It is said that Stanford students want to do well and do good. There is no better place for their talents, intelligence and enthusiasm these days than Africa. There, political, cultural, environmental, health and infrastructural challenges offer students and their teachers from across the university an arena to test their knowledge, their tenacity and their imagination.
Doing African Studies

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African studies emerged in the 1950s along with other area studies programs, but from the start it was different. Most obviously, it coincided with the independence and/or creation of some 40 countries in the space of very few years; around 20 attained independence in 1960 alone.

“The colonial experience provides us with a shared framework,” said Sean Hanretta, a historian who studies Islam in West Africa. “Colonialism defined what it meant to be African.”

The subsequent broad perspective meant that communication across disciplines was always relatively fluid. Political scientists, engineers, anthropologists, linguists and historians all had to deal with the structures and legacies of colonialism.

“Decolonization created African studies as a deeply engaged project,” said history Professor Richard Roberts, also a specialist on West Africa. “All those new states meant suddenly there was a need for a curriculum that could supply useful knowledge, and that allowed for interdisciplinary participation there, among Africans, working together, sharing methodologies. Everything was new and fresh. In that way, African studies is different than Asian or Latin American studies. There was a need for all sorts of knowledge and collaboration right away, from the very start.”

The second defining feature of African studies is that it has always been wrapped in issues of human good and evil, of social structures and destruction. It was a call to action. And, as Roberts said, it was a laboratory.

“Students are mobilized by the great injustices, by the fact that we have the technology to solve problems in Africa and yet the problems persist,” said Jeremy Weinstein, assistant professor of political science and director of the Center for African Studies, founded in 1965. “It’s no longer just students interested in politics; today we have students from engineering, medicine, law. They’re all involved.”

Indeed, everyone participating in things African on campus, regardless of the discipline or department, comments on the enormous upsurge of student interest over the past decade. For one thing, it’s easier and safer to travel to Africa now than in the past. And in some ways the current interest surpasses the mobilizations of the anti-apartheid movement of the 1980s, precisely because of its wide reach. Issues such as AIDS, acts of genocide in Darfur and Rwanda, the transition to democracy in South Africa, the effects of a globalized economy and the emergence of post-colonial literary movements draw in a vast range of students, all of whose projects end up, to some degree, being influenced by the others.

Roberts, who has taught at Stanford since 1980 and has been central to African studies since then, was unequivocal: “Student interest is booming and it shows no signs of abating. There’s no single reason, but what links it all are the opportunities to make a difference.”

Public health projects

“Stanford doesn’t have a public health program, so the medical people interested in AIDS and infectious diseases come to us,” Weinstein said. He and David Katzenstein, a research professor in infectious diseases at the School of Medicine, recently received funding from the Presidential Fund for Innovation in International Studies, administered by the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, for a project called “Combating HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa: The Treatment Revolution and its Impact on Health, Well-Being and Governance.”

A grant from the Woods Institute for the Environment has funded two assistant professors of civil and environmental engineering, Jenna Davis and Ali Boehm, and their Medical School colleague Gary Schoolnik in a pediatric health project in Mozambique, where the lack of clean drinking water leads to high childhood mortality.

In the Program in Human Biology, Robert Siegel, who also is an associate professor in the Medical School’s Department of Microbiology and Immunology, teaches about health and development in Tanzania and leads three-week student workshops there. Similar overseas seminars on community development and
public health in South Africa are taught by Timothy Stanton, former director of the Haas Center for Public Service. Haas, in turn, offers service fellowships to students who want to work throughout Africa.

“I had a student who went to the Tanzania seminar, a medical project,” recalled Norman Naimark, director of the Bing Overseas Studies Program and a professor of history. “He told me afterward that, for the first time in his life, he understood he wasn’t the center of the world. ‘My life changed,’ he said.”

The disproportionate number of Rhodes Scholars in African studies may be linked to their experiences while on field programs. Certainly the creation of student-led organizations is: FORGE (Facilitating Opportunities for Refugee Growth and Empowerment) was founded in 2003 to work with refugees in Zambia. Students on that project established FACE AIDS in 2005, which has grown into a nationwide student organization mobilizing awareness and fundraising on behalf of Paul Farmer’s public health work in Rwanda and Zambia.

Biodiversity projects

Stanford environmental projects are also making a difference.

A Woods Venture Program project led by biologist and ecologist Gretchen Daily, called “Natural Capital,” focuses on several areas of the world, among them the mountain ranges that stretch from Ethiopia to Mozambique. The area is described as a biodiversity hotspot where species extinction or endangerment, habitat loss, water shortages and deforestation are all serious threats with disastrous natural, economic and societal consequences.

