim
Mohamed**



Elias Byamukama

Student Leaders, 2023



Brian Junior Musenze



Rebecca Wembabazi



Shakirah Nalutaya



Ashiraf Mugalula

Student Leaders, 2024



Awards & Fellowships won by Staff and Students

- ❑ Associate Professor Lyn Ossome, the MISR Director was elected President of CODESRIA (Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa) on 8th December 2023.
- ❑ Associate Professor Lyn Ossome, the MISR Director was also appointed to the UNESCO High-Level Expert Group on Ecosystem-Level Transformation (HILEG-ELT) in 2024
- ❑ Dr. Joseph Kasule, a MISR Research Fellow was appointed the 2023 Visiting Research Fellow at the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, Universität Bayreuth, Bavaria, Germany.
- ❑ Rahamon Bello Award to Dr. Katumusiime Dr. Jacob Katumusiime was awarded the 2024 Rahamon Bello Award for the Best PhD Thesis in African and Diaspora Studies. His PhD thesis, "Beyond Religio-Cultural Violence: A Historico-Political Recontextualisation of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God," was applauded for its scholarly rigor and its innovative exploration of the intersection between religion and politics in Africa.

MISR Students have been awarded numerous prestigious international awards. In 2023, MISR Students constituted 20% of SSRC's Fellowships for Africa, and 30% of the Guggenheim African Fellows Awards. In 2024, a record of 9 students received the Next Generation Social Sciences in Africa (SSRC) Fellowships Awards 2023, African Fellows Program of the Harry Frank Guggenheim (HFG) Foundation.

1. Kenekchukwu Nwachukwu – "Nigeria's Unresolved Political History and the Production of Violence Through Historical Narratives: The IPOB Question"
2. Adventino Banjwa – "Contesting the Postcolonial Political Order: A Critical Historical and Political Study on the Federalist Movement in Uganda"

3. Yosef Sintayehu Jemberie – "The Making of State of Emergency: A Historical Critique of Modern Political Power in Ethiopia"

2023 Junior Scholars' Workshop, Program on African Social Research (PASR)'s [Dakar, Senegal]

1. Tsebaot Melaku
2. Namugenyi Caroline Lillian

2023 Visiting Research Fellows, University of Bergen (UiB), Norway

1. Jacob Katumusiime
2. Mbasughun Mackenzie Ukpi
3. Dr. Jonathan Mugenyi

2023 Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research (IQMR) [Syracuse University]

1. Mary Muhuruzi Kajumba

2023 Generation Social Sciences in Africa Doctoral Dissertation Fellowships

1. Kenekchukwu Nwachukwu - "State Power, Production of History and Political Development in Nigeria: Reading Post-Independence Nigeria's Unresolved Political History through the IPOB Separatist Agitation"
2. Olive Lomokol- "Shifting perspectives on 'pastoral' violence: the persistence of the 'Karamoja problem' in Uganda"
3. Stanley Elias - "Popular Theatre and the Nation: Rethinking Nation-building in the neoliberal Tanzania"
4. Jacob Katumusiime - "Beyond Religio-Cultural Violence: A Historico-Political Re-Contextualization of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God"

2024 Next Generation Social Sciences in Africa Doctoral Dissertation Fellowships

1. Robert Birungi – “The Nexus Between Ethnicity and Land Conflicts: A Critical Analysis of the Banyoro-Bafuruki Violence in Uganda”
2. Freweini Tekle Kidane – “Social Reproduction: The Political-Economy of State and Nation-Building in Post-independence Eritrea”
3. Stanley Elias Kiswaga – “Theatre for Development and the Nation: Rethinking Nation-Building in ‘Post-Socialist Tanzania’”
4. Olivia Komuhangi – “Political Discourse in Stand-Up Comedy and Editorial Cartooning in Uganda, 1996 – 2021”
5. Kenekukwu Nwachukwu – “State Power and the Production of History: Reading Post-Independence Nigeria’s Political History through the IPOB Separatist Agitation”
6. Nicholas Odooyo – “Rural Land Struggles and Social Differentiation in Kenya: Contradictions of Post-Colonial Land Reforms”
7. Hamudan Ssenoga – “Last Becomes First: The Politics of Mwe Abali Mu Kintu and the Nationality Question in Uganda”
8. Olive Lomokol – “Shifting Perspectives on ‘Pastoral’ Violence: The Persistence of the ‘Karamoja Problem’ in Uganda”
9. Mary Muhuruzi – “An Analysis of History Writing: Political Imagination of Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom and its Cumulative Impact on the Formation of The National Project”



MISR Offices



MISR Staff & Students' Publications

Between 2023 and 2024 MISR produced a total of 31 scholarly publications: 2 books; 28 journal/book chapters; and 1 issue of The MISR Review

Books:

Cassatella, A. (2023). *Beyond the Secular: Jacques Derrida and the Theological-Political Complex*, New York: SUNY Press.

Sseremba, Y. (2023). *America and the Production of Islamic Truth in Uganda*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003356813>

Journal articles:

Banjwa, A. (2023). 'Yahya Sseremba: America and the Production of Islamic Truth in Uganda.' *Journal of Religious History*.

Katumusiime, J. (2023). "Beyond Culturalist Conceptions of the 2000 Kanungu Inferno: Decolonization Perspectives." *The MISR Review* (Number 6).

Katumusiime, J. (2024). 'Reading Mahmood Mamdani in a Decolonizing World. On the Subject of Citizenship: Late Colonialism in the World Today', *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589346.2024.2335034>.

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Okoth, H. O. 'How are the Karamojong Politically Marginalized?' *Nomadic Peoples*, Vol. 27 (1).

Sseremba, Y. (2023) *Gender and the bifurcated state: women in Uganda's traditional authority*. *Third World Quarterly*: 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2023.2243832>.

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Bargawi, H., Mezzadri, A., Ossome L. & Stevano S. Eds. (2024), "The social reproduction of agrarian change: Feminist political economy and rural transformation in the global south. An introduction," *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 24(3). <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/joac.12595>

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Ossome, L. (2024c), "Imperialism and crises of social reproduction in Africa," *Review of African Political Economy* (ROAPE), 51:181 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62191/ROAPE-2024-0034>.

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Banjwa, A. (2023) "The Question of "Idle Land" and the Dynamics of Displacement for Large-Scale Land Acquisitions in the Global South: Preliminary Observations From Uganda" in *National Association of Professional Environmentalists, Compendium on the Dynamics of Land Acquisition for Development in the Global South*, NAPE Compendium Report. <https://nape.or.ug/download/nape-compendium-report/> Block, S. and Galabuzi, G.E. (2023) 'A Rising Tide Does Not Lift all Boats: Ontario's Colour-Coded Labour Market Recovery'. *Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives*, Canada.

Cassatella, A. (2023) "COVID-19 and Decolonisation in Africa" in Tshimba, D. (ed) *Coloniality and African Responses to COVID-19*, Umu Press.

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Ssenoga, H. (2023, November 27). 'Genealogy of African Debates on Decoloniality: Afrikaans and Kiswahili: (Part IV) Portuguese Tale in Colonial Brazil, 1500 - 1822' *The Sword*.

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MISR Gardens

The MISR Review, 2023



Introduction to the Issue by Prof. Mahmood Mamdani, Chair, Editorial Board

The MISR Review 6 has two parts. The first is the smaller, consisting of two review essays from the regular publication program of the journal. Lwazi Siyabonga's reviews Nigerian sociologist Peter Ekeh's seminal essay on 'Colonialism and Social Structure'. Sefa Secan reviews Peter Gran's 2020 book, *The Persistence of Orientalism: Anglo-American Historians and Modern Egypt*. The essays in part two of this issue have been selected from work produced and discussed at the Mellon-supported workshop and institute on 'Cultural

Studies'. The papers are introduced at the beginning of part two of this issue by Professor Rosinka Chaudhuri of the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta (CSSSC) in Kolkata. The MISR Review will present three sets of selected papers from Mellon-supported multi-university research consortium on 'Decolonisation, the Disciplines and the University.' The first set of essays under the disciplinary umbrella of Historical Studies were published in *The MISR Review*. The current set of essays were a product of the workshop on Cultural Studies. We hope to publish the final set of papers under the disciplinary theme Political Studies in the next issue of this journal.

