



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

HUMANITIES UPDATE

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

ISSUE 02



IN
THIS
ISSUE

FACULTY LEADERSHIP

STUDENT TRIUMPH
NTOKOZO MAKHAZA

AI FOR HUMANITIES

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Dean's Welcome Message

Dear Colleagues, Students, Alumni and Friends of the Faculty of Humanities,

As we move through the second semester of 2025, it is inspiring to reflect on the achievements and milestones our Faculty has reached so far this year.

We began with 3 inaugural lectures between March and July, setting a vibrant tone for scholarship that will continue throughout the year.

I am especially delighted to congratulate Professor Tanja Bosch on her appointment as SARChI Chair in Digital Media Sociology. Based in the Centre for Film and Media Studies, her research on the intersection of digital media and society is making a significant contribution to the field of digital humanities and continues to enhance UCT's global impact.

We also warmly welcome Professor Nomusa Makhubu as the new Director of the Institute for Creative Arts, whose leadership is already energising our arts programs.

Our students continue to impress with their resilience, creativity, and accomplishments, and the Humanities Student Council has demonstrated exceptional leadership, driving initiatives that enrich the student experience across campus.

Open Day this year was a resounding success, reaffirming our position as a large and dynamic Faculty at UCT, and giving prospective students and families a glimpse of the opportunities and community we offer.

We also celebrate global recognition of our programs, particularly Development Studies, now ranked 15th in the world, reflecting the impact of our teaching and research in addressing real social, economic, and political challenges across the African continent.

This achievement is a testament not only to the dedication of our academic staff but also to the curiosity, resilience, and creativity of our students, who are constantly pushing boundaries, asking critical questions, and contributing to solutions that matter. Every achievement, every milestone, every story of perseverance adds to the rich tapestry of our Faculty.

All of this happens on the backdrop of a profoundly painful moment of widespread assaults on life and knowledge all around us. I am grateful for the tireless efforts of our students and colleagues and their intellectual leadership in the struggle against genocide and global histories of imperialism and colonisation. Your efforts to end injustice are a beacon of hope for humanity.

As we continue through 2025, I am grateful to every member of our community, students, staff, alumni, and partners for your energy, passion, and commitment. Your contributions, large and small, shape the life of our Faculty and inspire those around you. It is through your engagement that we continue to lead, innovate, and make a tangible difference in society.

I hope you enjoy this edition of our Humanities Update.

May it inspire you, make you proud, and remind you of the vibrant life, intellectual curiosity, and collective excellence that define the Faculty of Humanities.

**Best wishes,
Professor Shose Kessi
Dean, Faculty of Humanities**



Why Study History at UCT?

The Department of Historical Studies at the University of Cape Town (UCT) boasts a long and proud tradition of academic excellence, professional leadership, and social sensitivity. As the oldest university history department in sub-Saharan Africa, it has, over more than a century, trained and hosted some of South Africa's most creative, authoritative, and impactful historians.

In a rapidly evolving, technology-driven world, studying history remains vital. Historical inquiry provides the tools to understand the tensions and paradoxes of time and place, engage in rich debates, and appreciate diverse perspectives. Technological advancements from artificial intelligence to virtual reality are embedded in social and historical processes, and storytelling, the oldest human innovation, continues to be central to how we interpret and navigate the world. At UCT, history sits at the heart of these conversations, helping students make sense of both past and future innovations.

INNOVATIVE INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY

While maintaining its commitment to rigorous historical knowledge, the department embraces 21st-century technological innovations. Students engage with historical research through digital media, podcasts, visual exhibitions, music, poetry, and documentaries, extending history beyond traditional archives. Programs like the Archive and Public Culture Initiative (APC), including the Five Hundred Year Archive and the EMANDULO project, showcase the transformative potential of digital archives and offer students opportunities to explore history in dynamic, modern ways.



Diverse and Engaging Curriculum

UCT history students take courses spanning precolonial African history, early modern empires, modern African intellectual history, and 20th- and 21st-century South African history. Postgraduate programs—Honours, Masters, and PhD—focus on advanced historical methods, original research, and developing critical thinking. Students learn to analyze complex sources, interpret diverse perspectives, and articulate evidence-based arguments, preparing them for both academic and professional success.

UNIQUE RESEARCH INITIATIVES

The department is home to innovative research projects like:

- EMANDULO Project: Exploring the historical experiences and perspectives of southern Africa. [Learn more](#)
- Five Hundred Year Archive: A digital archive that highlights the richness and continuity of historical knowledge.

[Explore here](#)

These initiatives demonstrate how historical research can intersect with public culture, technology, and community engagement, giving students firsthand experience with cutting-edge scholarship.

CAREER READINESS AND GLOBAL IMPACT

Studying history at UCT equips students with skills for navigating the complexities of contemporary societies. Graduates emerge as original thinkers, critical analysts, and effective communicators. Many alumni thrive across fields such as academia, research, education, NGOs, law, arts and film, government, and consultancy. The department fosters international engagement through conferences and collaborations, ensuring students are connected to global scholarly debates.

JOIN A LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE!



SPOTLIGHT ON SOUTH AFRICAN NONFICTION: PROFILING THE INTERPRETERS

A/Prof Hedley Twidle, HOD of the Department of English Literary Studies, dives into **“The Interpreters: South Africa’s New Nonfiction”**, an anthology he co-edited that brings together 33 remarkable works from the past three decades. The collection highlights how South African nonfiction continues to shape our understanding of history, memory, and contemporary life, and the nationwide launch events underscored its role as a vibrant, creative, and intellectual practice.

