**Call for Proposals**

**writing and mentoring workshop on “African Ecologies”**

The Leeds University Centre for African Studies and the British Institute in Eastern Africa are hosting an interdisciplinary writing and mentoring workshop on the theme of “African Ecologies”, to take place on 29-31 July 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya.

The workshop is aimed at Africa-based early-career researchers from across Arts, Humanities and Social Science subjects, whose work speaks to the theme of “African Ecologies”. The aim of the workshop is to support participants in developing their writing skills, preparing their work for publication, building their research profile, and strengthening their networks.

Participants will be expected to prepare and submit a 6-8,000 words draft paper ahead of the workshop, and to provide feedback on the draft papers of other participants. At the workshop, they will also receive feedback from experienced academics who serve as mentors, and they will receive training on general academic skills. Following the workshop, each participant will be assigned a mentor who will advise them in the process of preparing their paper for publication and who will provide more general career advice. The aim is to publish the revised papers as a special issue in a relevant academic journal.

Participants will further be given the opportunity to participate in the conference of the African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR), if they wish, and present at in a panel about “Religion, Culture and Ecology in Africa”. This conference takes place immediately after the workshop (1-4 August) in Nairobi.

Participation in the workshop is free. Successful applicants will have the costs for travel to, and accommodation in, Nairobi covered. Costs related to AASR conference participation will also be covered.

**Eligibility**

The workshop aims at early-career academics based on the African continent.

* As a minimum, participants are required to be registered for PhD studies.
* As a maximum, participants can have up to five years of postdoctoral experience.
* Participants should be undertaking work relevant to the theme of “African Ecologies”.
* Both researchers currently affiliated with an African academic institution, and independent researchers based in an African country, are welcome to apply.
* Female academics and scholars from otherwise marginalized groups are especially encouraged to apply.

**Organisers**

The workshop is organized by

* Dr Damaris Parsitau, British Institute in Eastern Africa
* Dr Abel Ugba, University of Leeds
* Prof. Adriaan van Klinken, University of Leeds

The organizers will be supported by a team of academics who will serve as workshop mentors.

The workshop is made possible with funding from the British Academy and further benefits from support provided by the Leeds Arts and Humanities Research Institute, the African Association for the Study of Religions, and the African Studies Association in the UK.

**African Ecologies theme**

The workshop focuses on the theme of African ecologies, and is driven by an intellectual and political commitment to ecological and epistemic justice.

Ecological justice is distinct from climate science: it is a concept that addresses the just division, fair sharing, and equitable distribution of the consequences of climate change and responsibilities to deal with these. The global north is overwhelmingly responsible for the carbon emissions that will continue to alter the state of our planet, and this engenders a pressing ethical responsibility for polluting countries to address issues related to the fallout of climate change. Efforts to better understand and mitigate ecological change are disproportionately rooted in theoretical frameworks which originated in the global north. This is despite the fact that such changes demand the formation of durable, long-term collaborations that are multi-disciplinary and global in nature. While the sciences can help us to understand the dramatic changes that are underway to our climate, it is only through the arts, humanities and qualitative social sciences that we can hope to understand and address these through the crucial lenses of justice, equity and restitution that come with the damage and change to our environment. Present and future ecological changes will not impact all of us equally. Extreme weather, rising sea levels, drought, food insecurity and myriad other problems will disproportionately affect traditionally underserved and marginalised communities.

Our starting point is that ecological justice can only be achieved through epistemic justice, which includes a decentring of Eurocentric knowledges and a privileging of knowledges from the Global South, including Africa, as part of a decolonising move in scholarship and policy-making. Drawing on conceptual tools rooted in epistemologies, indigenous knowledges and creative forms of activism from the African continent has the potential to generate productive and genuinely global ways of understanding and reinterpreting contemporary ecologies. How can diverse African spiritual and philosophical traditions of intergenerational justice better inform our climate planning? How can the arts, literatures, religions and cultures of African societies better attune us to the human toll of climate injustice, as well as to ways of responding to this? How can the lessons of history, anthropology and politics proffer knowledge about our everyday choices and their

environmental impact, as well as about the (in)ability of local communities, social institutions, and political structures to address these with creativity, resilience and criticality? Crucially: how can we generate and translate African and global knowledges from across the broadest range of humanities and social sciences to support global efforts to generate effective responses to ecological change, both in Africa and worldwide?

**How to apply?**

Please complete the form below and submit it to african-studies@leeds.ac.uk by 12 April 2023.

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| --- | --- |
| Names |  |
| Gender |  |
| Highest academic qualification (degree, subject, year, institution) |  |
| Current affiliation / career status |  |
| Home address |  |
| Email address |  |
| Where would you travel from to Nairobi (if different from home address) |  |
|  |  |
| Title of proposed workshop paper |  |
| Abstract of paper (up to 200 words) |  |
|  |  |
| Motivation statement for the workshop (up to 200 words) |  |
|  |  |
| Would you like to participate in, and present at, the AASR conference following the workshop? | Yes or no If yes, give a brief explanation of your interest  |