

Proposal for African Studies Major with a focus on Anthropology/Sociology, History, and Culture

Sara Young
Class of 2009

When I look at Africa, I see a collection of a many unique cultures striving to make their place in the world. I see drummers and dancers, writers and filmmakers. I see an environment ranging from the driest of deserts to the wettest of rainforests. But most importantly, I see many different peoples, each with their own rich history and fascinating cultural backgrounds. When I look at Africa, I see opportunities to learn.

With the major "African Studies with a focus on Anthropology/Sociology, Cultural, and Historical studies," I propose a holistic education based on an understanding of the peoples, cultures, and histories of Africa. I will do this at Hendrix by combining various fields of study. I have learned in my anthropology/sociology classes the importance of knowing the history and traditions of the place of study; this is my ultimate goal in creating this major. Africa is a vast multi-cultured continent which I have found a special interest in. Through my studies I hope to be able to grasp Africa on a number of different levels. Through the African history courses I will have a good, strong understanding of the rich past of the continent. Through the anthropology and sociology classes, I will be able to look at various angles of culture through the eyes of an anthropologist and culture's relationship with humans like a sociologist. Throughout my literature and film classes I have been able to read wonderful African novels and see noteworthy African films, learning how to analyze each in the process.

Next fall semester I will be studying in Madagascar. This one of a kind opportunity will be a great chance to apply all that I have learned thus far, and expand my knowledge to include a particularly interesting island country full of culture and ecological wonder.

Each course relating to this major has a specific role in my holistic Hendrix education. All the courses which apply to this major fall under one of the three groups: history, anthropology/sociology, and culture.

History:

The history section of this major is vital due to the importance of understanding how each African state developed into the countries they are today. My first Africana class at Hendrix was Contemporary Africa. Previous to this class I had very little knowledge of the continent, but always carried an interest of Africa. In this course I was able to learn about a wide variety of countries and cultures. Contemporary Africa opened my eyes to an Africa which was behind the news articles I had been exposed to in the past. The class showed me the various effects of colonialism, introduced me to two states which escaped colonialism (Ethiopia and Liberia), and took my African studies on a journey which started with learning about contemporary issues. It was in Contemporary Africa where I learned the importance of *understanding* how and why things like the Rwandan genocide occurred. I was shocked at the lack of attention the Congo was getting and how little I knew about the apartheid in South Africa. The next course I took was Colonial African History. This class was a great follow up to the contemporary class

able to examine various societies and cultures through an internal perspective. In the book You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town, I was able to see the struggle of one girl's life growing up in apartheid South Africa. When learning about issues such as whether to stay or leave Africa, reading literature such as Camara Laye's The Dark Child helps to visualize these struggles. This class gave me an opportunity to analyze the works on a deeper level as opposed to simply reading for fun. In African Film, I experienced some of the struggles and culturally significant moments in African history portrayed in film. Each film displayed a small slice of what African life is like, such as in Kwah Ansah's "Love Brewed in the African Pot." The film tells the story of two teenagers who fall in love under difficult circumstances. In the film, a well off daughter from a wealthy family falls for the illiterate son of a fisherman. While this "Romeo and Juliet" story may not be unique, the way Ghanaian director Kwaw Ansah took cultural norms and applied them to the story brought relevance to a seemingly remote tale. Through the film course I learned that while generalizations are tempting, African films often include themes of flashbacks and the inclusion of spirits. African films are also often charged with motifs relating to challenges while allowing relatively little room for films that are simply entertainment. Through analysis of each work I applied the knowledge from my sociological/anthropological such polygamy in "Xala!" or historically as I read God's Bits of Wood on the railroad strike in Senegal.

Development:

African Development Issues is turning out to be a great overview of many things I have studied thus far. Professor Pierre Antoine has combined a study of the history of Africa with modern day issues and accomplishments. We are required to check frequently African news and discuss most important issues in class. The course is challenging and has a lot to do with research outside the classroom. This research has become a great tool for me, as I can apply these research techniques to further studies. The cumulating project for this class is a case specific study on a certain country or issue. I have chosen to study Madagascar so as to be better prepared for my fall voyage.

Study Abroad:

I plan on studying abroad as part of my Hendrix experience in fall 2008 in Madagascar. By spending a semester in Africa I will be immersed in the culture of an African country. With this experience I will be able to become better acquainted with an African island country with a very unique culture and history. The program in which I will be participating is focused on ecology and conservation and will be conducted in French and Malagasy. During the several home stays I will be studying in French and living with both French and Malagasy speaking host families. I have taken French since seventh grade as well as two courses at Hendrix. These courses are going to aid in facilitating conversation and conceptual understanding during the Madagascar program. The program includes ninety hours of class relating to the program topic, culminating in a one month field study seminar where I will study food and its connection to people.