How a groundbreaking anthology is reshaping the landscape of nonfiction writing in South Africa

Hedley: “The past three decades of South African democracy have produced an extraordinary body of nonfiction – journalism, memoir, essays, reportage, life writing, and experimental forms that continue to redefine how we tell our stories. The Interpreters: South Africa’s New Nonfiction, co-edited by Hedley Twidle and published by Soutie Press, brings together this dynamic tradition in one ambitious collection.

The anthology collects 33 outstanding works by some of the country’s most celebrated literary voices, including Nobel Laureate J. M. Coetzee, Njabulo S Ndebele, Rian Malan, Bongani Madondo, Lin Sampson, Jonny Steinberg, Mark Gevisser, and Antjie Krog, alongside powerful contributions from a new generation of writers such as Bongani Kona, Zanele Mji, Kimon de Greef, Julie Nxadi, Lindokhule Nkosi and Anna Hartford.

As a project, The Interpreters seeks to trace and celebrate nonfiction as a powerful mode of interpretation: of history, of memory, of contemporary life, and of the ways South Africans imagine their place in the world. The book brings together diverse voices and forms, offering both a reckoning with the past and a way of thinking through the present.

“This magnificent anthology”, wrote Ferial Haffajee, “will surely emerge as one of the best books out of South Africa this year, if not this decade.”

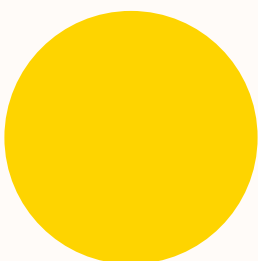
In an essay for The Conversation, Twidle highlighted how nonfiction has emerged as one of the most vital and experimental genres in post-apartheid South Africa, listing five essential reads from the past 30 years. Ambitious and innovative nonfiction, he noted, has become a space where South Africans process change and continuity, as well as the challenges of justice, memory, and belonging.

The launch of The Interpreters became a national conversation in its own right. Events were held across the country – from Cape Town to Johannesburg, Durban and Pietermaritzburg – creating spaces where writers, editors, and readers could come together to discuss nonfiction as both literature and lived experience. These gatherings underscored the book’s central idea: that nonfiction is not just about recounting events, but about interpreting them, shaping meaning, and opening dialogue.

As part of this momentum, Soutie Press has been actively engaging audiences on social media (@soutiepress on Instagram), showcasing the contributors, sharing excerpts, and documenting the growing excitement around the anthology.

The Interpreters is more than a collection of texts. It is an invitation to see nonfiction as a creative, intellectual, and political practice, one that is helping to define South African literature for the next generation.”

Read More: [here](#)



UCT Jazz Commands the Main Stage at the Cape Town International Jazz Festival 2025



The Cape Town International Jazz Festival, ‘Africa’s Grandest Gathering’, returned in 2025 with a powerful reminder of where the heartbeat of South African jazz lies: right here at the University of Cape Town. With a lineup brimming with UCT Jazz staff, students, and alumni, this year’s festival was not just a celebration of jazz, but a bold showcase of the excellence cultivated within UCT’s South African College of Music (SACM) and its renowned Jazz Programme.

Headlining the main stage was celebrated vocalist, composer, and UCT Jazz lecturer Nomfundo Xaluva, who performed with an ensemble featuring several UCT alumni and current students, including Pam Lunguza, Marzia Barry, and Brathew van Schalkwyk. Xaluva’s performance captured the depth of artistry and innovation that continues to flourish within UCT Jazz.

Another highlight came from trumpeter Muneeb Hermans, a UCT graduate, who fronted a sextet comprised almost entirely of UCT Jazz alumni: Blake Hellaby, Tefo Mahola, Sean Sanby, and Dylan Fine. Together, they demonstrated the international calibre and creative energy that has become synonymous with the programme.

The band Ritmo, featuring SACM Jazz staff members Justin Bellairs, Shaun Johannes, Amy Buitendag, Murray Buitendag, and Blake Hellaby, further underscored the collaborative energy of UCT’s teaching staff, many of whom continue to shape the present-day jazz landscape while mentoring the next generation of artists.

UCT alumni also featured prominently across other headline acts, from Ivan Mazuze to Kujenga (featuring Benjamin Jephta, Jodi Fredericks, Keno Carelse, Danél Murcot, and Bonga Mosola), Thembi Dunjana’s band, and the Kyle Shepherd Trio, with bassist Shane Cooper and Shepherd himself, another UCT Jazz alumnus.

