

For Immediate Release

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**African and African American Studies Department Launches New African Language Program
*Program Offers Students Opportunity To Study in Africa***

September 17, 2003, Cambridge – The Department of African and African American Studies is launching a new African Language Program. Beginning this fall, undergraduate students can study Hausa and Swahili with two experts in the field of African language as well as travel to Kenya, Niger and Ghana for further study.

Elementary Swahili, the most widely spoken language in Eastern Africa, will be offered this year under the teaching of Professor John Mugane. Professor Mugane is the director of the African Language Program and Senior Preceptor in African and African American Studies. Professor Mugane will also be directing the African Language Tutorials Course which will offer students individualized study in Igbo, Kikuyu, Twi, Wolof, Yoruba and Zulu.

Hausa, an important *lingua franca* of West Africa will also be studied at the elementary level under the teaching of Professor John Hutchison. Professor Hutchison teaches at Boston University and will be a Visiting Professor of African and African American Studies this year at Harvard. He is also the Coordinator of the African Language Program at Boston University. The emphasis in all of African language courses will be on oral fluency, reading comprehension, and written expression.

“With the launch of these courses, we hope to become the leading institution in North America in the study of Africa and be a noted program for intellectual rigor and the integration of African perspectives,” said Professor Emmanuel Akyeampong, Chair of the African Studies Committee. “This is an important opportunity for students to receive language instruction within a comprehensive African Studies program as well as fulfill requirements towards a degree in African Studies.”

In the summer of 2004, students will also have the opportunity to gain additional understanding of the language and culture by traveling to Africa. Specifically, students who have completed the Elementary Hausa course can journey to the University of Niamey in Niger to undertake further language study and directed field study in environment or health.

Students interested in furthering their study of Kikuyu or Swahili have the chance to visit universities in Kenya and can also participate in an oral history project led by Professor Caroline Elkins of the History Department. The project focuses on the life stories of survivors from the Mau Mau Rebellion. At the completion of this multi-year project, Widener Library may become the only depository outside of Kenya to house the digitized interviews.

Finally, students who want to advance in their study of Twi or take a semester abroad in an African University can travel to the University of Ghana for a semester of planned academic study.

For more information, students should contact Professor John Mugane in the African and African American Studies department at (617) 495-4113 or at mugane@fas.harvard.edu. Students can also visit www.fas.harvard.edu/~cafrica or www.fas.harvard.edu/~afroam.

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