My senior capstone experience will be an independent study with Dr. Shutt. Through this capstone I will combine the fields of anthropology/sociology, cultural, and historical studies. The sociological methods course I will be taking this summer will

significantly aid in my preparation and practice of this interdependent study. With the guidance of Dr. Shutt, the independent study will allow me to look at a particular subject and its relation to all the said departments. The culmination of this independent study will be a paper followed by an oral defense in front of my major committee, Dr. Shutt, Dr. Capek, and Dr. West.

Courses included in major:

History:

HIST 280 Contemporary Africa
HIST 130 Colonial African History
HIST 120 Early African History
HIST 252 History of East Africa

Sociology/Anthropology:

SOCI 340 Food, Culture, and Nature
ANTH 100 Intro to Cultural Anthropology
SOCI 375 Environmental Sociology
ANTH 280 Anthropology of Gender

African Studies:

AFRI 358 African Film
ENGL 245 African Novel
AFRI 300 African Development Issues

Supplements for the Madagascar Study Abroad:

FREN 110 First Year French I (Credit)
FREN 120 First Year French II
FREN 210 Intermediate Comp & Conversation

Plan to take:

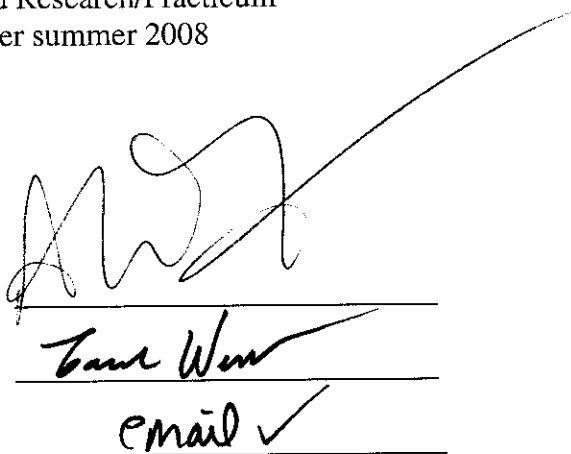
ANTH 497/SOCI 497 Advanced Research/Practicum
Sociological Methods course over summer 2008

This major proposal is approved.

Allison K. Shutt (History), chair of committee

Carol West (English)

Stella Capek (Sociology)



Handwritten signatures and initials of Allison K. Shutt, Carol West, and Stella Capek, with a checkmark next to the name Stella Capek.

Subject: Interdisciplinary Studies**Date:** Thursday, April 3, 2008 1:52 PM**From:** David Sutherland <sutherlandd@hendrix.edu>**To:** sara young <sarandipity92@yahoo.com>**Cc:** "Hurd, Amanda" <Hurd@hendrix.edu>, "Wang, Xinying" <Wang@hendrix.edu>, "Shutt, Allison" <Shutt@hendrix.edu>, "West, Carol" <West@hendrix.edu>, "Capek, Stella" <Capek@hendrix.edu>**Conversation:** Interdisciplinary Studies

Sara,

I am writing to acknowledge acceptance of your proposal to major in "African Studies" under the Interdisciplinary Studies program. Your proposal meets all the requirements listed in the catalog for the I.S. Program. It is also my understanding that Dr. Allison Shutt will chair your committee and that your committee also includes Dr. Carol West and Dr. Stella Capek.

Please complete the attached declaration of major form and return it to the Registrar's Office as soon as possible.

Please remember that any changes to this proposal must be approved in writing by both your faculty committee and me. Also, please remember that as with any major, at least 50% of major courses must be taken in residence at the College and a minimum grade point average of 2.0 in the major must be achieved.

Good luck with your courses!

David

P.S. I would like to request your permission to use your proposal as a guide for other students by making it available on the I.S. web pages. Please let me know if you are willing to allow me to do this.

On 4/2/08 5:50 PM, "sara young" <sarandipity92@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dr. Sutherland-

This is Sara Young, I turned in a major proposal (African Studies with an emphasis on History, Sociology/Anthropology, and Culture) yesterday. Dr. Capek had already left by the time I would have been able to have her email you her approval. Here is the

Subject: Sara Young, Major proposal
Date: Wednesday, April 2, 2008 5:50 PM
From: sara young <sarandipity92@yahoo.com>
To: <sutherlandd@hendrix.edu>
Conversation: Sara Young, Major proposal

Stella Capek <capek@tcworks.net> wrote:

From: "Stella Capek" <capek@tcworks.net>
To: "sara young" <sarandipity92@yahoo.com>
Subject: Re: final proposal copy!
Date: Tue, 1 Apr 2008 03:36:22 -0500

Dear Sunny,

So sorry I didn't have a chance to respond earlier! I'm leaving for a two week trip tomorrow, and I will be away from e-mail until I return on the 15th. I can see from your proposal that you put a lot of work into providing more details about your proposed major (in some cases, probably more than you actually needed). It's definitely an improvement, although there are places where it still needs editing. I will trust Dr. Shutt and Dr. West's judgement about this, especially since I won't be here, and don't want to hold up the process. I'm sorry I couldn't get together with you on the signature. We can either do it when I get back, or you can let Dr. Shutt and the registrar know that I will go along with what the other committee members decide.

Best wishes,

Stella Capek