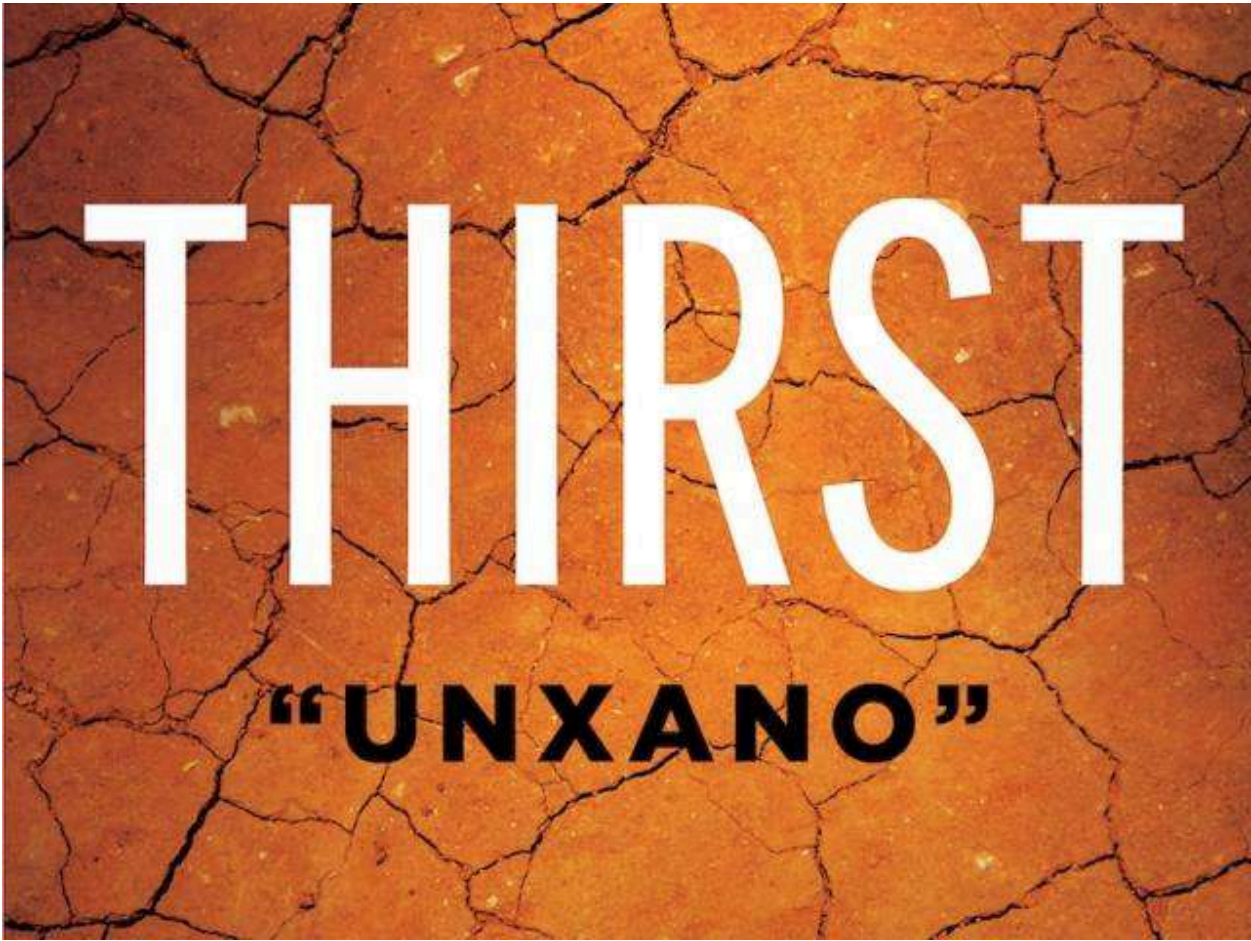
Reflecting on the moment, Prof Andrew Lilley, Director at SACM and one of the founding lecturers in the Jazz Programme, said:

“The impact of UCT Jazz on the Cape Town scene has been nothing short of transformative. Over the last two decades, we have seen a complete renaissance in local jazz, driven in large part by the artists who have come through our programme. From legends like Judith Sephuma, Musa Manzini, Ivan Mazuze and Jimmy Dlodlu, to the next generation you saw on stage this year, the legacy continues to grow. Without UCT Jazz, the Cape Town jazz landscape would be a very different place.”

The 2025 Festival was a clear signal of excellence, consistency, and influence. UCT Jazz was not merely present, it was leading. On the main stage, in multiple bands, and in the spirit of the festival itself, UCT Jazz stood right where it belongs, at the centre of Africa’s grandest gathering.

Thirst – Unxano: A Powerful Collaboration of African Music and Dance at UCT

As part of the University of Cape Town’s Africa Month celebrations, the South African College of Music and the Centre for Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies presented Thirst - "Unxano", a part of African Gumbo 2025. Thirst - "Unxano" delved into the urgent issue of water scarcity, exploring the devastating effects of drought, forced migration, starvation, and disease. The work highlighted the narratives of communities forced to evacuate and migrate due to water scarcity. The pain of losing family members, loved ones, diseases, and the notion of constantly reminiscing about the idea of home.



The production was choreographed and directed by Maxwell Rani, with musical direction by Keketso Bolofo and Nomapostile Nyiki, and dramaturgy and voice by Lukho Noyila and Yolanda Ntanyana.

Rani states: “The music and dance collaboration delivered 'Unxano’ narrative through movement characterisation and movement dramaturgy while not neglecting oral traditions of storytelling in South African spaces of performativity. This production commemorated the important ways contemporary stories are told through African indigenous musical instruments and African contemporary movement language.”

“The **music** and **dance** collaboration delivered 'Unxano' narrative through movement characterisation and movement dramaturgy while showcasing oral traditions of storytelling in South African spaces of performativity”



Performances took place on Friday 23 May, 7:30pm and Saturday 24 May at 2:30 and 7:30pm at the Little Theatre, Hiddingh Campus, University of Cape Town.

Pictures by Lerato Maduna



Citizen Scholarship: African Literary Cities Website Launch



A collaborative project between A/ Prof. Polo Moji and Dr Laura Nkula-Wenz, a lecturer and researcher at the African Centre for Cities, African Literary Cities: Hubs, Maps and Literary Urban Ecologies research addresses the “absenting” of African literary cities in both globally authoritative cultural policy discourses and the emerging scholarly field of Literary Urban Studies.

Funded by the National Research Foundation (2023-2025), the project critically engages specific literatures and modes of cultural production that represent and/or shape contemporary African urban dynamics. The ALC website archives our public seminars and student activation at the Open Book Festival. You are welcome to explore our podcasts, and videos, as well forthcoming blog posts and public events.

We are particularly proud of the African Literary Cities live map, which was created through a collaboration with the Cities in Fiction project (India) and promotes citizen scholarship. We invite all members of the UCT community to contribute to this public archive, what will serve as resource for scholars, practitioners and members of the general public.