MISR's Statement of Solidarity with Palestine

On 16th October 2023, the Scholarly Community at MISR released a statement of solidarity with Palestine amidst the genocidal violence against the people. The statement read:

"We, the undersigned scholarly community at Makerere Institute of Social Research, Makerere University, strongly condemn the ongoing massacre and war crimes committed by the state of Israel against civilians in Gaza. We express our solidarity with the Palestinian population and call for an immediate ceasefire, and the end of violence through a political solution that effectively recognizes the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, return, and political existence. This violence occurs in the context of full support of major Western powers, whose own history of colonial genocide is well known in Africa. In an atmosphere of manipulation, racism, and paranoid Islamophobia on the part of dominant Western or pro-Western media, we seek to highlight that the violence of the Israeli regime in Gaza, where a 16-year blockade has created unlivable conditions, started before the creation of Hamas and the recent events. It is a normalized and daily reality of colonial occupation for Palestinians that has generated in Palestine, as it has historically done in Africa and elsewhere under colonialism, various forms of resistance as part of the struggle for liberation. Comparative historical consciousness exposes the criminalization of Palestinian resistance or its labeling as 'terrorism' as being part and parcel of colonial mentalities and strategies. In constant and well-documented breach of international law and obligations as the occupying power, Israel continues to violently target Gaza today, bombing private and public spaces including homes, schools, hospitals, playgrounds, universities, mosques, and churches, deliberately killing any and all Palestinians indiscriminately. The

current worsening of the blockade through cutting access to water, electricity, and fuel that sustain vital services is now tied to the displacement of more than a million of the population there. This is more than those provoked by the *Nakba* (catastrophe) that occurred with the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948 and is a continuation of its 75-year-old history of Zionist settler colonialism, a political regime based on land dispossession, ethnic cleansing, and apartheid. We support a structural framework for understanding the ongoing violence beyond binary positions that either invoke Israel's 'legitimate' right of self-defense or appeal to legal-humanitarian discourses that go no further than condemning the killing of innocent civilians on both sides. Far from justifying violence against civilians in Israel, we call for a framework that allows for identifying the root causes of Hamas' recourse to violence as well as the ongoing genocidal massacre in Gaza as being part of the colonial nature and history of the Israeli regime. That history is inextricably connected to the neo-liberal economic order it participates in, and benefits from, through the occupation of Historic Palestine. Without addressing the structural and historical causes of the current violence, the military and humanitarian solutions pursued so far will continue to support cycles of violence. As we advocate for concrete decolonization, we recognize that this idea is inseparable from the ideal of liberation of colonized people everywhere. There is no decolonization without a free Palestine! We urge the scholarly community and wider society in Uganda, Africa, and beyond to mobilize and sustain action in solidarity with the Palestinian people in view of putting an end to their suffering, and to the violence likely to spread through the region.

16th October 2023

Makerere Institute of Social Research Academic Community.



MISR grounds



MISR Events' Highlights

a) PhD Defenses

“Customary Resistance to Marketization of Land: Lango clans in Northern Uganda” by Auma Theresa Odur, on January 20th, 2023.

Abstract

This thesis investigates how clan leaders in the Lango region of Uganda - as a political force within society - are resisting the advance of (capitalist) markets in Land. The theoretical analysis contributes to the debates on the Land Question, by showing the legacy of colonial construction of customary laws on contemporary structures of clan power, in championing resistance to the expansion of land markets. The study argues that clan resistance to the marketization of land is related to questions of economic, cultural and political independence of society (from the state and the market). Departing from political economy studies on the impact of the land market on customary land tenure in Uganda, which concluded that the power of the clan to control land markets had been eroded by market forces, the study shows that the rise of the market has instead pushed clans to devise more mechanisms to regulate land sales. The study calls for an analysis of markets that considers both historical factors and the political dimension of responses to that market. Using the clan as a unit of analysis, the thesis deploys Mamdani's construction of “customary power” to analyze the various methods devised by the clan in limiting the expansion of land markets. The thesis challenges misrepresentations of the clan in the literature on legal pluralism as “traditional” and/or “cultural” by situating the clan as a political force within society. It also counters agrarian literature denying the existence of social movements in Africa, by providing the Uganda political dimension of the clan system as a core representation of a socio-political movement championing resistance to capitalist land

alienation. The study was undertaken in the Lango region of northern Uganda using a qualitative method involving ethnography, focus group discussions, interviews, archival study, observation, document collection and review of secondary sources. The study shows that following the pro-market (land) reforms undertaken in Uganda since the 1980s and 1990s, land sales under customary land tenure increased but also consequently increased clan control over land markets, making customary land a site for contestations of various forms of power, mainly customary power opposed to state power. The study shows that the clan is caught up in a contradictory role of both facilitating and hindering the expansion of the land market. This dialectic approach provides an understanding of the persistent land conflict witnessed between clan leaders and their members, among clan leaders themselves, among family members, between “natives” and “outsiders”, between state agencies together with investors on one side and “local communities” on the other side, in the fight to make (and unmake) customary land a (global) commodity.

“Beyond Religio-Cultural Violence: A Historico-Political Recontextualization of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God” by Jacob Katumusiime on 30th October 2023

Abstract

In conceptualizing the emergence of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God (MRTCG) and the mass violence that the religious movement orchestrated, scholarship and popular literature have accentuated the primacy of culture. The MRTCG is claimed to have arisen from ethnic Bakiga's embrace of Marian and Millenarian religious traditions. The MRTCG violence which climaxed with the 2000 Kanungu Inferno is also essentialized

as a predestined result of inherently violent ethnic and religious traditions. This study however de-emphasizes the culturalist conceptions of the MRTCG and its violence. It deploys decolonization as a methodology and critically utilizes aspects of anthropology, historicism and political science to explore the context within which the MRTCG both emerged as a breakaway religious movement and descended into violence. The study contends that the MRTCG arose from multiplicities of the history of political marginalization within institutions of the nation-state. It illustrates that the MRTCG is a product of the colonial politicization of ethnicity, political parties and religion. The study further argues that the MRTCG violence erupted within the context of Uganda's regulation and criminalization of religious movements. In making sense of the agency of breakaway religious movements in postcolonial Africa, the study calls for a historicization that focuses on their interaction with institutions of nation-state power. It contends that breakaway religious movements arise not only as a critique but also a creation of the nation-state.

“People and State: A Genealogy of the Political Constitution of the Nigerian State” by Oluwatosin Samuel Orimolade on 25th June 2024

Abstract

Recent agitations to restructure the Nigerian state reflect the deep discontent that has defined the political constitution of Nigeria since the 1940s. Extant explanations attribute the absence of an agreeable political constitution to the undemocratic constitution-making process, the lopsided nature of the so-called over-centralized federal system and the failure to constitute the state based on ‘true federalism’. Combining the approaches of history and political science, I examine official publications, Hansards, draft constitutions, constitution documents, constitutional conference proceedings and reports, autobiographies, biographies and relevant political writings sourced in archives and libraries to challenge these explanations. The thesis argues that the challenge of evolving an agreeable political constitution derives not merely from the competing political imaginations of the nationalist intelligentsia, military elites and constitution framers but also from the enunciation of political blueprints that uncritically reproduced the colonial regime of ethnic difference and thus foreclosed the prospects for inclusive political community. The study traces the genealogy of the colonial regime of difference to a distortion, one that assumed that the modern colonial state in

Nigeria was created out of an assemblage of fixed, discrete precolonial ethnic groups and nationalities. I show how this regime of difference was similarly reproduced by nationalists and regionalists in the context of the struggle for independence in the 1940s and 50s, military elites in the 1960s and 70s and by constitution framers in cahoots with the military in the context of the transition to civil rule in the 1970s. Yet despite differences in the blueprints enunciated, the thesis argues that they represented two sides of a coin given their shared commitment to managing the ethnic question. Critiquing these blueprints from the standpoint of decolonization, the thesis maps a lineage of alternative discourse to the colonial regime of difference articulated at different times between the 1940s and 70s. Beginning with Nnamdi Azikiwe's problematization of ethnicity in the 1940s, Aguiyi Ironsi's desire to detribalize political society in the mid-1960s and the Constitution Drafting Committee's attempt to premise national integration on resident-based citizenship in the 1970s. I argue that the decolonial potentials of these ideas were subverted by entanglements with ideas that embodied the colonial logic. Drawing lessons from these proposals for an alternative political constitution, the thesis argues that decolonizing the political should grapple with the challenges of forging inclusive political communities at the triadic levels of the Nigerian federation: beginning by reconceiving localities from domains of tribal privileges to communities of residents united by productive, cooperative, social relations; reconceiving subnational states from domains of ethnic privileges by unleashing their potential as territorial and resident-based communities and rethinking the Nigerian state from a federation of ethnic communities to a federation of territorial units.