But biodiversity is not only about flora and fauna. Archaeologist Lynn Meskell, a professor in the Department of Anthropology, has worked in South Africa’s Kruger National Park for the past few years and now is organizing an interdisciplinary team of researchers and students to begin work in Mapungubwe National Park. Underlying her work is the belief that archeological heritage, landscape, history and political power are interwoven, and that understanding the past, particularly in when it has been both created and ripped away by an oppressor, is a cultural process situated in a particular landscape. “Wilderness” and “nature” are terms laden with significance in Africa. Meskell is coordinating a Mellon grant to bring South African scholars to Stanford to study and work with students on heritage issues.

Tom Seligman, director of the Cantor Arts Center and himself a prominent Africanist, also promotes the need to expand disciplinary and conceptual categories when working in Africa.

“I work on biodiversity projects,” he said, “I talk to shamans and elders. But we have disintegrated and categorized the environment.” Maybe, he suggested, we can’t possibly understand what Africans—in his case the Tuareg, Berber descendants in West Africa and the world lived with it.”

A laboratory for politics

Opposition to authoritarian regimes, corruption and human slaughter in Africa also have mobilized students and faculty members. Weinstein, whose first book was a study of rebel violence in Uganda and Mozambique, has a project under way about political transparency in the Ugandan parliament, and one of his students recently worked on a Ugandan newspaper. The Law School has an international community law clinic in Ghana, and Roberts is editing a volume on domestic violence and the law in Africa. Larry Diamond, a political scientist and senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, is an internationally known expert on democratic development and regime change, and has participated in constitution writing in African nations.

Here, too, students are organizing the Stanford branch of Students Taking Action Now: Darfur (STAND), for example, was founded in 2005 and was instrumental in pushing the university to divest endowment holdings that could be seen to help fuel the genocide.

As Roberts says, the continent is in many ways a laboratory, a place unique on the globe for studying political processes. Naimark uses the same word: “The evolution of apartheid is an incredible laboratory for historians.” He told me afterward that, for the first time in his life, he understood he wasn’t the center of the world. ‘My life changed,’ he said.”

In the spring, Stanford’s Cantor Arts Center will present an exhibit of 24 wooden masks from the Three Corners region of Zambia, Angola and Congo. The masks, from the collection of the Fowler Museum at UCLA, may assume human, animal, hybrid or abstract appearances. Left, a female mask from the Omundu people; above, a representation of Mbwesu, a character part royal male and part aggressive or protective ancestor. Below, Jessica Bledin, ‘04, left, and Jacqelyn Wamala, ‘04, during their time at a 2003 Bing Overseas Studies Seminar in Cape Town.

continued on next page
On the Ground in Africa

“All the students want to do field work” in Africa, said Jeremy Weinstein, director of the Center for African Studies. “We could send 50 a year.”

The most common way of getting the country is a new one at the Stanford graduate killed in South Africa in 1993, was established for community development in Cape Town. That fellowship later was rolled into the Stanford program for International Training to Tanzania on a John Gardner Fellowship. African Studies helps students do internships or research in a range of other countries, and Elisabeth Mudimbe-Boyi, an expert in Franco-African relations major, is at the United Nations Secretary-General’s Office now. But Stanford would be a great place, said Naimark said. “So I talked to African studies, and...we decided on Cape Town because there’s a town where students want to spend a full academic year in Africa, they had to figure it out on their own. But starting in a couple of years, they may have another option. The Bing Overseas Studies Program hopes to open a center in Cape Town, South Africa. Training is under way.

Three-week (2-credit) and quarter-long seminars in Africa have existed for some time and are completely over-subscribed, said Norman Naimark, the Burke Family Director of the Bing Overseas Studies Program. This spring, for example, Timothy Stanton, currently at the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities and formerly the director of the Haas Center for Public Service, is teaching Community Development and Public Health in Post-Apartheid South Africa. A three-week seminar last fall, taught by Joel Samoff, a consulting professor of African studies, was called A Decade of Majority Rule: Transformation Strategies in South Africa. Students spend time in the classroom and on site, in clinics, schools or wherever the project takes them.

And beyond Bing, the Center for African Studies helps students do internships or research in a range of other countries, including Sierra Leone, Ghana, Madagascar, Kenya, Zanzibar and Senegal. Clearly there is a market for a longer-term overseas experience in Africa. The program’s associate director, Kim Rapp, said students come into her office all the time, asking how they can go there. “We have a very strong African studies program now, a great program,” Naimark said.

On the Ground in Africa

This photograph of a boy near Cape Town was taken by Noah Hawthorne, a human biology major, in winter 2005.

paintings in the African rainforest.