Just click on our “SUBMIT YOUR CONTRIBUTION” link and get started!

The Department of English Literary Studies and the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town are delighted to announce the launch of the African Literary Cities website:

<https://africanliterarycities.uct.ac.za/>



LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE CORNER

KONA YA LUGHA NA FASIHI

ANGOLO DI LINGUA E LETTERATURA

IKONA YELWIMI NENCWADI

Dr Mara Boccaccio, Senior Lecturer and Head of
Section – photo supplied



Dr Eliza Mahenge, Lecturer, School of Languages &
Literatures – photo supplied

In this edition, we are delighted to showcase voices from the School of Languages and Literatures (SLL). We spoke to Mara, who lectures in Italian, and Eliza, who lectures in Swahili. For this special feature, we encouraged them to respond in their own languages, giving us a glimpse not only into their ideas, but also into the beauty, rhythm, and richness of Swahili and Italian. Their reflections remind us that language is more than a tool of communication, it carries culture, identity, and creativity.

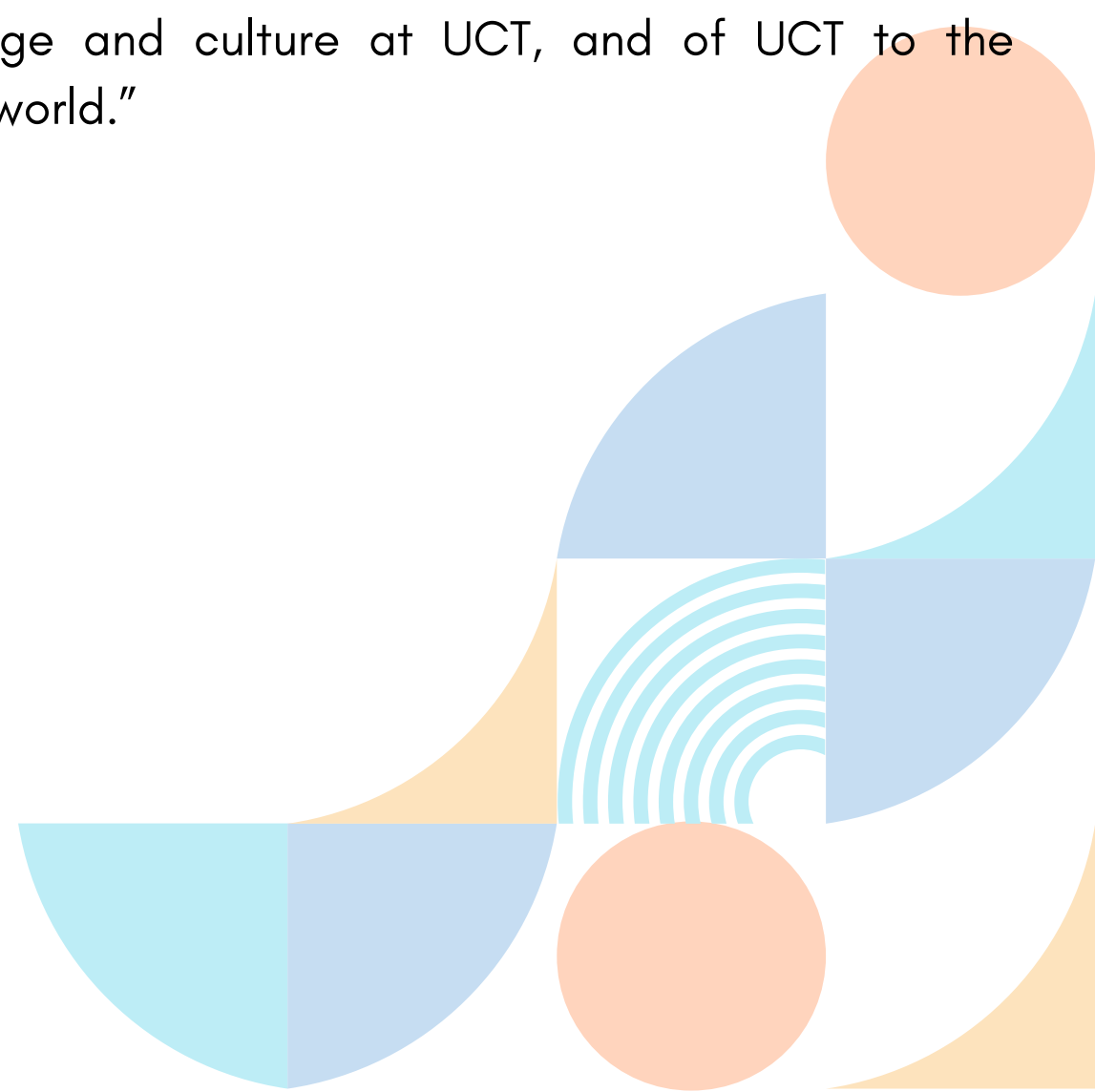
What does teaching your language at UCT mean to you, both personally and professionally?