“Traditional Institutions and State Power: Culturalist Contestations in Buganda and Ankole” by Anitah Atwijuka on 11th October, 2024.

Abstract

Most scholarship on Uganda's post-colonial politics has revealed the persistent legacy of a colonial logic in power. Its focus has been the central state, with little articulation of politics from below. Yet, Uganda's recent post-colonial history has featured agitations for different forms of traditional institutions through which the society advances a critique of the state. Whereas some are demands for kingdoms, others are demands for what the proponents call ‘cultural institutions’ and ‘cultural foundations’ which this thesis regards as *skeletal kingdoms*. Both have produced

nationalistic sentiments- some transitioning into violence and others stopping at the threshold of it. What is their agency and what is its nature? To understand the agency of traditional institutions, it is imperative to reflect on their various demands. While some publics have viewed the demands for kingdoms as reactionary and so regressive, others have considered it progressive. The demand for skeletal kingdoms has often been privileged as able to overcome colonial logics of indirect rule. Investigating the manifestations of both forms of nationalism in Buganda and Ankole, this thesis inquires into the nature of the agency of these perceivably different forms of nationalism. It argues that all these culturalist agitations are mired in a cycle of conscription in reproducing the logic of the modern colonial state.

From Nägarit to National Sovereignty: Lineages of Political Modernity in Ethiopia” by Yosef Sintayehu Jemberie, on November 22, 2024

Abstract

This study shows that modern political power in Ethiopia emerged in a historical process of change and continuity marked by the colonial transformations of Italian East Africa (1936-1941). Theoretically conceived as a transformation from nägarit to national sovereignty, this historical process shows a shift in the form of state power from the premodern right and power of military authorities to issue professionally and provincially specific commands by drumbeats to the modern juridical power of a national sovereign body to make or suspend state laws in an official gazette. The study’s methodological approach can be understood as conceptual and political historiography of the present. The theoretical discourses and empirical materials examined in the study are obtained through archival and library research and ethnographic fieldwork. Accordingly, a history of an existing political concept in Ethiopia, identified as “nägarit,” is reconstructed in the *longue durée* to show how its meaning and use transformed in different modes of political thought and practice before, during, and after the encounter between the Ethiopian state and colonial modernity under Italian East Africa. In particular, the study shows: how, in the allegorical exegesis of Political Formation in the Heavens drawn from The Book of Aksimaros (a G ‘ z Hexaameron (c.15th century)) and the history of the formation of the military state in Ethiopia before the early 20th century, nägarit was the right and power of state-appointed or hereditary commanders to issue military-type orders by drumbeats, which

continually summoned and constituted professional and provincial political collectives; how, in the Italian colonial writings on Ethiopia of the early 20th century and the institutional practices of colonial governance under Italian East Africa, nägarit became the “customary power” of native subjects ethnologically defined as “Abyssinians” as opposed to those defined as “non-Abyssinians”; and, how, in the nationalist writings of the liberal and Marxist-Leninist Ethiopian intelligentsia of the 1940s-70s and the policies of state nationalism and centralization under Emperor Haile Selassie and Därg during 1942-1991 and ethnonational state decentralization under the EPRDF’s ethnic federalism since 1995, nägarit has become the official gazette of the state in which a sovereign body – that represents a defined national political majority as opposed to minorities excluded from within the body politic – exercises its juridical power to enact state laws or, by declaring a state of emergency, to suspend them. The study can be read as a critique of the dominant literature in Ethiopian political theory and historiography impaired by the analytical straitjackets of colonial, liberal, Marxist, and nationalist interpretations drawn mainly from Western political thoughts and practices. In showing that the political and the conceptual are inseparable, the study emphasizes the need for a combined task of political and epistemic decolonization in Ethiopia.

“Kyapa Mu Ngalo and the Land Question: Understanding the Politics and Dynamics of Land Reform in Uganda” by Muhamed Lunyago

Abstract

Taking Buganda kingdom’s Kyapa mu Ngalo program and the central government’s calls to abolish Mailo land tenure as entry points, this thesis interrogates the contemporary land question in Buganda by tracing its historical development. It contends with existing explanations that attribute the question to cultural nationalism and neopatrimonialism to argue that the land question in Buganda is rooted in the historical and political economy contexts within which it has materialized. Deploying interdisciplinary approaches while foregrounding heterodox political economy, the thesis analyzes the colonial and postcolonial framing of and responses to the land question in Buganda and the material conditions within which peasant subjects have subsisted to show how land reforms and ‘development’ initiatives have historically marginalized, subjectified, alienated and dispossessed the peasant society. To illustrate this argument, the thesis explores the ways in which

the colonial epistemological, political, and economic transformations displaced precolonial land relations in ways that produced and reproduced colonial state power and consolidated the colonial capitalist economy. The colonial and capitalist processes of depoliticization, commodification and privatization of land resulted into disposessions, alienations, displacements, and evictions of peasants. The thesis further highlights how the postcolonial states' attempts at (re)framing and responding to the land question have innovatively reified the colonial and capitalist logics in ways that have intensified land problems. Reflecting an enduring process of capitalist incorporation, the Buganda land question has been worsened by the growing influence of neoliberalism and the structural power of (finance) capital, rendering it a state-market affair with the exclusion of society in ways that depoliticize and weaponize the peasants to achieve political legitimacy and sustain capitalist accumulation. Contrary to their stated objective of addressing the land question, the postcolonial land reforms and the political and discursive contest between the central government and Buganda kingdom have instead exacerbated the peasant subject condition. Lastly, the thesis recenters the peasants by engaging discourses that emerge from society as a decolonial move to imagine conditions of possibility for peasant emancipation. I think with the society's discourse of motherhood as mirroring possible alternative modes of socio-economic organisation. In doing so, the thesis foregrounds the multiple and complex forms of land use, values and meanings that the society has embraced historically as an epistemological counter to the neoliberal market-oriented conception of the land question, one that fortifies colonial and neoliberal capitalist principles.

b) Graduations

PhD Graduand, 2023



Dr. Auma Theresa giving a speech on her graduation day, at MISR.

PhD Graduand, 2024



Dr. Jacob Katumusiime's mother and family congratulating him, at the Freedom Square

MPhil Graduands, 2023



Graduating with a Masters of Philosophy in Social Studies were:

1. Cissy Namuddu Settumba
2. Freweini Tekle Kidane
3. Tony Kinyera Apecu
4. Mbasughun Mackenzie Ukpi
5. Lilian Caroline Namugenyi
6. Fred Niringiye
7. Nyakahuma Charles
8. Nicholas Ochieng Odoyo
9. Hamudan Ssenoga
10. Yordanos Ghirmay Kidane

MPhil Graduands, 2024



Graduating with a Masters of Philosophy in Social Studies were:

1. Patience Itah Mbethis
2. Stanley Elias
3. Kenekchukwu P. Nwachukwu
4. Robert Birungi
5. Brian Junior Musenze
6. Adam Kyomuhendo
7. Brenda Judith Amaido



Some of the MISR Graduands 2024 pose for a photo with the Director and some faculty

c) MISR Graduate Open Day



Some of the intending applicants attending the MISR Graduate Open Day

On 25th March 2023, the student leaders of Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR) organized a Graduate Open Day Event for Prospective MISR Students, at the Okot p'Bitek Pavilion. The Open Day is for individuals planning to the MISR MPhil/PhD program. Namugenyi Caroline Lilian and Ssenoga Hamudan led the team. At the event, the academic faculty at MISR were represented by Prof. Andrea Cassatella, Dr. Joseph Kasule and Dr. Yahya

Sseremba. A total of 53 participants were physically at the function and 14 participants attended virtually via Zoom. The Open Day guided the prospective students on the MPhil/PhD application process, the structure of the program, and the various opportunities that come with a MISR admission. The old students shared their own experiences with the prospective students, and also took them on a tour around MISR and its facilities, like the library.

d) 'Graduate Students' Conference, 2023



MISR convened a Graduate Students' conference from the 11th - 13th August, 2023 under the theme: **'Decolonization as Method: Understanding the Theme and Place of Research Problems.'** Prof. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni gave an opening Keynote address, and the conference attracted graduate students from a vast array of scholarly spaces. These included students from Nigeria, Tanzania, Ghana, South Africa, Kenya and Uganda. Themes engaged at the conference included: 'Beyond Culturalist Framings'; 'Decolonization as Research Activism'; 'Colonial Discourse and Historical Writing'; 'The (Post) Colonial State and the Pastoral Question'; 'Migration and Identity Formation'; 'The Field as Method'; 'Ecology and Society'; 'Nationalist Imagination and Colonial Power'; 'Representation and Inclusion'; 'The Postcolonial State and the Question of Detribalization'; 'Gender, Sexuality, and the Decolonial Question'.