But even five new faculty members, plus Meskel, also a recent senior hire, can’t keep up with student demand. Working in rough environments, Roberts joked, perhaps makes Africanists likely candidates for administrative duties, a further strain on limited resources. Roberts is on leave this year, working on a book at the Humanities Center, and Martinez-Ruiz is in England, working with Stanford’s program in Oxford. Weinstein runs the Center for African Studies, and Elisabeth Mudimbe-Boyi, an expert in Franco-phone literature, including that of Africa, is director of the Program in Modern Thought and Literature.

A shortage of course offerings is Weinstein’s biggest worry. “If Stanford can make a meaningful contribution, we need strong area studies,” he said. “We need to provide the basics so we can put out a new generation of educated students. The center is a vehicle for that, but instruction, the content, is basic—the backbone.”

Traditionally, area studies programs, including African studies, received federal Title VI funds, which have dwindled. The center today is under the jurisdiction of the Division of International, Comparative and Area Studies (ICIA) of the School of Humanities and Sciences, which supplies it with some funding. But Weinstein and his colleagues have embarked upon a coordinated effort to raise private donations specifically for their field so as to guarantee instruction and resources to students and faculty. A faculty retreat in the fall identified priorities for the future, among them new faculty positions and a three-quarter core sequence of courses.

In addition to its curriculum, Stanford has two extraordinary assets for African studies: the Cantor Arts Center, which has a small but representative African collection, a director with one foot in that continent and an upcoming show (sponsored with UCLA) on Zambian masks; and the University Libraries, whose African curator, Karen Fung, gets effusive praise for her web pages (used nationwide) and her collaboration with faculty and students. Stanford owns an extraordinary range of African maps, and the Hoover Institution has a shortage of course offerings is Weinstein’s biggest worry. “If Stanford can make a meaningful contribution, we need strong area studies,” he said. “We need to provide the basics so we can put out a new generation of educated students. The center is a vehicle for that, but instruction, the content, is basic—the backbone.”

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When Stanford officials went on the road in recent years to keep in touch with alumni and get their support, they were struck by the similarity of responses to queries about what’s important these days to Stanford graduates. Education. It’s a crisis.

So the university last year launched a $125 million initiative, part of the Stanford Challenge, stressing teachers, policy and leadership. The underlying mission of the initiative, according to its co-directors, theoretical physicist Helen Quinn and education professor Kenji Hakuta, is interdisciplinarity and reaching out from the university into the community.

Stanford’s School of Education is a good place from which to launch such a venture. There are 17 doctoral programs and 11 master’s degree programs, along with the teaching credential program. There are a multitude of research centers and institutes addressing such areas as pedagogy, policy, technology and management. A point of pride for the school is that scholars and policy experts are deeply involved with teacher training, and graduate students are not divorced from the communities they will one day serve.

At the heart of this marriage of theory and practice are children. “Kids do really well in preschool, and then they fall apart in public schools,” said Dorothy Steele, director of the Stanford Integrated Schools Project, run by the Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity (CCRSE). “Our whole approach is to try to get an understanding of what’s going on in classrooms from the people who are in there.”

School is hard. Not because the subjects are hard, which they might well be, but because school has become, for many children, a series of insurmountable obstacles. This is a series of obstacles and looks at how Stanford faculty, researchers and students are working to make them less formidable.

The definition of adequacy

First, there has to actually be a school, a physical location that is safe and clean and equipped with things like roofs and bathrooms and pencils. In 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that education was not a fundamental right and therefore that being practice
deprived of education did not constitute a violation of the 14th Amendment. What with equal access to education, the principle established by Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, no longer a permissible argument, legal advocates turned to the concept of adequacy.

This is the narrative told by William Koski, the Eric and Nancy Wright Professor in Clinical Education at the Law School, and Rob Reich, associate professor of political science. According to their recent study, adequate isn’t good enough. If not for reasons of constitutional weight, then for reasons of sound public policy, it is a mistake to consent to a system in which the state systematically provides superior educational opportunities to some children and not to others based primarily on wealth and neighborhood.

This is a debate engaging not only law, political science and ethics, but also economics, as it all comes down to fiscal policy. In ruling that education was not a 14th Amendment, or equal protection, right, the courts allowed the states to define what standards will be able to address these relative deprivations.”

Language barriers

Many children receiving a less-than-adequate education have no idea what their teachers are saying because they don’t understand English or don’t hear it at home. It is impossible to figure out how many children are in this situation; Census figures say there are 660,000 households in California that are “linguistically isolated,” meaning no one over the age of 14 speaks English “well” or “very well.” In Santa Clara County, that applies to around 10 percent of all households. Those households are not equally distributed among county schools, some of which have student populations that are 98 percent Latino.

