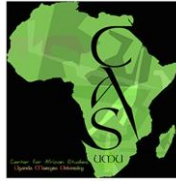


Directorate of Graduate Studies, Research and Enterprise
Centre for African Studies

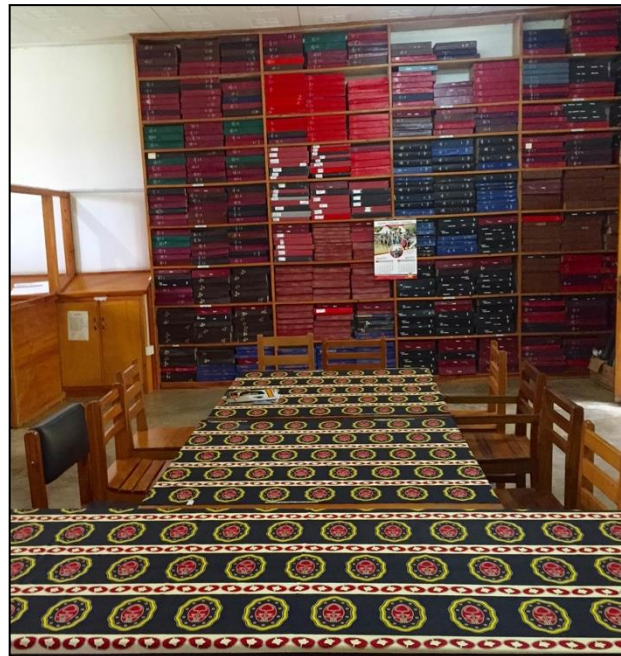


Africans should be studying Africa not simply for the legitimate purpose of rebutting inaccuracies and misrepresentations that abound in African studies made elsewhere in the world but, even more importantly for the fact that the development of a robust scientific understanding of Africa in its mutations and transformations is a duty which Africans owe themselves first and foremost, and that must be undertaken with all the rigour and seriousness it deserves. Self-understanding is a pre-requisite for the understanding of others...

(Adebayo Olukoshi, Director of the United Nations African Institute for Economic Development and Planning - IDEP)

The Centre for African Studies at Uganda Martyrs University (CAS@UMU) falls under the UMU Directorate of Graduate Studies, Research and Enterprise (DiGSRE), whose offices and resource facilities are located at the University's main campus bestridden by the Equator. It holds the status of a semi-autonomous academic research unit headed by an appointed Chair of CAS and staffed by CAS Research Fellows as well as CAS Associates/Affiliates both from within other academic units of the university and outside UMU.

The Centre was established in 2015 to address the need to promote and deepen the study and generation/documentation of knowledge about Africa's multifaceted realities. Whereas we acknowledge the significance of pursuing universal knowledge through the best standards of academic excellence, we emphasise that it would be odd and irresponsible for an African university to pursue such knowledge without a rigorous integration of its African environment and context into the universal. At the heart of Centre's *raison d'être*, therefore, is a carefully calibrated balance between 'universal excellence' and 'particular relevance'.



As observed by Professor Molefi Kete Asante, "our African universities are the repositories and dispensers not of our ancestral knowledge and philosophy but of Europe's. The fact that European knowledge is in the system is not the problem, but that such knowledge is at the center of most African curricula is an immediate

danger that privileges white [Western] scholars in those institutions and marginalises Africans and African knowledge”. Through various historical and contemporary local and international machinations, both the politics and political economy of knowledge have underprivileged Africa’s contributions in almost all fields of inquiry. As such, the task of studying African knowledge and practices and repositioning them from the periphery is both a grand and urgent one. Our Centre thus seeks to pursue inter-disciplinary, un-disciplinary and even anti-disciplinary critical research and exchange of insights/findings on African peoples and places (past and present) as well as their standing in and relation with the world.