Eliza: “Kitu kikubwa kabisa kwangu na muhimu ni kumshukuru Mwenyezi Mungu kwa fursa hii ya kuletwa UCT. Maana kuna wataalamu wengi sana wa Kiswahili nchini Tanzania – kwa nini niwe mimi? Ni kwa neema yake tu na rehema. Sasa nitajibu maswali yako kama ifuatavyo. Kufundisha lugha yangu UCT kuna maanisha jambo moja kubwa sana "umajumui wa Kiafrika" ambao tutaweza kuufikia kupitia mawasiliano ya lugha moja ambayo ni Kiswahili. Kibinafsi hii ni fursa muhimu kwangu kuweza kuwaimarisha vijana wa Afrika Kusini ili waweze kupata "nyenzo" ya kujiajiri kupitia fursa mbalimbali zilizomo ndani ya Kiswahili. Kitaaluma ni fursa ya kujifunza wenzetu UCT wanatumia mbinu zipi, zana, mikakati na pedagogia ipi katika kufundisha lugha. Ni darasa kwangu maana nilipofika nilielekezwa misingi ya kufanya kazi UCT ikabidi nifundishwe kutumia Amathuba na sasa nimeiva. Lakini pia katika kuunda kozi mpya za Kiswahili ili zifanane na muundo wa Kiulaya wa A1&A2, B1&B2, C1&C2 ilibidi nisome mtandaoni ili kuelewa inamaanisha nini; na Mkurugenzi wangu Profesa Anorld Markus akanishauri nipate uzoefu wa wenzangu wanaofundisha lugha za Kisasa – Kifaransa (Karin), Kiitaliano (Mara) na Kijerumani (Gwyer) ili kuona wanafanyaje. Kweli nilijifunza maana tulikuwa na mikutano kadhaa wakinishauri namna ya kuboresha mwongozo wa ufundishaji. Kwa sasa nimeiva na nimeweza kuandaa majukwaa yangu ya Amathuba kwa ajili ya kufundishia kozi mpya za Kiswahili – 2A&2B na 3A&3B .”

Mara: *“Insegnare lingua e letteratura italiana a UCT rappresenta per me un’avventura culturale e linguistica che intreccia l’Italia e il Sudafrica in modo coinvolgente, in grado di entusiasmare le menti dei giovani. Al tempo stesso mi dona la gioia profonda di condividere con loro il piacere dell’apprendimento, un’esperienza autenticamente umana e universale. Dal punto di vista professionale, trovo molto stimolante la sfida di coltivare nei miei studenti una competenza linguistica solida, ma anche flessibile. Infine, mi fa piacere presentarmi come ambasciatrice della lingua e della cultura italiana presso UCT, e come rappresentante di UCT nel panorama culturale italiano.”*

Eliza: “The biggest thing for me which is very important is to thank Almighty God for this opportunity to be brought here to teach at UCT. Because there are so many Kiswahili professionals in Tanzania – why me? It is by His grace. Now I will answer your questions as follows. Teaching my language at UCT means one very big thing "African unity" which we will be able to achieve through communication in one language which is Swahili. Personally, this is an important opportunity for me to be able to empower young South Africans so that they can find "an avenue" for self-employment through the various opportunities available in Swahili. Academically it is an opportunity to learn what methods, tools, strategies and pedagogies our colleagues at UCT are using in teaching languages. It is a class for me because when I arrived in 2023, I was instructed on the basics of working at UCT and had to be taught to use Amathuba and now I can run it myself. But also, in designing Swahili courses to match the European structure of A1&A2, B1&B2, C1&C2 I had to read online to understand what it means, and my Director Professor Markus Arnold advised me to gain the experience of my colleagues who teach Modern languages – French, Italian and German to see how they do it. I really learned because I had several meetings with them where they advised me on how to improve my course outline. Now I know how to do it and have been able to prepare my Amathuba sites for teaching the new Swahili courses.”

Mara: “Teaching Italian at UCT means combining the adventure of Italian and South African culture and language in a way that excites young minds and brings me the satisfaction of experiencing the same, while witnessing the joy of learning that is universally human. Professionally it stimulates me with the challenge of building a rigorous yet elastic linguistic ability in the still-plastic intelligence of my students. Lastly, I am pleased to be an ambassador for Italian Language and culture at UCT, and of UCT to the Italian world.”





How do you see your language opening doors for students at UCT i.e. academically, culturally, or personally?

Eliza: “Ninaona ni jambo zuri sana lugha yangu ikifungua milango ya wanafunzi wangu wa UCT kimasomo, kitamaduni na kibinafsi. Najivunia wanafunzi wangu wana bidii sana ya kujifunza na wanafurahia Kiswahili kwakuwa ni fursa yao kimasomo wataweza kupata ufadhili wa kusoma ngazi ya umahiri na uzamivu katika Chuo Kikuu cha Dar es Salaam; kitamaduni ni mlango mwingine wa mafanikio kwakuwa wameshajifunza utamaduni wa lugha kwahiyo wanajua namna ya kuchangamana na Waswahili na kushirikiana nao; kibinafsi ni fursa inayomwezesha mtu kujiajiri na kujiongezea kipato endapo atafuzu na kuiva anaweza kufundisha wengine Kiswahili kama nilivyo mwalimu wao.”

Mara: "I miei studenti sviluppano pensiero critico e analitico, perfezionando la capacità di interpretare testi con profondità e consapevolezza. Alcuni di loro trascorrono periodi (anche di studio) in Italia, immergendosi direttamente nella cultura e nella lingua, e partecipano attivamente nella comunità italiana in Sudafrica. Grazie a queste esperienze, si rafforza il legame tra apprendimento e vita vissuta, e lo studio della lingua diventa un percorso personale e profondo. In collaborazione con i colleghi dell'Università di Wits e con il supporto delle Istituzioni italiane, inoltre, stiamo promuovendo un programma di tirocinio formativo presso aziende italiane operanti in Sudafrica. L'obiettivo è offrire agli studenti l'opportunità di scoprire come la conoscenza della lingua italiana possa rappresentare un concreto sbocco professionale nel loro paese, valorizzando così lo studio della lingua e rafforzando il legame culturale ed economico tra Italia e Sudafrica."

What is one concept or idea embedded in your language that you wish every student at UCT could truly understand?