Virtualy none of those children are in bilingual classrooms, which were outlawed in 1998 with the passage of Proposition 227. Somehow, they have to learn both English and their school subjects.

The Ravenswood English program tries to make that possible. Stanford students and local volunteers provide children at East Palo Alto schools up to the fourth grade with what program director Gaudalupe Valdes describes as rich, comprehensible English, meaning the learners can guess intelligently and figure out meanings by using the context.

“This state is facing a crisis,” said Valdes, the Bonnie Katz Tenenbaum Professor of Education and a member of the K–12 Initiative steering committee. “Schools are in denial. They are facing an enormous problem with no easy solutions,” Valdes said.
problem with no easy solutions. Some schools are try-
ing programs where kids simultaneously learn the sub-
ject and English. But if test scores go down, schools
become desperate."

Ravenwood English, she says, is unique. The pro-
gram, a volunteer effort based at the School of Edu-
cation, allows kids to simply hang out with English-
speaking adults after school. No tutoring, just lots of
listening, “reading” together, questions and answers,
songs and games.

Koski told the Ethics@Noon audience. “Teachers
won’t work in low-scoring schools, which makes
homeowners leave. Real estate agents are wild
for test scores,” Koski said.

"Kenji Hakuta moves so well at the state and na-
tional level" on matters concerning bilingualism and
the education of English-language learners, she said.
"He knows what’s going on with policy; he effectively
uses large databases. I give him the viewtoles to get
the policymakers’ attention. I can humanize numbers.
I can say, ‘Look at Tomás.’" The testocracy
So the children are enrolled in an adequate school
and they are beginning to understand their teacher.

Now they have to take tests. They become part of
what Prudence Carter, associate professor of educa-
tion, calls the “testocracy.” The tests, mandated by the
federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) program, will
determine their schools’ funding and the children’s
own future.

"Title I federal education funds have diminished,
and they are linked to perverse incentives, a brutal
reward-and-punishment system based on test scores," Koski
told the Ethics@Noon audience. "Teachers
won’t work in low-scoring schools, which makes
homeowners leave. Real estate agents are wild for test scores."

And, as everyone knows, there is an achievement
gap. Non-white and poor kids score worse than white
and well-off students. And the longer they stay in
school, the wider the gap gets.

One person who is not surprised by the growing gap
is Linda Darling-Hammond, the Charles E. Ducom-
um Professor of Education, a leading expert in school
reform and recently named one of Barack Obama’s top
education policy advisers. At a recent symposium to
celebrate the 10th anniversary of CCSRE, she showed
some remarkable footage of Oakland high school stu-
dents recounting how many substitute teachers they

“Teachers won’t work in
low-scoring schools, which
makes homeowners leave.
Real estate agents are wild
for test scores,” Koski said.

Rediscovering Creativity by Building It

It took a bunch of kids to come up with the
perfect desk, which was pretty much
how it was planned. The kids, who attend
the Nueva School in Hillsborough, are
junior partners in an exciting collaboration
with a group of designers and educators
at Stanford's Hasso Plattner Institute of
Design, better known as the d.school.

It all began when d.school director
David Kelley, the Donald W. Whittier Pro-
fessor in Mechanical Engineering, asked
alumni of his Product Design program for
ideas for projects beyond engineering.
There was a consensus that sustain-
ability, health and elementary education
were priorities that could benefit from
“design thinking,” the problem-solving
approach championed by Kelley and his
pathbreaking team.

Thus the K-12 Lab was born. The
roughly 20 members are doctoral stu-
dents at the School of Education’s Learn-
ing Sciences and Technology Design
(LISTD) program or master’s students in
its Learning Design and Technology (LDT)
program, master’s students in the School
of Engineering’s Product Design program
or fellows at the d.school.

Devising the project was similar to the
process used when designing an object.
In order to figure out where the problems
and needs lie and what solutions might
look like, one simply starts by watching.
"Essentially, we’re prototyping," said
lab member Scott Doorley, a graduate of
the LDT program and a current d.school
fellow. “The problem statement comes
at the end. At the end, we don’t

PHOTO BY L.A. CICERO

During their weekly meeting, Susie Wise, left, K-12 learning lab director, works with Andrew Salverda, Nueva School Innovation Lab coordinator, and Adam Royalty, the learn-
ing experiences designer from Stanford's d.school.
had had that year. Actually, they had only substitute teachers.
They go to what she calls “apartheid schools.” If teachers were properly trained and paid, she main-
tains, we’d be a big step ahead. In her mind, teacher quality counts for more than race or class in explain-
ing the gap.