Concept of the Conference

The recent resurgence of the discourse on decoloniality/decolonization has generated much excitement within the humanities and social sciences. Just as it has created much buzz, it now appears to have been overtaken by a bandwagon effect evident in the recent tendency to decolonize just about everything. The approach to decolonization as an abstract theoretical framework or toolbox merely to be filled in with empirical cases is arguably the boldest illustration of this problem, one unlikely to be theoretically and analytically productive. Like previous incarnations of critical scholarship, the current decolonial wave risks creating a strawman for the enemies of decolonization. Moving beyond this problem arguably requires an admission that decolonization cannot be framed as an abstraction. By focusing on *method*, we do not mean the method of data collection, but rather the broader theoretical approach towards addressing a research problem. We

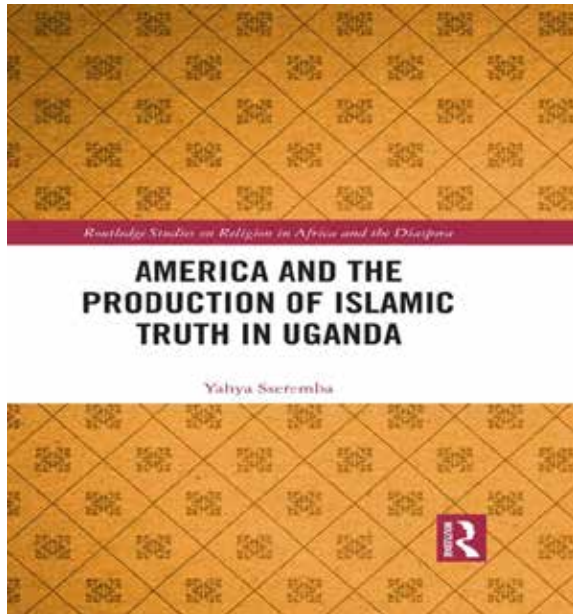
thus invite critical reflections that pose decolonization as a concrete, empirical, and grounded question from our respective thematic and place-specific contexts. Theme here refers to the wider intellectual topic of the research such as Gender, Identity, Land, Violence, Modernity, State formation, etc. By place-specific context, we mean location of the research, which may be the particular region, country, city, or any other place where the research problem is anchored. We, therefore, seek interventions that engage decolonization as an intellectual problem to be theorized from our different problem spaces. We are interested in contributions that situate decolonial questions in actual historical experiences as well as theorize these experiences in ways that illuminate the historical context. Contributors may engage decolonization as encompassing political, economic, cultural, or epistemic dimensions. Submissions do not have to be on the theme of decolonization, but we expect participants to reflect on decolonization as a methodological question as they explore the different themes and places of their research projects. We welcome papers/dissertation chapters between 7,000 – 10,000 words from advanced graduate students who have conducted archival, ethnographic, or other forms of fieldwork and are now in the process of developing their dissertations. Papers may embody an interdisciplinary approach, crisscrossing disciplinary fields of Literary and Cultural Studies, Political Economy, Historical Studies, and Political Studies. The conference will afford each participant opportunities for mentorship from the MISR faculty. Travel and full board accommodation will be provided by MISR for presenters based in the African continent. The English language will be the principal medium of communication for this conference.

Conference Participants and Papers Presented

Graduate Student	Paper Title
Asher Gamedze	Ensemble as Method: The Social Life of Struggle and Inquiry
Robyn Humphreys	Assessing the contribution biological anthropology can make to exploring the history of enslavement in Cape Town
Benezet Rwelengera	Coloniality, Intellectual Formations and the Reinforcing of Pastoralism-Forestry Incompatibility in Tanzania
Eric Narh Tei-Kumadoe	Colonial Reporting on Forced Labour and Decolonization Discontents
Benyin Adah Akande	Decolonizing Women's Participation in the Struggle for Self-Determination: Examining Gender Roles and Separatism in the Context of IPOB's Movement in South East Nigeria
Evelyn Onwaniban	Decolonizing the Indigene-Settler Construct for African Development
Yikwabs Peter Yikwab	Famer-Herder Conflict and Manipulative Elites: Implications for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in North Central Nigeria
Martin Ihembe	Electoral Reform and the Question of Representation in South Africa and Nigeria
Patience Kolade	Using oral tradition to decolonize research problems in minority communities in North-Central Nigeria.
Caleb Wafula	Climate Security In Light Of Decolonization: Key Evidence From Kenya's Arid and Semi- Arid Lands
Gaaki Kigambo	If The Theory Doesn't Fit...Media, Political Dissent and the Decolonising/De-westernising Agenda in Uganda/Africa
Zainab Monisola Olaitan	Re-Imagining Feminist Thought from the Prism of Decoloniality
Tsidiso Tolla	Decolonising Colonial Perceptions and Constructs of African Black Boys
Diana Kamara	Implications of Resetting the National Culture Question from Being a cultural to a Political Economy phenomenon: The Case of Post-independent Tanzania
Mubarak Tukur	Women, and Interfaith Peacebuilding: The Feminine Decolonization of Peace Protest in Northern Nigeria, 2008-2018.
Lisa Damon	How to see like a palm-wine drinkard?
Tosin Orimolade	Transitional Moments and the Prospect for Political Detribalization in Postcolonial Nigeria
Yosef Sintayehu	The Ethnological Subject: How Italian Colonial Power Defined the Modern Subject in Ethiopia.
Anitah Atwijuka	The making of traditional power of kingdoms in Postcolonial Uganda: Thinking Decolonization
Adventino Banjwa	Colonial Power and Nationalists' Postcolonial Political Imagination in Uganda
Olive Lomokol	Beyond Cattle Raids Talk: Rethinking the 'Karamoja problem' in Post-colonial Karamoja.
Muhamed Lunyago	Nationalization and the Paradox of the Land Question in Early Postcolonial Buganda/Uganda
Jacob Katumusiime	Beyond Culturalist Conceptions of the 2000 Kanungu Inferno: Decolonization Perspectives

e) Book Talks & Launches

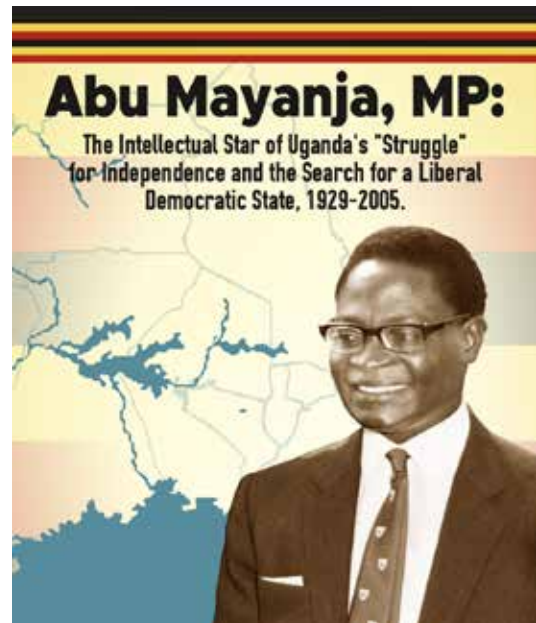
Dr. Yahya Sseremba's 2023 Book Publication, "America and the Production of Islamic Truth in Uganda" [July 26th, 2023, 2:00 PM]



About the Book: This book investigates the ways in which the war on terror has transformed the postcolonial state in Africa. Taking American intervention in Islamic education in Uganda as the entry point, the book demonstrates how state control over Islamic truth production and everyday Muslim life has increased. During the colonial period, the Muslims in Uganda were governed in two ways: partly as lesser citizens within the Christian-dominated civil sphere and partly as members of a distinct Muslim domain. In this domain, a local system of Islamic education developed with a degree of autonomy that reflected the limits of the colonial state in shaping the Muslim subject. In the subsequent postcolonial period, systems of patronage and clientelistic networks dominated, and Muslim leaders were co-opted by the state, but without much real interference in the day-to-day lives of ordinary Muslims. However, as part of the war on terror, the US State Department seeks to bring the mechanisms of Islamic truth production, especially the madrasa, under direct state control and civil society scrutiny. This book argues that the "Muslim domain as a separate entity is coming to an end as it is being absorbed into the civil sphere, unifying the state's domination of society." The book also analyzes local Ugandan Muslim initiatives to modernize and contextualize their own education and religion and how these initiatives are shaped by and transcend the dominant power. A thorough exploration of US foreign policy and Islamic education, this book will

be of interest to students and scholars in the fields of Political Studies, African Studies, and Religious Studies.