Eliza: “Dhana au wazo linalopachikwa katika lugha yangu ambalo ninatamani kila mwanafunzi wa UCT aelewe kweli ni "kuzungumza Kiswahili ni raha". Hii ni dhana muhimu na ukitaka kujua ukweli wake anza tu kusema kwa Kiswahili utaona mwenyewe unapata raha furaha na bashasha.”

Mara: “Mi piacerebbe che i miei studenti comprendessero il senso profondo della tradizione, intesa come flusso continuo di linguaggio e pensiero, capace di trasformarsi e rinnovarsi nel tempo. La letteratura e la lingua sono espressioni vive di una memoria che si rinnova e in questo dialogo tra continuità e cambiamento si trova la vera ricchezza della cultura.”

TRANSLATION

Eliza: “I think it is a great thing that my language opens doors for my UCT students academically, culturally and personally. I am proud of my students who are very eager to learn and enjoy Swahili because it is their opportunity academically they will be able to get funding to study at the master's and doctoral levels at the University of Dar es Salaam; culturally it is another door to success because they have learned the language and culture so they know how to live with the Swahili speakers and cooperate with them; personally it is an opportunity that enables a person to be self-employed and increase their income if they graduate and master this language they can teach others like myself.”

Mara: “My students come away with critical and analytical thinking, and frequently spend sessions of time and study in Italy and participate in the strong Italian community in South Africa. These experiences strengthen the connection between learning and lived experience, turning language study into a personal and meaningful journey. In collaboration with colleagues from Wits University and with the support of Italian institutions, we are also promoting a training internship programme within Italian companies operating in South Africa. The aim is to offer students the opportunity to discover how knowledge of Italian can lead to real professional opportunities in their own country, enhancing the value of language study and reinforcing the cultural and economic ties between Italy and South Africa.”



Eliza: “The concept or idea embedded in my language that I wish every UCT student truly understood is "speaking Swahili is a pleasure". This is an important concept and if you want to know its truth, just start speaking Swahili and you will see for yourself how happy and cheerful you are.”

Mara: “I would love them to understand the concept of tradition and literature of deep time, continuity and transformation. Literature and language are living expressions of the memory that renovates itself, and in this dialogue between continuity and transformation lies the true richness of culture. “



What has surprised you most about your students' engagement with your language at UCT?

Eliza: “Kilichonishangaza zaidi kuhusu ushirikiano wa wanafunzi wangu wa lugha ni jinsi wanavyokuwa wepesi katika kubuni hadithi za kuvutia, pamoja na umahiri wao wa kuzungumza lugha hii, na kujiamini – vyote hivi unaweza kuviona wanapotunga drama zao au mazungumzo yao kwa ajili ya jaribio la mazungumzo na mtihamu wa mazungumzo. Ni hadithi mzuri zinazotokana na mada mbalimbali walizojifunza kama mapishi, kuagiza chakula, kujitambulisha, salamu, familia, shughuli mbalimbali za kila siku, na utamaduni kwa ujumla. Wanatunga wenyewe na wakikuita usikilize mtafurahi kwa jinsi wanavyojieleza – lugha imenyooka vizuri na hadithi ni nzuri kwa hiyo inakuwa ni vicheko na burudani. Wanafunzi wangu wana furaha na wanajiamini. Kitu kingine cha kufurahisha ni ufanano wa Kiswahili na lugha za Afrika Kusini, jambo linalosaidia sana katika kufundisha. Kwa mfano, maneno kama **“mtu/muntu”; “Watu/ Bantu”; “Funda/Fundisha”;** “umfundisi/mfundishaji” yana maana zinazofanana katika lugha hizi. Pia kitu kingine cha kufurahisha ambaho mimi na wanafunzi wangu hucheka kwa pamoja ni jinsi lugha moja inavyotumia neno linalofanana [kimaandishi] na la lugha nyingine kwa namna tofauti. Mathalani mwaka 2023 nilipoanza kufundisha mada ya “familia” nikasema **“kaka”** nikaona wanafunzi wanacheka basi tukacheka pamoja. Kisha nikawauliza *‘mbona mmecheka’* wakasema “mwalimu ukisema “kaka” kwa kikwetu maana yake ni haja kubwa” tukacheka zaidi na tangu hapo imekuwa ni burudani na raha kujifunza Kiswahili.

Mara: “Mi ha sorpreso e mi sorprende sempre constatare che la competenza linguistica degli studenti dipende principalmente da un impegno costante e dalla partecipazione attiva, piuttosto che da un talento innato per le lingue. Questo processo di apprendimento è favorito anche dal modo in cui le nostre classi si trasformano in spazi sociali e di collaborazione, un contesto dinamico e condiviso in cui sperimentare la lingua.”

Can you share a moment in your classroom that reminded you why teaching language matters?

Eliza: “Ndiyo napenda kuzungumzia tukio moja la muhimu kabisa kuhusu kufundisha lugha yangu nalo ni kusoma maneno kama yanavyoandikwa. Hili huwa ni jambo la muhimu siku ya kwanza tukikutana maana tunazungumzia lugha kwa ujumla kwa hiyo kuna maneno ni **“mwiko”** kuyatamka na unaweza kukosea tu matamshi. Mathalani tunapohesabu namba ni muhimu kuzisoma kama zinavyoandikwa ikimaanisha penye **/i/** utamke kama ilivyo na penye **/a/** utamke kama imivyo. Usitamke kwa Kiingereza kwa sababu utatukana. Ten kwa Kiswahili ni **/kumi/** tamka na soma hivyo hivyo kama ilivyoandikwa – usibadilishe. Pili, ni muhimu sana ili kuwajulisha wanafunzi maneno ambayo hawatarajiwi kuyasema hadharani badala yake unatumia tafsida ili kusiwe na ukakasi wazungumzaji wa lugha wakikusikia. Hi ni muhimu kwa sababu inamfanya mwanafunzi aongee kwa kujiamini na asiwe na wasiwasi.”