Another Stanford faculty member devoting his re-
search time to the racial achievement gap is Sean Rear-
don, associate professor of education. Among his pro-
jects is one examining huge amounts of data from Bay
Area school districts to track achievement rates since the
federal courts lifted desegregation orders 10 years ago.
So far, it looks like black students’ achievement suf-
fered once segregation was allowed to reestablish itself;
Reardon says it’s the first time a causal link has
been demonstrated between school segregation and
academic outcome.

“The debate about No Child Left Behind is really a
debate about how to think about the achievement gap,”
said. As a faculty researcher with the Insti-
tute for Research on Education Policy and Practice,
Reardon and his associates collaborate with school
districts to establish the important research questions.
The districts give them the data, and the scholars fig-
ure out what it says.

Science as casualty?

Race and poverty aside for the moment, one of the
clear casualties of the testocracy is the virtual extinc-
tion of science instruction in elementary school. Read-
ing and math, the barometer of NCLB, has displaced other
subjects. A recent survey of Bay Area elemen-
tary school teachers by the Lawrence Hall of Science
at the University of California–Berkeley showed that
80 percent spent less than an hour each week teach-
ing science. About 16 percent said they spent no time
at all on science; these were teachers whose schools
had missed the NCLB benchmarks and were trying to catch up.

This is a matter of particular concern to Helen
Quinn, co-director with Hakuta of the K–12 Initiative.
Quinn, one of whose university degrees were awarded by
Stanford, is a professor at the Stanford Linear Acceler-
tor Center. For 20 years she has worked with and run
programs in area schools. As she explains it, science-
teacher education “is the other half of what I do.”

Logically enough, science education was singled out
from the start as a priority of the K–12 Initiative. As
Hakuta puts it, “It would be very weird if Stanford
didn’t have a science-teaching emphasis. We think we can
do some useful things.”

Already, Stanford’s Office of Science Outreach is
running programs to train future and current science
teachers, and bringing promising teachers and high
school students into Stanford labs over the summer
to work with mentors.

Quinn, a former president of the American Physical
Society, was clear in pointing out that the K–12 Initia-
tive, in emphasizing teachers, is not simply emphazis-
ing curriculum.

“People think that if there’s a problem, you just
need a good curriculum,” she said. “But teachers are
compartments of curriculum. Right now, there’s no sci-
ence curriculum in elementary schools, even though
that’s where you need it the most. Maybe we can de-
velop different components of our core’s place for
that course? A good science course is not the issue—
the issue is having the time to teach it.”

The legacy of Brown

But, of course, one can’t put aside race and poverty.
On the 50th anniversary of Brown, education reform-
ers at Stanford and elsewhere acknowledged that the
landmark ruling has failed to provide equal educa-
tional opportunities for all American children. The
promise has not materialized. De facto segregation
and prejudice, it turned out, survived even when legal
segregation did not.

According to Carter, whose degrees are in econom-
ics and sociology, “we are in a crisis moment” and
must not romanticize Brown. Even in so-called good
schools, she said, black students are performing worse
than a few years ago.

“Should we implement a better Brown?” asked
Darling-Hammond at the CSRE event. “Or imple-
ment a new form of Plessy?” referring to Plessy v.
Ferguson, the 1896 U.S. Supreme Court case that institu-
tionalized separate but equal facilities for blacks and whites. It was a controversial suggestion, but she im-
mediately pointed to the well-known case of East Palo
Alto, where Ravenswood High closed in 1976 as a re-
sult of a desegregation order. Dispersed among area
schools, two-thirds of the city’s black students ended
up dropping out.

Nearly 30 years later, Stanford launched a small
public high school in East Palo Alto. It has graduated
three classes so far; 90 percent of the enrolled students
graduate. Almost all go to college.

At the heart of the achievement gap and of educa-
tion finance reform are the twin legacies of race and
class. In an age of low taxes, rollback of federal pro-
tection laws and economic globalization, the poor
and the non-white can easily and quickly get left be-
hind. Indeed, Koski, Darling-Hammond and others
might argue that it would be very surprising if they
kept up.

An alternative approach, along with desegregation
orders, was one of the chief compensatory mechanisms
for structural inequities. But that too is no longer in
the toolbox of many reformers, having been removed
by voter initiatives or judicial rulings.

The 2003 Grutter v. Bollinger case, in which the
U.S. Supreme Court (in a 5–4 vote) ruled that the Uni-
versity of Michigan Law School was permitted to take
race into account, is likely to be the last such ruling in
a long time. (Indeed, at the end of last term, the court
effectively undid Grutter in a case involving schools
in Seattle and Louisville.)