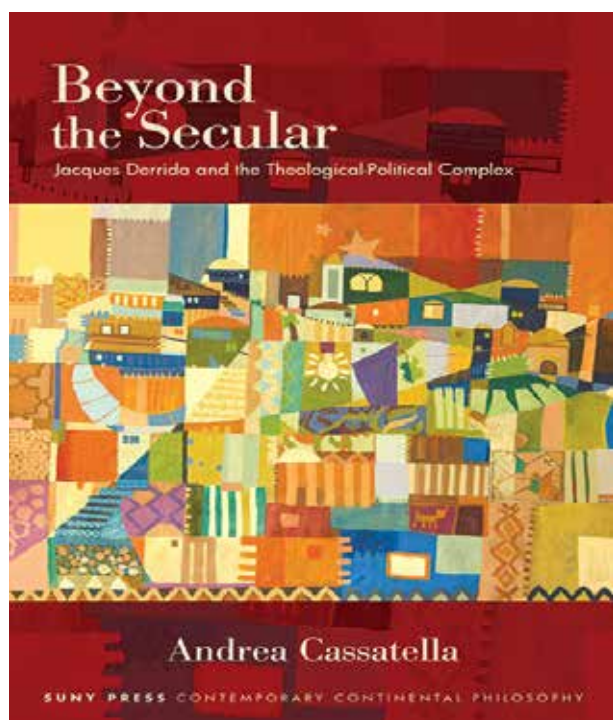
Prof. A.B.K. Kasozi - Book Title: "Abu Mayanja, MP: The Intellectual Star of Uganda's 'Struggle' for Independence and the Search for a Liberal Democratic State, 1929-2005" [31st January 2024]



About the book: This book is a biography of a brilliant African politician, a history of a country and a continent told through the lens and activities of an individual politician. The book breaks new ground in how Uganda and Africa have been viewed by academic and popular opinion. Mayanja's life sheds light on the last days of colonialism and the early postcolonial history of Uganda and other African countries. First, although Africa, particularly Uganda, is viewed by popular imagination through the images of dictatorial and corrupt African leaders like Amin, Obote, Mubutu, Bokassa, Bongo and others, there were, and still are, voices of reason who advocated for the advantages of good governance. Secondly, it shows that it is not only heads of states who influenced the political direction of postcolonial states in the period just before and after independence. Other actors shaped the opinions of the masses and influenced how laws were formed and implemented. Thirdly, Mayanja is one of those public intellectuals who stood up to autocracy and what he thought should be done through words and actions. He analyzed political and social issues at a higher conceptual level than almost all his contemporaries. He was indeed the "intellectual star" of Uganda's "struggle" for self-rule and the nine years that followed independence. His

ridiculing of those in power for their failure to know or understand governance issues landed him in prison and denied him full participation in governing the Uganda postcolonial state. But he left deep footprints on Uganda's and East African political thought. Had his suggestions for managing postcolonial Uganda been followed, the country would not have suffered as severely as it has since 1966.

Dr. Andrea Cassatella - Book Launch of: *"Beyond the Secular: Jacques Derrida and the Theological-Political Complex"* on 17th April, 2024



About the book: Through an in-depth, critical analysis of Jacques Derrida's later writings, *Beyond the Secular* examines the contemporary nexus between religion and politics. Reconnecting these writings to his early works, Andrea Cassatella explores distinctive topics that are thematically linked by Derrida's relational approach to language, time, religion, and politics. The result is a critical investigation into under-examined assumptions of modern secular discourse that questions its binary logics and illuminates such discourse's exclusionary character by tracing its roots in racialized understandings about language, epistemology, politics, and religion that travel worldwide through global processes of assimilatory translation. By exposing the discriminatory hierarchies that the Western-Christian, sexualized, and racialized presuppositions of secular

discourse keep producing and maintaining, Cassatella ultimately sheds light on the deep entanglements of secularism with the legacy of race and colonialism.

F) Wednesday Seminar Series

***"How to (Not) Pursue Justice"* by Jacob Katumusiime - February 15th, 2023, 2:00 PM**

Abstract:

What should Justice look like in the context of the 2000 Kanungu Inferno? This paper navigates how the institutions of the state and society framed the question of justice in the aftermath of the extreme violence orchestrated by the separationist religious movement, Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God (MRTCG). The paper puts a spotlight on the overriding discourse of criminal justice. Through also exploring the grievances of the Kanungu Orphans Group the paper highlights the shortcomings of the criminal justice system. It argues that the conundrum of criminal justice in response to the MRTCG violence highlights the relevance of Mahmood Mamdani's proposal of Survivors' Justice. Survivors' justice would not only have enabled an understanding of the history of the MRTCG and its violence but also opened pathways for reforms within institutions of the state.

***"The Climate Change-Internal Displacement-Human Trafficking Nexus: What's in it for International Law?"* By Dr. Gillian Kane, Ph.D. Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of Galway, February 22nd, 2023, 2:00 PM.**

Abstract:

Globally, almost 60 million people are internally displaced, and this figure is increasing as new drivers of displacement, such as climate change, emerge alongside existing problems of conflict and violence. The number of 'climate' internally displaced persons (IDPs) is likely to rise sharply in the coming years, as the effects of climate change become ever more severe. IDPs face significant protection challenges, including a heightened risk of human trafficking. Indeed, the nexus between climate change, displacement, and human trafficking, is increasingly recognised, although the direction of causation is acknowledged as complex and multifaceted. Against this backdrop, this paper explores the extent to which international law can be operationalised to address the protection challenges arising from the climate change-internal displacement-human trafficking nexus. The paper adopts a sociolegal

approach, exploring the role of applicable norms in the context within which they operate. First, the nature of the complex nexus is outlined, through the lens of Uganda, a country where the effects of climate change are increasingly leading to internal displacement and heightening the risk of exploitation. Second, the paper sets out the key international and regional normative frameworks – including anti-trafficking law – which have the capacity to address the problem, highlighting not only the scope of protection, but also the variance across regions, along with where normative gaps lie. Finally, the paper reflects on how international law may be (more) effectively operationalised to address the climate change-internal displacement-human trafficking nexus. Ultimately, the paper argues for an approach which (1) incorporates a more in-depth understanding of the nature of the problem, (2) moves beyond the siloes of the overlapping applicable frameworks, and (3) maximises the normative protection that *does* exist by enhancing institutional and operational capacity, and empowering State actors, State-empowered entities, and NGOs to do the work of interpretation, and implementation.

“Please don’t take away my hāmām, my Lord”: Illness as a Basis of Power” by Dr. Setargew Kenaw- Research Fellow, Makerere Institute of Social Research, Makerere University - March 15th, 2023, 2:00 PM.

Abstract:

This is the thought that illness is something better embraced than just suffered. This idea has its origins in the spirit possession beliefs and practices in Ethiopia. These practices offer an interpretation of illness as something to be engaged with, nourished and mollified to the extent that it might be a basis for empowerment, instead of something that should be cured, ejected, or disposed of. This essay aims to establish how spirit possession illness could wield power.

“KCCA City Charter: Enhancing accountability for service delivery through public deliberation and resident empowerment in Kampala City” by Dr. Grace-Edward Galabuzi - March 29th, 2023, 2:00 PM.

Abstract:

This paper reports on urban research that aims to explore the determinants of public satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with city services in Kampala City, Uganda and how the proposition of a Kampala City Charter can enhance public participation and resident empowerment. We focus on basic services

such as road construction and maintenance, solid waste collection and disposal, education, health care services, physical planning ...services intimately identified with the proper functioning of City government and within the purview of the Kampala City Council Authority (KCCA). The research focuses the lens of analysis on the micro level in order to assess service satisfaction from a users’ perspective as well as local government leadership’s perception of service delivery. Along with the residents’ general perceptions of service accessibility, their specific experiences with service providers, and the question of accountability for service delivery, we consider their income status as influencing their perception and possibly access to services, given the income-based selection of neighborhoods. The proposed KCCA Citizens Charter represents a statement of minimum standards in terms of residents’ right to services and an anticipation of political participation to ensure the KCCA is committed to upholding those standards for the residents. It is anticipated that the Charter would represent the establishment of a normative structure for residents’ claim to rights to service and possible resident empowerment that would hold the Authority publicly accountable going forward. The charter establishment process also represents an important political project to restructure the most powerful local authority in Uganda in a manner that would address the question of legitimacy. Theoretically, the paper contributes to the debates about measuring political inequality. The paper highlights four key themes that emerged in the consultations: Resident awareness of KCCA responsibilities for service delivery; service and accountability limitations related to governance and representation structures across income-based neighborhoods; the demand for accountability as a pressure for improving service delivery; and reforms to align representation with accountability across income-based neighbourhoods. A qualitative methodology was used to collect the data across five divisions and the results are reported upon and discussed below.