Eliza: “1.What surprised me most about my language students' collaboration was very easily they came up with interesting stories, their fluency in speaking the language, and their confidence – all of which you see when they create their own dramas or their conversations for oral test and oral exam. They are good stories based on various topics they learned such as recipes, ordering food, introducing themselves, greetings, family, various daily activities, and culture in general. They compose conversation themselves and if they call you to listen, you will be happy with the way they express themselves. The language is well-developed, a good story, so it becomes laughter and entertainment. My students are happy and confident. Another thing is similarities of Kiswahili and South African languages. For example, words like: “mtu/muntu”; “Watu/ Bantu”; “Funda/Fundisha”; “umfundisi/mfundishaji” they are related in meaning. So, it becomes easy task to teach them. But there is a fun thing with learning this language. In 2023 when I started teaching the topic about “family”, I said “kaka” and I saw my students laughing, so we laughed together. Then I asked them ‘why did you laugh’ and they said ‘teacher, you say “kaka” in our South African languages it means number 2 when you go to the toilet. So, we laughed even more and since then it has been fun and enjoyable to learn Swahili.”

Mara: “It surprised me that students’ success in the language depends mostly on consistent hard work and participation rather than any particular talent for languages. Also that their success is facilitated by the way in which our classes become social and collaborative spaces, a dynamic and shared context in which they can experience the language.”

Eliza: “Yes, I would like to talk about one very important event about teaching my language and that is reading words as how they are written. This is always important on the first day we meet because we are talking in general so there are words that are “taboo” to pronounce, and you can just make mistakes in pronunciation. For example, when we count numbers, it is important to read them as they are written which means where **/i/** you pronounce it as it is and where **/a/** you pronounce it as it is. Do not pronounce Swahili sound in English because you will be making an insult. Secondly, it is very important to inform students of words that they are not expected to say in public instead of you use metaphor so that there is no embarrassment when native speakers hear you. It is very important to give precautions so that they can speak with confidence.

TRANSLATION

Mara: *“Durante la lettura di In altre parole di Jhumpa Lahiri, mentre esploravamo insieme l’esperienza translinguistica, una studentessa ha condiviso un’osservazione significativa: anche per lei scrivere in italiano rappresenta una forma di libertà espressiva, capace di conferirle una nuova voce. Ho avuto, perciò, la conferma del fatto che imparare una lingua non è soltanto l’acquisizione di una nuova abilità, ma è soprattutto un’esperienza profondamente trasformativa, capace di reinventare il proprio modo di essere nel mondo.”*

If you could change one misconception people have about your language, what would it be?

Eliza: “Ningetamani kubadilisha dhana potofu ambayo watu wanayo kuhusu lugha yangu kwamba **"Kiswahili ni kigumu"** hapana. Kiswahili si kigumu ila "sarufi ni ngumu" kwa sababu ni sayansi ya lugha. Mimi sifundishi sayansi ya lugha nafundisha mawasiliano. Kwa hiyo wanapaswa kusema ‘sayansi ya lugha ni ngumu’ – hii ni kawaida sayansi zote kwani ziko hiyyo kama sayansi za lugha za Kiingereza, Kifaransa, Kijerumani zilizvyo ngumu, vivyo hivyo na sayansi ya lugha ya Kiswahili ni ngumu pia. ”

Mara: *“Dovremmo smettere di pensare che l’italiano sia una lingua difficile e lontana. Al contrario è la quarta lingua più studiata nel mondo, il che testimonia il suo fascino culturale e la sua rilevanza globale.”*

How do you hope your students will carry your language forward after they leave UCT?

Eliza: “Ndiyo ninatarajia wanafunzi wangu kuendeleza lugha yangu baada ya masomo yao kutokana na fursa mbalimbali ambazo Kiswahili kinawapa ikiwemo kujiajiri wao binafsi kwa kuwa walimu wa lugha. Lakini pia kwenye taasisi zinazotumia Kiswahili wanaweza kuomba kufanyakazi huko kama wafasiri, wakalimani, wahariri, waandishi nk. Ofisi kama SADC, EAC, AU, UNESCO, na NGO zilizopo Afrika Mashariki ni eneo jingine ambalo litamwezesha mwanafunzi kuendelea kuzungumza Kiswahili chake. Vilevile kama atapenda kujiimarisha katika taaluma za Kiswahili, UDSM inatoa ufadhili kwa wanafunzi wa kimataifa wanaosomea Umahiri katika Kiswahili [M.A Kiswahili].”

Mara: *“Credo che, una volta terminati i corsi, i miei studenti portino con sé un autentico senso di appartenenza all’Italia e il desiderio di custodire quella conoscenza nella loro vita. Ho visto alcuni dei miei studenti trasferirsi in Italia per proseguire gli studi o insegnare la lingua ad altri.”*

Mara: “While teaching Jhumpa Lahiri’s In other words, and both discussing and participating in the translanguaging experience, a student remarked that for her, too, writing in Italian had afforded the same excitement of freedom to express and represent herself in a new modality. I realised then again that teaching and learning a new language, also through and for literature, is a life-changing experience and not just the acquisition of a new skill.”

Eliza: “I would like to change the misconception that people have about my language that "Swahili is difficult" no. Swahili is not difficult but "grammar is difficult" because it is a science of language (linguistics). I do not teach linguistics I teach communication. So, they should say that the science of Swahili language is difficult – this is normal, all sciences are like that and other language sciences like that of English are difficult too.”

