

Call for Applications

Working with African Arabic Script Manuscripts A 3-day Training Workshop

Sponsored by the Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa, Northwestern University, the Center for African Studies, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, University of Hamburg

Location: Program of African Studies and the Herskovits Library of African Studies
Northwestern University, Evanston IL
August 14-16, 2017

Application Deadline: December 11, 2016

The Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa (ISITA) at Northwestern University, the Center for African Studies (CAS) at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) at the University of Hamburg announce a workshop on **Working with African Arabic Script Manuscripts**, to be held at Northwestern University from August 14-16, 2016.

This intensive three-day workshop is the first of its kind to focus uniquely on the rich Arabic manuscript traditions of sub-Saharan Africa, including the practice of writing African languages in Arabic script (*ajami*). The workshop aims to train participants in a holistic approach to Africa's manuscript tradition that combines attention to the materiality of Arabic manuscripts with exploration of their contents and the intellectual contexts in which they were produced. The following topics will be covered:

- **The context of Arabic script manuscripts in Africa** (what makes a manuscript a manuscript, intellectual contexts of manuscript production, the social lives of manuscripts, where and how manuscripts are found)

- **The materiality of Arabic script manuscripts in Africa** (paper, watermarks, ink, format, bindings, script styles, decorative features)
- **Reading, identifying and documenting Arabic script manuscripts in Africa** (identifying texts: authors, titles, and variants; marginalia; paratexts; colophons; *ajami* texts; transliteration systems; searching titles and authors across the Islamic world; finding aids and contextualization)

Morning lectures and presentations by leading scholars in the field will be followed by afternoon “hands-on” sessions where students put into practice what they have learned through small-group exercises. For the hands-on sessions we will make use of the unique collection of Arabic script manuscripts from West Africa (<http://libguides.northwestern.edu/arabic-manuscripts>) held in the Herskovits Library of African Studies at Northwestern, along with page or digital images of materials from other collections.

Instructors: Three prominent scholars of manuscript cultures of sub-Saharan Africa will lead the workshop:

- **Dr. Charles Stewart**, Professor Emeritus of History, University of Illinois and Director of Programming, Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa (ISITA), Northwestern University
- **Dr. Dmitry Bondarev**, Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, University of Hamburg
- **Dr. Mauro Nobili**, Assistant Professor of History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Additional lectures will be given by other experts and practitioners in the field including **Michaëlle Biddle** (conservator, Wesleyan University Library), **Graziano Kratli** (Yale University Library), **Laila Hussein** (University of Illinois Library), and others. Pending additional funding, curators and manuscript specialists from Africa will also serve as workshop instructors.

Participant Eligibility: Since this workshop is funded in part by a US Department of Education grant, **participants must be US citizens or live in the United States in order to be eligible.** Permanent residents and foreign nationals who are enrolled in or work at an American institution of higher education, library, archive, museum, etc., are eligible to apply.

The workshop is designed to benefit two groups of participants:

1. Scholars and researchers in fields such as history, Islamic studies, and literary studies who use African Arabic script manuscripts as sources in their research, including graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, faculty, and independent researchers.
2. Librarians, conservationists, archivists, museum professionals, and others who work with African Arabic script manuscripts.

Cost: The workshop fee is \$300 USD, which covers three full days of instruction, course materials, evening cultural activities, and one meal per day with the group. Participants are responsible for arranging their own travel and accommodations.

How to Apply: Submit the following documents as email attachments to isita@northwestern.edu **no later than December 11, 2016:**

1. A recent curriculum vitae
2. A statement of motivation explaining why you wish to participate in the workshop, what you hope to get out of it, and how it relates to your current research or work. Statements should be 800 words maximum.

All applications will be reviewed by the Organizing Committee, which will communicate its decisions by mid-January, 2017. Those selected to participate will be informed at that time of registration and payment procedures. Due to the hands-on nature of the workshop, participation will be limited to no more than 15 people.

If you have any questions about the workshop, eligibility, or the application procedure, please contact Rebecca Shereikis, ISITA Associate Director, at r-shereikis@northwestern.edu or 847-491-2598.