“Abu Mayanja and the packaging of the first Uganda post-colonial state”, 1961–66 by Prof. A.B.K. Kasozi , April 5th, 2023, 2:00 PM

Abstract:

Since 1894, Uganda has gone through several state formats. The colonial state lasted 68 years from 1894 to 1962, the first post-colonial state from 1962 to 1966, the Pigeonhole Constitution state from 1966 to 1971, the Military based state from 1979 to 1986 and

the NRM governed state started from 1986. The focus of this paper is to identify who was key in designing and negotiating the structures of the first Ugandan postcolonial state. It is evident from the sources that Abu Mayanja was the major player in developing ideas for forming the governing coalition to which colonial officials transferred power in 1962. He “packaged” Uganda’s first postcolonial state by finding a formula for the various political factions in the state to work together. He was key in negotiating and therefore packaging Uganda’s initial post-colonial state. He negotiated the major articles of the 1962 Constitution with both the Mengo Establishment and Uganda Peoples’ Congress (UPC) leaders, including Milton Obote and Grace Ibingira. Indeed, it was Mayanja who introduced Obote to Sir Edward Muteesa II at Bamunanika Palace and thereafter worked tirelessly to design the alliance between the Kabaka Yekka (KY) and the UPC, which enabled Obote to form a government in 1962. Mayanja was also a prominent player in the London negotiations that led to drafting the 1962 Constitution. In addition, Mayanja managed the 1962 disputed Lukiiko elections, which allowed the Lukiiko to act as the electoral college and get 21 representatives in the National Assembly. The collapse of the first postcolonial state ushered in the gun as the major determinant of the nature of the Uganda state. Government being the power of the state, its structure determines the political behavior of the state. A constitution or order in council (in the colonial period) defines the nature of the state.

“Who is an African? Rethinking the Identity in View of Changing Realities” by Dr. Jimmy Spire Ssentongo, April 12th, 2023, 2:00 PM

Abstract:

For many ‘Africans’ and those that use the identifier in reference to a category of people, it might seem almost self-evident what it means. Yet, on basic conceptual inspection, it becomes apparent how behind the seemingly innocent label lies contradictions with difficult implications to reconcile with both demographic and political changes in Africa over time. This paper traces the dialectical process in the construction of Africanness, the evolution of its boundaries, and implications of its different forms of usage. In so doing, and by using the archive of the 1990s infamous row between Wole Soyinka and Ali Mazrui and reflecting upon the case of non-black Africans, the paper highlights some of the complicated questions in the debates on Africanness. Focusing the critique on two broad definitional categories, here

referred to as the nativist and the cosmopolitan, I argue that a clearly delimited or essentialist definition of an African is beyond reach. If we should keep it, our use of the concept has to be deracialised and contextualised, for it may mean different things in different settings - including both being a positive rallying nucleus and a tool for xenophobic mobilization.

“Nostalgia and Home in the Oral Narratives of Ugandan Women Formerly Abducted by Lords’ Resistance Army Rebels” by Dr. Florence Ebila, Senior Lecturer Makerere University School of Women and Gender Studies and Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR). June 14th, 2023, 2:00 PM.

Abstract:

For more than two decades (1986-2006) different groups of rebels forcefully recruited children from Northern Uganda into their army. Later, when the war ended some of these children returned home but the home they returned to was never the same as the one they left. The girls returned as women and so called wives, boys as men or some as ‘husbands’. This chapter explores the experiences of some of the formerly abducted women who returned and settled in Lira District in Northern Uganda to show the different ways in which they are coping with the return home. From nostalgia for home, to the hard realities of the return home, some of these women have been reincorporated into their societies while some have faced rejection or indifference. To such women, home remains a place of nostalgia, a place which may yet have to be rebuilt based on current realities rather than a place to be lived in based on the memories of the past. The article explores to a large extent therefore how home has been conceptualized.

“Translation as Healing” by Dr. Andrea Cassatella, Senior Research Fellow, Makerere Institute of Social Research. June 21st, 2023, 2:00PM

Abstract:

This paper engages the psychiatric writings of Frantz Fanon to investigate the relationship between decolonization and translation in processes of knowledge and cultural production in Africa. It starts from the insight that his perspective on psychic life, trauma and disalienation offers significant resources to critically rethink and re-imagine decolonization in such processes. In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in Fanon’s thought, with his work often used to reflect on colonial experiences across the world, and on the decolonization of dominant

knowledge models. Fanon's recently published psychiatric writings (2018 [2015]), and the recognition of his continuous clinical research and practice, have shifted scholarly attention to his long ignored clinical works as central to rethinking his entire oeuvre, as well as postcolonial violence in its multiple ramifications and reproductions. While his view on decolonization has been widely debated, translation has been much less so and remains understudied especially with reference to psychic life. Further, translation remains insufficiently thematised, in its complexity beyond language and culture, in past and recent humanistic and social sciences research in Africa that, inheriting Fanonian themes, aims at decolonizing knowledge and cultural production. This is surprising, especially if one considers the daily translations of African culture(s), politics, economics and societies into Western modern forms, and the pitfalls involved in both nativist and modernist responses that nevertheless operate as modern conscripts. Addressing these gaps, this paper aims to engage the following questions: What are the conditions of possibility for epistemic and cultural decolonization? How to think of the relationship between decolonization and translation? By addressing these questions through Fanon's clinical works, the paper seeks to illuminate the relevance of a complex understanding of translation to decolonization processes in Africa. In these writings, Fanon emphasizes the significance of psychic life, particularly the affective and somatic disorders produced by colonial violence and assimilatory forms of translation, both of which produce hierarchies and divisions that continue in the post-colony, thereby hindering processes of disalienation. Yet, he also points to creative and liberatory forms of translation that are conscious of the impact of modern conditions within African realities. The hypothesis I seek to put forward is that Fanon's psychiatric writings open up the space for thinking of translation, or in his words "transmutation", as an analytical and transformative praxis of decolonization through which to reclaim the epistemic and political value of African cultural sources and experiences.

***"Africa's Second Struggle for Freedom: What's Decolonization got to do with it?"* By Prof. Olúfemi Táíwò, Africana Studies and Research Center, Cornell University. July 5th, 2023, 2:00 PM**

Abstract:

The paper argued that there is Decolonization¹ and Decolonization². It argued that the second phase of Decolonization, is incoherent and has no significant value when it comes to our making sense of the life and times of ex-colonized and, therefore, must be expurgated from our discourse. It more so contended that Africans are reminding us that FREEDOM is not a geographical, cultural, or national thing: it is a human attribute. It contended that we should stop blaming colonialism for the postcolonial situation or either we agree that we have been brain damaged by colonialism such that we lack the wherewithal to undo whatever terrible legacies colonialism left us with or we have refused to lay hold of our possibilities and imagine a different world.

***"The Constitution Abu Mayanja wanted for the Uganda Postcolonial State"* by Prof. A. B. K. Kasozi. July 12th, 2023, 2:00 PM**

Abstract:

Mayanja was the leading "founding father" Ugandan politician in trying to define ideas of a constitution fit for his homeland. He was the most prolific in articulating how the Uganda postcolonial state should be designed and managed before and after independence. His ideas of the constitution of the Uganda postcolonial state he advocated for were informed by the nature of the state he wished his homeland to become. He wanted to live in a Uganda where a constitution was respected and guaranteed the rights and liberties of the people. He saw the constitution as a vital document that lays down government responsibilities and defines citizens' rights and their obligations to the nation in a liberal democratic state. For him, the constitution was the legal basis for the actions of the state, for constituting the government, for laying down the relationship between the people and the government, for clarifying the rights and defining the obligations of citizens and spelling out the values and principles for which a nation stands. He insisted, however, that a constitution was not a cure for every political problem. It was only a guide to political behavior, and the state managers would make the nation flourish or fail. He was very disappointed that some leading members of Obote's government did not know the value of a

constitution in the management of a state. He was involved in drafting, criticizing, and moderating almost all of Uganda's constitutions since 1962. He was the principal architect of the 1962 Constitution, the leading outspoken critic of the 1967 Constitution, a member of the Constituent Assembly that debated the 1995 and an opponent of what he thought were bad amendments to the 1995 Constitution.