One of the expert witnesses in Grutter was Claude
Steele, the Lucie Stern Professor in the Social Sciences
continued on next page
Teaching and Learning

continued from previous page

Identity and safety in the classrooms

One such effort is the Stanford Integrated Schools Project, directed by Dorothy Steele, who also is executive director of CCSRE. The project grew out of an interdisciplinary research group spearheaded by Steele and Hazel Markus, the Davis-Brack Professor in the Behavioral Sciences.

“We said, ‘Look, what can we do that could help derail the presence of stereotypes?’” Dorothy Steele said. “People love to use the [achievement] gap as a measure. It’s a reasonable measure, but my answer is that the gap is such a narrow piece of evidence about learning and development. Focusing on it is like going to the pediatrian and taking only the height and not examining eyes and ears. It’s a single measure, and we punish children with it.

“We’re trying to see if there are things teachers can do that would make a difference in spite of all the inequalities out there.”

Her research group is working with East Bay schools on what they call “identity safety,” collecting all the data they can to figure out what actually transpires in the classroom.

“We have a lot of data now,” Steele said, “and from that, we learned that there’s a constellation of things...”
that, when teachers do them, kids do better.”

State Superintendent of Schools Jack O’Connell got that message in November at a Sacramento event (reported by the San Francisco Chronicle) at which kids told teachers what it’s like to be a pupil.

Encourage us, they told teachers. Keep the noise down. Take an interest in us. Look us in the eyes.

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Small things, in other words. Real things. Stanford students are in classrooms throughout the Bay Area learning those things. They’re in charter schools run by teachers, co-director, School Redesign Network

Susanna Loeb, associate professor of education and director of the Institute for Research on Education Policy and Practice

TAKING DESIGN THINKING TO SCHOOLS: APPROACHES TO INTEGRATING THE DESIGN PROCESS IN K–12 TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Hasso Plattner Institute of Design and the School of Education will partner to explore how design thinking and design processes can best affect teaching and learning in K–12 environments. (See accompanying article.)

Shelley Goldman, teaching professor of education

Bernie Roth, professor of mechanical engineering

INNOVATIONS IN LITERACY TUTORING

This project will conduct, expand and evaluate a reading tutoring program in two East Palo Alto schools: Costano Elementary School and the Stanford-sponsored charter school, East Palo Alto Academy.

Connie Juo, professor of education

Paula England, professor of sociology

RAVENSWOOD WRITING CENTERS

This project aims to enhance the writing and communicati...
A new master's program

Hanretty referred to the present period as “the era of the NGOs,” the era of foreign policy by other means. The potential of nongovernmental organizations as motors of social change appeals to students, who exhibit a “just do it” approach to social problems.

With that in mind, the Center for African Studies is initiating a one-year master’s program that will attract people interested in policy or NGO administration and students who want a PhD but aren’t sure in which discipline. The program will have three tracks: culture and society; health, well-being and environment; and political economy and security. The first cohort has two students, and the center is hoping for five or six more in the fall.

The center’s associate director, Kim Rapp, has her hands full organizing weekly talks, finding instructors to teach languages off the beaten track and advising students on how to get travel and research funds and link up with student groups. She’s also working with the Office of Development to identify people who might be interested in helping build an endowment for African studies at Stanford. She is drawing up a list of all the African studies graduates, starting from the 1960s.

“African studies graduates don’t tend to get rich,” she noted, “but it’s a start.”

Above all, she’d like to help create a community of Africanists at Stanford. While there are people across the schools and disciplines working on Africa, it is not always easy to get them in the same room (though the center’s Africa Table weekly lunches draw a healthy crowd of around 40 people). A calendar is key, Rapp said, echoing the observation of her peers in a multi- discipline crowd of around 40 people). A calendar is key, Rapp said, echoing the observation of her peers in a multidisciplinary crowd of around 40 people). A calendar is key, Rapp said, echoing the observation of her peers in a multidisciplinary

Development careers

Abernethy, one of the key figures in African studies at Stanford since he arrived in 1965, said he didn’t want to lose touch with undergraduates when he retired in 2002. He realized that his students, “the best of the best,” were in a quandary when they graduated.

“We stay away from vocational implications”

at Stanford, he said. “But I was worried about the questions I was getting from my students: ‘What do I do?’ And I was clueless. All we can tell them is, ‘Go get a PhD and clone yourself.’ I had gotten them all excited about African studies, and then I let them down.”

Job descriptions rarely include things like developing innovative solutions for helping people. And they generally don’t have a salary attached.

So five years ago Abernethy launched a development careers discussion group.

“We start by marching uphill, talking about ideal jobs,” he said. “Then we march downhill, away from idealism. The jobs don’t exist. So they have two choices. Give up and go make money, or be an entrepreneur and create the job. ‘Job creation’ is the group’s mantra.

