

MOORE



ASAA2022

4TH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE
AFRICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION OF AFRICA



CAPE TOWN,
SOUTH AFRICA



11-16 APRIL
2022

Africa and the Human: Old questions, new imaginaries

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ASAA2022: CONCEPT NOTE

What does it mean to be human today in Africa, African in the world today, and what can Africa contribute to thinking the human? The idea of the human is increasingly threatened by destabilising transformations as the world gradually moves to what is defined by some as the abyss of modernity and the aftershocks of the postmodern. Will prevalent ideas of being human and/or being African survive? Should the idea of the human and African be saved, and as we move into the Anthropocene/posthuman, what or who will or should count as human and/or African in the end? As the old certainties of the enlightenment are questioned and rejected and the promises of neoliberal democracy shattered – labelled as both fraudulent and farcical – what alternatives remain to imagine the human from Africa?

The elaboration and representation of Africa sways between narratives of promise and humaneness and those of catastrophe and despair. The continent is often touted as the birthplace of the human, and the site of strong humanist principles, enshrined in philosophies of community, care, conviviality and interdependency variously called *teranga*, *ujamaa*, *ubuntu* and so on. The continent's representation as the place of hope and future of humanity persists. Yet, a global narrative of the continent as a place of suffering, pain and neglect concurrently frames the continent and its people as inhumane, anti-humanist and instrumentalising. Rising deaths in the Mediterranean, the rise in ethno-nationalism, civil strife and the growth in secessionist demands, normalisation of election rigging and contestation, undermining of judicial institutions, xenophobic politics, state brutality, gender violence, natural/health disasters and social abandonment, economic strain amongst others are recurring themes in conversations about the continent. The purported liberatory promises of new scientific and technological developments, the growth of new elites, the embrace of new (imperial/hegemonic) partnerships and renascent notions of a borderless continent are said to have failed to emancipate, dignify or rehabilitate the human.

The question of the human is urgent and essential to tackle, especially at this moment of global existential crises provoked by the Covid-19 pandemic, the paradoxical undermining and re-centering of science in tackling global challenges, the collapse of postmodernism's promises and its assurances of equality, social justice and the end of histories of violence, discrimination, and poverty. The task of critically reflecting on the democratisation of authoritarianism and chauvinism and the increasing de-legitimisation of rights frameworks is crucial for re-centring African epistemologies in global attempts to re-imagine the future of the human. Whether in the fields of knowledge production, feminism, public health, mathematics, literature, engineering, history, biochemistry, political studies, agriculture, religious studies and anthropology, amongst others, Africa currently has an opportunity to re-produce the world and provide new terms of reference and recognition for the future of humanity.

If modern histories of racism and colonialism exposed the contradictions at the core of enlightenment affirmations of a shared human nature, late modern identity politics – associated with violent, sometimes genocidal, assertions of irreducible difference – have also blighted efforts to establish peaceful, dignified and mutually respectful modes of living. Being human is not a self-evident matter, hence the need to investigate the ambiguities, tensions, and sometimes straight contradictions that make up what the human implies or refers to. What are the discourses and how do they play out in daily lives? Which differentiations are made and how do we place these in particular histories, cultures, political economies, etc.?

The conference will aim to contribute to resurgent scholarly interest in questions of what we humans share – even while recognising our profound differences – as the basis for grappling with the contours of our collective futures. The resurgence of anticapitalist, decolonial, antipatriarchal, anti-racist, pro-science, ecological justice movements and other struggles for social justice have questioned the problematic triad of human justice, human destructiveness and human dignity. What

new ideas can Africa bring to these questions and struggles, and what new spaces can be created for knowledge production?

We envision the conference as a carnival of ideas, a laboratory of concepts and a space for ideological experimentation about Africa and the human. Selected outputs will be published in the HUMA-ASAA “Encounters” series. Co-hosted by HUMA – Institute for Humanities in Africa at the University of Cape Town, we aim to create an interdisciplinary space of conversations between the disciplines – social sciences and humanities (SSH) and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) – focusing on the production of new knowledges about Africa and the human. Scholars, activists, artists and policymakers across different generations, disciplines and sub-fields in SSH and STEM are invited to propose panels on the conference theme.

ASAA2022 ORGANISERS



ASAA2022 COLLABORATING PARTNERS



ASAA2022 WILL BE HELD AS
A **HYBRID EVENT** –
IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL

ASAA2022: KEY DATES

01 MAY 2021	Call for panels and pre-conference workshop proposals
11 MAY 2021	Start of HUMA-ASAA “On Being Human in Africa: Epistemological Debates”
30 MAY 2021	Submission of panels and pre-conference workshop proposals
11 JUN 2021	Acceptance notification of proposals
14 JUN 2021	Call for abstracts
30 AUG 2021	Submission of abstracts
14 SEP 2021	Acceptance notification of abstracts
01 NOV 2021	ASAA2022 early-bird registration
31 JAN 2022	Close of early-bird registrations
01 FEB 2022	Start of registrations
03–08 APR 2022	Pre-conference tours
09–10 APR 2022	Pre-conference arrivals
11–12 APR 2022	ASAA2022 pre-conference workshops and meetings
13 APR 2022	ASAA2022 conference opening and plenaries
14 APR 2022	ASAA2022 conference debates
15–16 APR 2022	ASAA2022 parallel conference sessions
17–22 APR 2022	Post-conference tours
30 MAY 2022	Submission of concept notes for edited volumes of HUMA-ASAA “Encounters” series
30 JUN 2022	Submission of draft papers for “Encounters” series
01 SEP 2022	Acceptance notification of draft papers for “Encounters” series
30 SEP 2022	Submission of final papers for “Encounters” series
01–30 MAR 2023	Launch of HUMA-ASAA “Encounters” series

LEGEND: PREPARATION REGISTRATION CONFERENCE BOOK SERIES

ASAA2022: Call for panels

The Call for Panels is now open for proposal submissions. The decisions of the Scientific Committee will be communicated on 11th June 2021.