“Music as a Discourse on Power: A Foucauldian Analysis of Patriotic Songs of the National Resistance Movement and Army” by Jonathan Mugenyi (Ph.D.) Postdoctoral Research Fellow Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR), Makerere University. July 19th, 2023, 2:00 PM.

Abstract:

For five years, from 1981 to 1986, the National Resistance Movement and Army (NRM/A) conducted a protracted Bush war in the Luweero Triangle. The war ended when the NRM/A took over power on 26th January 1986. One of the notable features of the rebellion was the popularization of its organizing ideology to peasants using song items. The songs were termed NRM/A patriotic songs, which were created and popularized to Uganda's masses during and after the rebellion. This paper is based on analyzing these songs in terms of how they created discourse on power. The paper adopts and adapts the Foucauldian analysis of power in understanding how musical expression functions as a discourse in the practice of politics. By applying Foucault's discourse on power, this paper argues that Musical expression is more than just an artistic form of expression but also a multifaceted discourse that generates knowledge that can be specifically subjected to different forms of power and power relations. On method, interdisciplinary qualitative tools were mobilized during data collection and analysis. The sources of data included extensive interviews that were carried out during my doctoral fieldwork through the writing process and during the 'return to the field' project sponsored by MISR during my postdoctoral fellowship. The study also mobilized literature on popular arts and popular politics that is available in monographs, book chapters, journal articles and academic papers.

“Anti-blackness and moral repair: The Curse of Ham and the Repugnance of Liberal Critique” by Dr. Justin L. Haruyama, University of British Columbia. August 2nd, 2023, 2:00 PM.

Abstract:

For centuries, the Curse of Ham narrative was

interpreted by Europeans to justify brutal colonization and enslavement of Africans. More problematically from a decolonizing anthropology perspective, this story is repeated by many Zambians today as a demonstration of God's intention for Africans to be servants to whites, thus explaining global inequalities. I engage these challenging views not as those of tragically benighted, hapless subjects but as theorizations of racism, coloniality, and capitalism and as decolonizing critiques that should not leave my own views as a liberal anthropologist unscathed. These critiques demonstrate that for anthropologists, we cannot know in advance what decolonization means in any given social context prior to an ethnographic engagement with those whom we wish to decolonize our relations with. Working toward moral repair, I enlist the resources of liberation theology to diagnose the disfigurement at the heart of both my interlocutors' and my ethical imaginations. [hierarchy; liberation theology; kinship; liberalism; Christianity; decolonization; Zambia]

“Meditations on the Sea and its African Subjects” by Prof. Rozena Maart. August 16th, 2023, 2:00 PM.

Abstract:

In this chapter I engage with various online newspaper accounts of the African body that lands on European beaches via the Mediterranean Sea. Dead by exhaustion from crossing the ocean or dead as a consequence of boarding a sea vessel, which has capsized because it was not equipped to carry the embodied subject identities of Africans leaving the continent in droves to seek refuge on the continent of the European colonizer, the African body as a matter of concern for Europeans has garnered perverse and troubling interest in various United States and European online newspapers over the past ten years. The European colonizer usurped African land and people from the fifteenth century onwards, kidnapped African labor, whilst simultaneously exploiting and extracting raw materials to develop its wealth in a starving, ailing, and disease-infested Europe.

“The Rural Middle East: Some Preliminary Methodological and Theoretical Considerations in the Study of the Middle East” by Dr. Guiliano Martinello, January 17, 2024

Abstract

The rural Middle East is often excluded from journals of agrarian change and peasant studies. There are in fact very few studies dealing with land questions, agrarian transformation and food systems in the

Middle East compared to other regions in the world (despite a few exceptions) despite the existence of more than 20 million family farmers in the region. This omission is even more relevant when we see that the region is the most food dependent and ecologically vulnerable in the world. The paper explores this lacuna engaging with previous representations of the rural Middle East, which has been often framed as backward in Orientalist and Functionalist discourses. The paper explores these ahistorical representations showing the emergence of nationalist and Marxist schools of thought which contributed to reframe and re-historicize the study of the Middle East from political and political economy lenses, but also further entrenching its study within the box of the nation-state. The paper offers a set of theoretical and methodological reflections about how to study the region, starting from its subordinate incorporation in the capitalist world system and the emerging patterns of uneven capitalist development. It points to the necessity of looking at land questions and agrarian transformations as the common denominator of studying the character, drivers and implications of social change in the region. It urges to look at these transformations from multi-scalar perspectives which simultaneously combine and reciprocally tie in a single frame, different level of analysis, from local to national, regional and global. It also argues for a combination of macro- historical and global studies of adverse incorporation of the region in the capitalist system along with more empirically rich and ethnographic based research. In relation to the former it advances a methodology of research called Incorporated Comparison developed by Phillip McMichael. This would help not to reduce the dynamics of change to capital-centric and global-centric perspectives in which the whole imposes change on the parts, but rather it helps understanding how changes in the parts contributed to shaping the world and vice versa. In relation to the latter methodology, the paper also highlights the need for space-specific and place-based analysis of the agrarian changes in the region starting from the everyday experiences and struggles of family farmers; and the ways in which they adjust or adapt to historical transformations, political challenges and political economy imperatives. It argues that the rural transformations in the region need to be studied starting from changes in land-based social relations that occurred with the beginning of colonialism and during the post- colonial period, through the analysis of state land and agricultural policies which tried to revert some unevenness in the patterns of land

distribution but were trapped into developmentalist agricultural projects which replicated the same colonially imposed international division of labor. It concludes with an exploration of the ways in which the neoliberal policies further contributed to the integration of the region's agricultures and lands into the circuits of capitalist accumulation, contributing to shaping a market-based approach to food security which has worsened the prospects of rural development and immiserated millions of rural producers in the region, whose livelihood strategies have been further aggravated by persistent wars, economic reforms and ecological devastation.

Poetry performance: "But She Wanted it" by Kagayi Ngobi held on Wednesday 7th February, 2024

Kagayi Ngobi navigates the line between consent and rape. He imagines through the experiences of women that suffer different form of sexual abuse. He more especially explores the different forms of victimizing the subjects of sexual violence. The victimization often conditions the subject of abuse to accept the condemnation, and begin to judge themselves. It is also a critique of the patriarchy systems within which sexual abuse thrives.

"A Political Economy of Custom: Rethinking African Political Economy" by Dr. Theresa Auma on 28th February 2024.

Abstract:

Anthropological and political economy studies on the customary land question in northern Uganda failed to deduce the violent conflicts and other subtle forms of resentment towards the expanding land markets as a broader response and resistance from society against the intrusion of (new) capitalist land relations. Based on a study carried out in the Lango region of northern Uganda, the paper shows how society has devised various tactics of resisting the expansion of land markets within the realm of customary land tenure. The paper interrogates anthropological and political economy methods of analysis that tried to understand the impact of pro-market land tenure relations and argues that an interdisciplinary method – what I call the political economy of custom – of analysis is more appropriate for understanding this phenomenon because it allows us to make broader economic, cultural, political and historical analysis of the trends in society. The deployment of this interdisciplinary method of analysis leads to an understanding that because of the social embeddedness of customary

land tenure relations, customary forces deploy custom to limit the extent of land market relations and thereby prevent the emergence of free markets in land. What emerges is therefore a land market economy regulated by custom, rather than a free market economy in land. Deploying the political economy of custom, as an interdisciplinary approach to studying market relations in the rural areas of previously colonized African societies thereby allows us to understand the agency of society in responding to market (exploitation), and how non-market relations co-exist with market relations to limit the idea of free markets.

“Pitfalls of the Returnist Awakening: ‘African-Rooted’ Spirituality and Decolonizing Religion” by Dr. Jacob Katumusiime on 27th March, 2024

Recent intellectual consensus on the decolonization discourse in Africa contends that decolonization is both a political and epistemic project. Initially, scholars treated decolonization as either predominantly political, oriented towards restructuring institutions of the colonial state or fundamentally epistemic, oriented towards reprogramming the minds of the colonized subject. Mahmood Mamdani has however reckoned that it is the epistemic revolution that shall guide us to a political revolution. However, what is the manifestation of the epistemic revolution? In thinking of an epistemic revolution, several intellectuals in Africa have called for the rejection of ways of being that are imagined as non-indigenous. The focus of this article is on Black Africans seeking a return to what is African. The agency of both versions of Africans is what this paper refers to as returnist.