“There are four issues: you, the job, the money and the organization. So let’s experiment,” he says. Students’ eyes are wide open. They say, ‘You mean I can do this?’

Indeed they can. Alumni and role models who have visited the group include representatives of such ventures as kiva.org (online microcredit), the Global Fund for Women and Volunteers in Asia, as well as venture capital funds, the World Bank and the State Department.

“They’re doing African studies,” Abernethy exclaimed.

Take, for example, Abernethy’s former student Chris Maloney, “a force of nature,” according to his proud professor. Maloney, ’02, an African studies and economics double major, picked up a Harvard MBA and a master’s degree from the Kennedy School, moved through the Treasury Department, did some government advising in Africa and then found himself in the back of a truck.

The Rwandan government needed advice on how to solve transport and other infrastructural problems that were hampering overseas commerce. So Maloney, working for Genesis Analytics, a consulting firm in South Africa, hitched a ride on a container truck carrying coltan, a mineral from Central Africa used in the manufacture of electronics. For 1,700 kilometers, from Kigali through Uganda to Mombasa, Kenya, he took notes. The journey in July 2007 took five days, during which he kept close track of velocity, traffic flow, stoppages, bribes, accidents (often caused by right-hand tracks in left-hand countries), bumps, border crossings, rest breaks, weather and road repairs. Sixty percent of the time, the truck wasn’t moving.

“So instead of a huge computerized study, he knows exactly how it works and how to make it more efficient,” Abernethy said. “He reported from the back of a truck. Would the World Bank do this? I don’t think so!”

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African studies has a huge collection of primary documents, thanks largely to Fung.

Top, a female mask of the Chokwe peoples, Angola (courtesy of Fowler Museum, UCLA). Above, Marcus Williams, ’09, an international relations major, and a young friend in Tanzania in 2006. Right, a goat herder in Roggie Village, Ethiopia.
Urban Studies Adjusts to a New World

T he United Nations estimates that half the world’s population today lives in urban areas. By 2030, the figure will be two-thirds.

But the cities of 2030, even the cities of today, bear little resemblance to the ones studied by the first generation of urban studies scholars in the 1960s. Those scholars created the interdisciplinary field as a way of analyzing poverty, crime and racism in the United States. But the urban settlements of the future will be, above all, rapidly growing mega-cities in Asia and Africa with scarce infrastructure that places intolerable pressure on the natural environment.

Domestic poverty, crime and racism are still with us, but the incarcерation of urban studies confronts new problems and wields new tools. Globalization, technology and the environment are now crucial players in the urban narrative. It would be hard to find a little space for study cities. And in the United States, the escape to the suburbs turns out to have had far-reaching consequences on the city left behind, on infrastructure and on culture.

So just as the urban studies programs of the 1960s were grappling with some of the problems of that era, it’s time to take a second look at the field to see how well it responds to the new situation.

“Definitely, there’s a need for a rigorously interdisciplinary field called urban studies,” said sociologist Doug McAdam, faculty director of Stanford’s Program in Urban and Regional Studies.

“But it can’t be rooted in a romanticized, backward-looking set of urban issues. That kind of flavor hangs over most of the university programs, and we’ve had fumes ourselves, the community-organizing model reflected in a sixties-style activist approach. There’s nothing wrong with that, but it can’t be all there is. There must be a global approach.”

The opportunity to incorporate that approach came a few years ago when the Urban Studies Program ran into trouble at Stanford. Members of the faculty were concerned at the program’s lack of focus. The problem had been class structure and departmental politics, and few Academic Council members were teaching there. The program’s focus. McAdam was asked if he would step in, and he did, and he found that the program get an extra year before coming up for renewal.

"Then we sat down and said, ‘What should an exciting, innovative program look like?’" he said. The answer involved creating a major’s concentration areas, building a solid core of required classes and wooing new faculty.

Reconstructed concentrations

There were three concentration areas on the books, but one—Urban Planning and Design—had already been significantly weakened when its architectural connections moved to a new School of Engineering in 2003. The first decision, then, was to eliminate the area altogether and fold its planning and design components into a new Urban Society and Social Change concentration. A second concentration, Urban Education, was left intact. A third, new concentration was created: Cities in Comparative and Historical Perspective, which is drawing particular excitement, McAdam said.

"The exclusive focus on urban problems in the United States didn’t make sense when the most interesting things were happening in other places," he said. "The most rapid urbanization is happening in Asia."

“We’re ahead of the curve on this,” compared to Stanford’s peer schools, he said. “We’re different, too, because we don’t have public policy or architecture school, and that’s usually where urban studies is embedded. But ours is more interdisciplinary, more liberal arts.”