ASAA encourages conveners (those proposing/organising a panel) to reflect on the conference theme and address issues outlined in the theme description. Please read the information below and then submit your proposal via our dedicated online platform on <https://bit.ly/3u3m53s> or simply click the button at end of this document. The call for abstracts opens on 14th June 2021.

PANEL FORMATS

ASAA would like to encourage the submission of various panel formats:

1. **Traditional Panel:** five (5) papers per one 105-minute session.
2. **Roundtable Panel:** a group of scholars (no more than five) would discuss themes/issues of general scholarly interest in front of (and subsequently with) an audience. While a roundtable can include short (5–10 min) provocations/presentations, the main idea is to create a lively debate, not to focus on any one presenter. In the roundtable proposal, convenors can list/name the participants in the long abstract, or convenors can leave the list open and take in ‘provocation/presentation’ proposals during the Call for Papers and choose five of those to be on the roundtable. N.B. Please append the format to the title of the proposal, e.g. “Gender and the Ethics of Technology in Africa [Roundtable]”.
3. **Pecha Kucha Panel:** fast-paced presentation using *Pecha Kucha*, *Ignite* or *Lightning Talks* type of formats. N.B. Please append the format to the title of the proposal, e.g. “Dancing with Machines in Chinua Achebe [Pecha Kucha].”

RULES

- All accepted panels must be open to paper proposals through the website: panels should not be organised as ‘closed’ sessions.
- Special panels should be submitted with a complete list of papers and panelists.
- Panels should have at least two co-convenors (panel organisers) from different institutions and ideally from other countries.
- Delegates (those attending the conference) may only make one presentation each (please note that roundtable participation counts as being a discussant, not a presenter). It is allowed to be a co-author on multiple papers if he/she/they is/are not the one presenting them. In addition, a delegate may also convene once (be that a plenary, panel, or roundtable); and be a discussant or a chair in one plenary session, panel, or roundtable.
- All convenors and presenters must be or register as members of ASAA and have paid their subscription before the conference. They need not conform to this rule when submitting the proposal but must address it after their proposal is accepted.
- All attending the conference, including discussants and chairs, will need to register and pay to attend.

CRITERIA FOR ACCEPTANCE

1. ASAA2022 can host a maximum of 500 delegates, which suggests approximately 100 panels.
2. The Scientific Committee will decide which proposals to accept; the likely acceptance rate will be ~50%. The decision will be based on:
 - a. compliance with the rules stated above
 - b. clarity, cohesion, reliability and academic rigour (quality)
3. The Scientific Committee will pay attention to different disciplinary traditions and topics.

SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

All proposals must be made via the online form. Proposals should consist of a panel title, a short description of max. 300 characters, and an abstract

of 250 words. The proposal may also include the names of any chairs or discussants, although these can be added subsequently. Please use the convention of Firstname Lastname (Institution). (Where convenors will take these roles, you need not re-enter their names.)

On submission of the proposal, the proposing convenor (not the co-convenors) will receive an automated email confirming receipt. If he/she/they do not receive this email, please first check the login environment (click login on the left) to see if the proposal is listed there. If it is, it simply means the confirmation email got spammed or was not successfully delivered; and if it is not listed, it means the proposal needs to re-submit.

Proposals will be marked as “Pending” until the Scientific Committee decisions are publicised on 14th September 2021. On that date, proposals will be marked as “Accepted” or “Rejected”, and the conference administrators will inform you of the decision via email.

DURATION OF PANEL SESSIONS

Given the competition over resources (panel proposals outweighing available time slots) and the stated desire by many members to be able to attend more panels than just the ones they are active in (convening/speaking), **ASAA2022 will have panel sessions of 105 minutes. The panels will be limited to a maximum of TWO consecutive 105-minute sessions, each of which can accommodate a maximum of five papers.** This allows the conference to accept more shorter panel giving more choice to both paper proposers and delegates. Consequently, panel convenors may accept a maximum of ten papers in their panel. However, accepting four papers per session will be acceptable.

CONVENOR RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the convenors’ responsibility to ensure that all panel participants are well briefed and that the panel continues to meet the ASAA2022 requirements. To that end, convenors should commu-

nicate their decisions over proposals as detailed below, and – later in the process – email the panelists to: inform them of the speaking order (albeit this is displayed on the public panel page), inform them as to how much time they have been allocated, remind them to register (the registration status can be seen in the login environment), inform them of any late changes or additional chairs/discussants, and give any other information related to the panel. If panelists withdraw, convenors should inform the organisers.

TIMING OF PRESENTATIONS

How convenors allocate the time of their sessions is largely their decision. The ASAA norm is to allot each presenter a maximum of 25 minutes (for presentation and questions/discussion). The key is to respect the fact that many presenters have travelled a long way in order to be able to contribute and clearly need time to set out their argument. The particular panel sessions will be indicated in the conference programme, and papers are ordered within these sessions. While convenors may wish to amalgamate discussion time, where possible, they should adhere to the published session.

PRE-CIRCULATION OF PAPERS

ASAA has no rule about this; however, many convenors opt to pre-circulate completed papers. To facilitate this and lessen email traffic, authors can upload their papers as PDFs on the conference management platform. It is the author’s choice whether to instruct the presenters to make use of this offer.

CONTACT

For any queries with the above, please email: as-aa2022.org@uct.ac.za



SUBMIT YOUR
PROPOSAL
ONLINE



VISIT THE
ASAA2022
WEBSITE