“Okweyubula: Categorical Subversion and the Integration of Liminal Collectives in Buganda” by Dr. Joseph Kasule on 3rd July, 2024

Abstract:

This draft book chapter utilizes the act of Okweyubula (sloughing/moulting) as a metaphor towards understanding the interaction between forms of socio-political negation that emanate from layers of competing regimes of power in Buganda. The internal debate over the claim as to the persecution and discrimination of Banyarwanda can make sense by considering ‘structural invisibility’ which affects newcomers in a host’s structure of power, and the subsequent quest to subvert that status and become visible. Whereas newcomers can attain social, economic and political integration, only under exceptional circumstances can they become the power that shapes the norms of political culture.

“Climate Science and Africa: Knowledge Production, History, and Politics” by Prof. Adam Branch - a three-part seminar series, starting on 10th July, 2024

Abstract

In a context where climate change is declared the most critical question for Africa’s future, but also where climate-change talk and policy are accused of neo-colonialism and environmental violence, this seminar asks how an orientation towards epistemic and political decolonization might help think through questions around climate change as discourse and as material reality. We focus on contemporary climate science, situating it in its various histories and inquiring into the ways that it constructs Africa as a particular object of knowledge within a racialized geography. By the end, this might help point towards other possibilities of climate knowledge – and climate history and politics – beyond a global/local dichotomy.

“Uganda’s Indian Question and the Limits of Interdisciplinary Approaches” by Dr. Yahya Sseremba on 31th July, 2024

Abstract

The irony of interdisciplinary research is that it is approached from a disciplinary vantage point. Interdisciplinarity challenges the compartmentalization of knowledge into distinct disciplines by combining different disciplinary approaches. But it is not enough to assemble two or three or more disciplinary components in a disjointed manner and expect to generate an integrated and coherent understanding of a phenomenon. There is need to establish the points at which these disciplinary elements meet to constitute a consolidated interdisciplinary focus. To establish such a meeting point, some disciplines have to be subsumed under others depending on the disciplinary preferences of the researcher. Thus interdisciplinary inquiry tends to reproduce the disciplinary bias it critiques because it presupposes the existence of distinct disciplines in the first place. I discuss this social science conundrum by intervening in the debate on the interdisciplinary campaign mounted by political theorist Mahmood Mamdani. The said campaign involves his introduction of an interdisciplinary PhD program in Social Studies at Makerere University in 2012 and his famous books published since 1996, especially his ground-breaking *Citizen and Subject*. Both works—his PhD program and his books—combine historical, political, cultural and political economy lenses in a manner that is interdisciplinary par excellence. Yet, in both works,

Mamdani has been accused of privileging political analysis. Without interesting myself in the merit or demerit of such an accusation, I point to a bigger issue, namely, the inability of interdisciplinarity to completely overcome disciplinary bias. In the process, I shed light on the limits of decolonizing knowledge within the framework of the western academy that is founded on the compartmentalized European and indeed Eurocentric imaginations of social reality.

“Talk & Discussion: Homelands, Israel/Palestine” by Prof. Mahmood Mamdani on 7th August, 2024

This talk interrogated the notion of permanent homelands. It contextualized the debate on the Israel / Palestine question.

“Decolonial Insurgents: The Rwenzururu Secessionist Movement Astride a Congo-Uganda Border, 1962 - 1964” By Dr. David Ngendo-Tshimba On 28th August, 2024

Abstract:

Drawing from a panoply of primary sources—ethnographic, archival and oral—this paper brings to the fore an epochal insurgency that peasants from the highlands of the Rwenzori Mountains sustained in the first half of the 1960s. The Rwenzururu Secessionist Movement (RSM) under the aegis of Isaya Mukirane is here placed on an historical continuum of Yira highland peasants’ resistance against European colonial modernity. Their inaugural struggle against minorisation within the Toro kingdom-district in Uganda eventually gave way to a much more ambitious aim, namely a quest for a decolonial polity astride the mountain ranges. The RSM peasant insurgents viewed the colonial-cum-independent state, on both sides of the international border, as political decrepitude. They hence looked to reclaim a deeper history, a wider geography, and an anti-colonial modernity way of existing—akin to the precolonial Yira confederacy—in asserting a Rwenzururian polity out of steps with post-independence times. Although ephemeral in deeds of sovereignty, Mukirane’s RSM nonetheless unsettled the primacy of the nationalist state following the end of colonial rule on both sides of that international border. Unlike many secessionist movements in post-independence Africa whose historical reference-points are rooted in colonial statecraft, the RSM’s political imagination stemmed from roots older than the European colonial state in Africa. So too did its effects rage for decades after the demise of Isaya Mukirane in 1966.

G) Public events and Collaborations

MISR X 32° East: Cultivating Rhythms of Care: Installation

By Birungi Kawooya and Rebecca Khamala Part of the 21 projects presented in the KLA Art Festival (2024), and annual event by 32° East was an art installation that marked MISR’s collaboration with 32° East. ‘Cultivating Rhythms of Care’ is a biophilic installation curated to reflect on the monthly cycle of a woman in relationship to the seasons in nature, supported by a soundscape. It is ordered in three layers that follow the concentric form of the MISR library pavillion. It comprises a woven wall that encloses the space, a veil partition that guides movement through the space, a food and plant display along with questions to initiate conversations and knowledge on local foods, what we learn from the story of Njabala, and how we can care for our bodies throughout the menstrual cycle. Rebecca weaves an envelope with 100% unwaxed cotton yarn, a variety of plants and plant fibers (including papyrus, shredded papyrus (obukeedo by’otutoogo), trimmed papyrus plants, palm leaves (nsansa), enjulu, trimmed bamboo plants, and dry bamboo leaves) in a continuous loom created with the MISR library pavillion columns. She orders these plants and fibers to create movements that express the essence of the seasons as observed in cultivation, in the menstrual cycle, and in the day as captured in the soundscape. Birungi works with banana fiber on clay-dyed bark cloth to depict a crescent moon — that speaks to the link of the menstrual cycle to the movement of the moon—and “Njabala” sleeping during her menstrual period, surrounded by a variety of nutritious organic food. She also creates through an experimental weaving of braided sisal rope, raffia and bark cloth, expressions of the rains and their disrupted patterns, the sun rising through the day, the lushness of growing yam and potatoes, and finally the sun setting.



Curators and visitors at the "Cultivating Rythms of Care" event



Visitors at the "Cultivating Rythms of Care" event



MISR x AMwA x IEJ: Feminist Economics Summer School, 25-29 September 2024

MISR in collaboration with Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA), a feminist organisation based in Uganda, and the Institute for Economic Justice (IEJ), an economic policy think tank based in Johannesburg, co-convoked the 2024 Feminist Economics Summer School (FESS) at the Fairway Hotel, Kampala. The school attracted more than 245 applicants from 11 different African countries, with only 25 selected for participation. The theme of the school was “Feminist Interventions: Understanding Social and Economic Crises in East Africa,” and aimed to examine the deep-seated social crises impacting East Africa through a critical feminist lens, connecting these seemingly disparate yet fundamentally linked issues to underscore the broader implications of neoliberal capitalism and imperialism. The school focused on the surge in various forms of gendered violence in East Africa and their structural roots and linkages to other political and economic phenomena. Most importantly the discussions were situated within the context of the manifestation of neoliberalism in the region. This includes, the rising role of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP), roll back of social protection, export-oriented policies, rising debt, accelerated environmental degradation, and expanding international and intranational inequalities. By equipping participants with conceptual and methodological tools grounded in feminist political economy, the school sought to illuminate the nature of intensifying crises across the region. The main premise of the school was to situate the struggle for gender equity within the tendency of the neoliberal order towards economic, political, and social crisis for women.



Professor Lyn Ossome presenting at the MISR x AMwA x IEJ

MISR x Femrite: Poets as Social Thinkers: Feminism and Motherhood in recent Ugandan Poetry – 29 November 2024

On November 24, 2024 FEMRITE co-hosted with MISR an event titled 'Poets as Social Thinkers: Feminism and Motherhood in recent Ugandan Poetry'. The event took place within the MISR premises and was attended by approximately 40 people, including faculty members from MISR, Makerere University, students and members of the general public. It featured a presentation from Dr. Nathan Suhr-Sytsma from Emory University, USA, discussed by MISR Research Associate and Lecturer, School of Women & Gender Studies, Dr. Florence Ebila, who also acted as a moderator. The event stimulated an open discussion about the role of feminism in poetry, representations of motherhood in popular culture and the critical potential of poetry as a mode of social theory. Discussions continued for a significant time after the event, during the small reception offered by MISR.



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