One of the new required courses is Cities in Comparative Perspective, taught by anthropologist Paola Ebron in fall 2007. She developed the course with geographer Karen Seto, who teaches in the Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences in the School of Earth Sciences.

“It’s very challenging to work in a very interdisciplinary environment,” Ebron said of the class. “It’s not just between the arts and sciences, but because there we’re the same people as when we started. I showed me I actually do think as an anthropologist.

The final project, presented in Ebron’s class indicate the field’s breadth but also the commonality of the problems the students and texts address: migration and extreme residents in Las Vegas; check-cashing outlets in Phoenix; the fashion industry in Buenos Aires; the impact of the U.S. Navy’s departure from Hunters Point; the odd class structure of Dubai.

The importance of comparative analysis was also underscored by the graduating Class of 2008’s choice in the fall of their Model Scholar speaker: Carl Nightingale, from the University of Buffalo, who spoke on “Splitting Cities in Early 20th Century Johannesburg and Chicago.”

“Crisis and decline seemed to be the only narrative” to urban studies decades ago, said program director Michael Kahan, who edited an urban historian.

But he went on to say that there also has been thematic. He pointed to technology as an important influence on the field today, particularly software for geographic information systems (GIS) and social networking.

“In a way, though, it was technology that brought the field into existence in the first place, as American historians began using the early computer for quantitative analysis of social and class problems for the first time,” he noted.

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Sociologist Doug McAdam, faculty director of the Urban Studies Program, says a global approach to the field is the only one that makes sense, and that Stanford is ahead of the curve in that regard.
Gender: A Fiercely Interdisciplinary Terrain

BY LONDA SCHIEBINGER

Gendered innovations are beginning to challenge the research. A recent National Research Council study showed that at the University of California-Berkeley 26 percent of female faculty in science, technology, engineering and mathematics hold top faculty appointments, versus 13 percent at Stanford. It soon became evident that focusing on women in this way was too simplistic an approach. Consequently, the National Science Foundation retooled intellectually and launched its ADVANCE program in the 1990s aimed at “fixing” academic culture. Universities are beginning to work strategically to transform the ways universities do business in order to overcome subtle yet systemic gender bias in hiring, tenuring and other aspects of academic life. Changes at this level are deep, structural and broadly institutional.

Gender researchers have begun to document how gender inequalities, built into the institutions of science, have influenced the knowledge issuing from those institutions. I have watched hundreds of faculty and department chairs struggle to increase the number of women in their groups, but to do so requires us to enlarge our view of what can and should count as knowledge.

In March the Clayman Institute will publish a volume, Gendered Innovations in Science and Engineering, that provides concrete examples of how taking gender into account has fostered new research and paradigm shifts in fields such as neuroscience. Several government agencies, including the U.S. National Institutes of Health and the European Commission, now require that requests for funding address whether, and in what sense, sex and gender might be relevant to the objectives and methodologies of the proposed research. As this volume demonstrates, understanding and removing gender bias has brought about new insights to specific fields of science and engineering. Gender analysis, when applied rigorously and creatively, has the potential to enhance human knowledge and technical systems by opening them to new perspectives.

Gender research seeks to reconfigure disciplines, institutions and, ultimately, society. To these ends, the Clayman Institute harnesses the intellectual energies of its 160 affiliated faculty members from across Stanford’s seven schools and SLAC. Our Faculty Research Fellowship Program drives intellectual and social innovation by bringing together scholars from across Stanford in the Terman Engineering Center and as far afield as South Africa’s national parks. Our Graduate Dissertation Fellowship Program has trained 100 students in gender research since its creation in 1994. Our Art at the Institute engages with contemporary gender issues and currently features “Transfigurations,” an exhibit of photos exploring the experience of transgendered people. Our in-house sponsored research examines topics basic to academia and industry. We are currently running three studies: One analyzes academic couple hiring at 13 leading research universities nationwide; and two others seek to understand and how gender dynamics shape innovation in Silicon Valley, which in turn influences how we work and live.

Finally, the Clayman Institute sponsors and co-sponsors lectures and documentary films on topics ranging from “Identity Politics and the Presidential Election” to “Same-Sex Marriage.”

Gender, then, is more than an academic study; it is a social system. Effecting cultural change requires foundational research, good communication, outreach, and political action. Gender research can best contribute to that process by developing interdisciplinary methodologies to enhance knowledge from the humanities to the physical sciences, engineering and beyond. It is intriguing that sciences such as biomedicine and biology, where gender analysis has flourished, have relatively high numbers of women in their ranks. In these fields, as elsewhere, the use of interdisciplinary gender methods has sparked creativity by catalyzing vital new questions for research. Can we afford to ignore such opportunities?