



African Studies Program

AFRICAN STUDIES GLOBAL VIRTUAL FORUM 2022-23: DECOLONIALITY AND SOUTHERN EPISTEMOLOGIES



ABOUT THE FORUM

The African Studies Global Virtual Forum 2022-23, led by Dr. Sinfree Makoni, seeks to decenter hegemonic epistemologies and to decolonize the Western canon to facilitate other ways/waves of knowing. Through a series of online conversations, participants in the forum will challenge the notion of the “universal truth” and discuss how the only truth that is universal is the truth of complexity. To decolonize knowledge, epistemic perspectives need to be pluralistic in ontologies, cosmologies, and insights, and the emergence of Epistemologies of the South is one such response to the decolonial turn.

Joining us from around the world, our speakers will discuss the multiple approaches taken in the humanities and social science scholarship to decolonize knowledges by paying attention to complexities and heterogeneities in disciplinary formations.

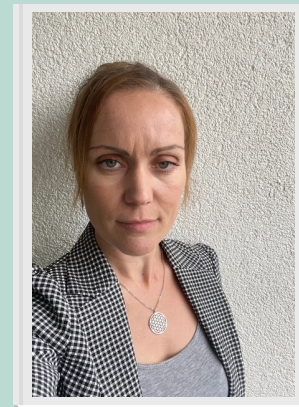
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ANDREA HOLLINGTON

**"LANGUAGE, KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND
DECOLONIALITY: PERSPECTIVES FROM EAST
AFRICA"**

Friday, June 30 | 9:00 AM EDT



As a social practice, a means of communication and a cultural expression, language can be involved in processes of knowledge production in multiple ways. Studying underlying cultural concepts of epistemology in various East African societies, it becomes obvious that linguistic practices are crucially involved in the production, negotiation and transmission of knowledge. In this talk, I will discuss three different examples of how language features in cultural knowledge production and decolonial practices. Firstly, I will show how the Amharic concept of *sāmənna wärq* ('wax and gold') works not only as an important rhetorical device in communication and verbal art but also as an allegory for social realities in Ethiopian culture (Levine 1965, Mattausch 2006). Secondly, I will discuss the Kiswahili notion of *utu* ('humanity') by looking at cultural linguistic practices and grammatical structure. Hereby, I seek to illustrate how *utu*, which from a philosophical perspective can be regarded as southern epistemology and form of knowledge of humanity and the world (Kresse 2007, 2018), is deeply inscribed in language and culture of the Swahili people and offers a Kiswahili view on language, culture and knowledge. Finally, I will turn to youth language practices in Uganda to shed light on how youth use linguistic manipulation as a means of epistemic disobedience (Mignolo 2011) and decolonial practice. These three examples will fuel a discussion of East African (or more generally: southern) perspectives on the intersection of language, culture, epistemology and decoloniality.

Andrea Hollington is a researcher with a background in African Studies. Her research interests include anthropological linguistics, sociolinguistics, social semiotics, ethnomusicology, post- and decolonial studies, epistemologies, youth language practices and studies on repertoires and identity. She has investigated cultural, linguistic and musical practices in Africa and the African Diaspora and studied African-Caribbean relations. Her research areas include Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Jamaica. In her multifaceted and multi-sited research she is also interested in creativity and agency in communicative practices.