One would ask what difference it makes whether to study Africa from Africa as viewed by Africans or from the various centres for African studies in Europe and America. There is certainly knowledge to be acquired either way, but it may not be the same. But place indeed matters in knowledge production. Although researchers often underline their objectivity, research and politics of knowledge are often informed by interests and positionality. Our study of Africa is rooted in the interest of achieving self-understanding and decolonisation through a pursuit of knowledge mainly driven from within Africa and guided by endogenous imperatives and lenses. This does not rule out working with other people from outside Africa, but we are keen on holding the concerns of the African world as our priority. Put differently, ours is not just another knowledge-scrutinising and knowledge-producing Centre for African Studies only different by location. Nor does it simply afford a research gaze at Africa(ns) as an object of indifferent study. As a centre *for* and not simply a centre *of*, we are instead embedded and purposeful at finding ways of taking Africa(ns) forward epistemologically first and foremost, and then in material and pragmatic senses as well. On the admission of the above ideal, we are open to working with a healthy synergy of African continent-based and non-continent-based scholars to animate scientific life in initiating and furthering enriching research on Africa and generating insights that could as well inform social policy and practice in Africa.

MISSION

To promote quality research, documentation, and exchange of ideas on Africa and her relations with the outside world

OBJECTIVES

- To facilitate research on and collection of elements of Africa’s cultural heritage and their relevance in contemporary times;
- Facilitate respectful dialogue/conversations among African and non-African researchers on African issues with a view to enhance knowledge pluralism;
- To address misrepresentations and underrepresentation of Africa through rigorous research, public debates, and publication;
- To promote the appreciation and utilisation of relevant African cultural precepts and knowledge, including through amendments and reviews of teaching curricula at UMU.

ACTIVITIES

Research and Publications

Our research focus cuts across the disciplines, though presently it is mainly inclined towards the arts and social sciences. We privilege interdisciplinary research as a way of overcoming the limitations of disciplinary boundaries. CAS@UMU runs a monograph publication series called *Mtafiti Mwafrika* (African Researcher) and a book series under the title of *Decolonisation Pathways*. It also publishes thematic anthologies based on seminars, dialogues, and African research conferences. In tandem with their research and publication portfolios, CAS Research Fellows also straddle different Faculties and Schools at UMU – though currently predominantly in the School of Arts and Social Sciences – where they regularly engage in teaching, academic research supervision and examination of theses.

Collection and Archiving

The Centre houses the *Uganda Martyrs University Museum*, which was set up in 1996 as a collection of endogenous cultural artefacts and sculptures from Uganda and elsewhere in Africa. Its mission is to preserve and promote African culture, as well as to facilitate research on its significance in the present African and world development contexts. It is one of the few anthropological museums in Uganda. Additionally, the Centre stores written, photographic, audio and audio-visual archival materials from various research and publication projects undertaken by CAS fellows and associates/affiliates.

Associate/Affiliate Fellowships

The primary purpose of the CAS research associate/affiliate fellowships is two-fold: to marshal collaborative endeavours through joint research and disseminations, as well as to assist specific research associates/affiliates with getting the necessary intellectual and logistical/bureaucratic support for their research endeavours, including research ethics clearance and access to the UMU library and other scholarly resources. Expectedly, CAS Research Associates and Affiliates consist of Africa-focused researchers outside UMU, whose expertise adds to the scholarly profile and work output of our otherwise thinly staffed Centre, without direct financial implications to the University budget.

CAS Public Lecture, Debate and Panel Series

The Centre organises periodic public lectures (featuring one key speaker), debates (featuring two speakers on one topic), and panel discussions (featuring three to five speakers) on thematic issues of historical and/or contemporary concern to Africa and Africans. The Centre also irregularly holds Policy Dialogues involving fellows engaged in policy-oriented research targeting the state, cultural and religious institutions.

CAS Exhibition Series

The Centre organises, in concert with a host of other state and non-state institutions both within and outside Africa, periodic public exhibitions on themes of historical significance to Uganda's political, cultural and religious public life. Materials used in these exhibitions (photographic, audio, audio-visual and artefacts/objects) end up feeding the contents of the Centre's Museum.

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