Mara: “We should stop to think that Italian is difficult and remote, while indeed it is the 4th most studied language in the world.”

Eliza: “Yes, I expect my students to develop my language after their studies due to the various opportunities that Swahili provides, including self-employment as language teachers but also in institutions that use Swahili, they can apply to work there as translators, interpreters, editors, writers, etc. Offices like SADC, EAC, AU, UNESCO, NGOs in East Africa are another area that will enable the student to continue speaking their Swahili. Also, if they would like to learn more Swahili disciplines, UDSM offers sponsorship for international students studying Master of Arts in Kiswahili [M.A Kiswahili].”

Mara: “I believe that my students, when they finish the courses, take with them a sense of belonging to Italy and the desire to save that knowledge in their life. I have seen some of my students moving to study in Italy for a period, or teaching the language to others.”



RESEARCH

HIGHLIGHTS

Interview with Zainab Adams: Championing Environmental Justice and Community Learning

Zainab Adams, an Administrative Officer with over two decades of experience in the NGO sector, has dedicated her career to empowering communities and advancing environmental justice across Southern Africa. With a strong background in Adult and Community Education and Training (ACET), Zainab combines her passion for facilitation and grassroots engagement to create inclusive learning spaces and build meaningful networks. In this interview, she shares insights from her journey, lessons learned, and advice for those seeking to make a real impact in communities.

1. What inspires you most about working in the NGO sector and advancing environmental justice?

Over the last 22 years in the NGO sector, I've had the privilege of gaining extensive experience while working with individuals dedicated to improving their lives and the well-being of their communities. Working within an NGO provides a unique opportunity to witness meaningful transformation and to know that your efforts—no matter how small—have contributed to that change. I've partnered with faith leaders throughout Southern Africa who have launched food gardens to nourish schoolchildren, led clean-up campaigns to improve their local environments, and influenced environmental policies to safeguard natural resources. The NGO sector has played a vital role in empowering communities, fostering a sense of agency, and building movements that advocate for the right to a cleaner, healthier environment. Being part of this journey and witnessing the impact has been one of the greatest blessings of my life.

2. How has your background in adult learning and community education shaped the way you approach your work today?

I started my journey in Adult and Community Education and Training (ACET) at UCT in 2009. The course equipped me with skills that, surprisingly, aren't as common as one might expect—like how to truly listen to communities, recognize what matters to them, and interpret their challenges without speaking on their behalf. Instead, it taught me how to empower them to voice their own experiences with confidence.

I've always been passionate about designing training programmes, and through my studies, I've learned how to centre participants' voices rather than the trainer's. The course sharpened my ability to create inclusive learning spaces and helped me discover my strengths as a facilitator, and I always have fun doing it!



I don't believe I would have grasped the diverse ways adults learn without this course. I'm currently completing my final year of the Postgraduate Diploma in ACET at UCT and plan to begin my Master's degree in 2026.

3. What's one piece of advice you'd give to someone who wants to build stronger networks in grassroots communities?

If there's one piece of advice I can offer, it's this: learn how to truly listen. Sometimes, saying nothing is more powerful than speaking. We often assume that sharing our knowledge is essential, but the real wisdom often comes from those in the room with lived experience.

Be aware of the power you carry. And I don't mean that in a positive sense—sometimes your presence alone can be intimidating, causing others to withdraw from the conversation. Learn to read the room and create space for others to contribute.



FACULTY OF HUMANITIES CONGRATULATES PROF. TANJA BOSCH ON PRESTIGIOUS SARCHI APPOINTMENT

The Faculty of Humanities warmly congratulates Professor Tanja Bosch on her appointment as the DSI/NRF SARCHI SA-UK Bilateral Chair in the Digital Humanities, a recognition of her outstanding scholarship and leadership in digital media research.

Prof. Bosch, a Professor of Media Studies and Production at the Centre for Film and Media Studies, is a leading scholar in digital media sociology, focusing on digital technologies, social media activism, identity formation, and social change. Her current research includes projects on digital colonialism in Africa and queer citizenship in African contexts.

“This appointment opens up exciting opportunities to create new research avenues, expand mentorship, and develop innovative academic programmes for students and emerging scholars,” said Prof. Bosch.

She also serves as chairperson of the African Digital Rights Network (ADRN), advancing digital rights, internet freedom, privacy, and online expression across the continent. Her work highlights the importance of humanities scholarship in understanding the social and political dimensions of digital technologies.

“A singular focus on STEM won’t make the global South competitive or improve the lives of marginalized people,” notes Professor Adam Haupt, director of the Centre for Film and Media Studies. “Humanities scholarship is crucial in making sense of fast-changing digital technologies and their impact on societies locally and globally.”

During her tenure as SARCHI Chair, Prof. Bosch will continue to advance digital media sociology while fostering interdisciplinary collaborations, policy engagement, and international partnerships. Her leadership strengthens the Faculty’s commitment to cutting-edge, socially engaged research and ensures African perspectives remain central in global digital discourse.



Photo credit: Zeest Marrium



HUMA – Institute for Humanities in Africa

The Future of Hospitals, from the South: Epistemologies & Experimentations Workshop

HUMA recently convened the second phase of the AI and the Future of Hospital Care in Africa workshop in Paris (16-19 June 2025) under the title “The Future of Hospitals, from the South: Epistemologies & Experimentations” at MSH–Paris Nord.

Convened by Divine Fuh (HUMA UCT) and Fanny Chabrol (IRD/CEPED), the workshop is part of a collaborative project between Ceped and HUMA that receives funding from PHC-PROTEA, the Global Research Institute of Paris, Carnegie Corporation of New York, the National Research Foundation (NRF), and the Wenner-Gren Foundation.

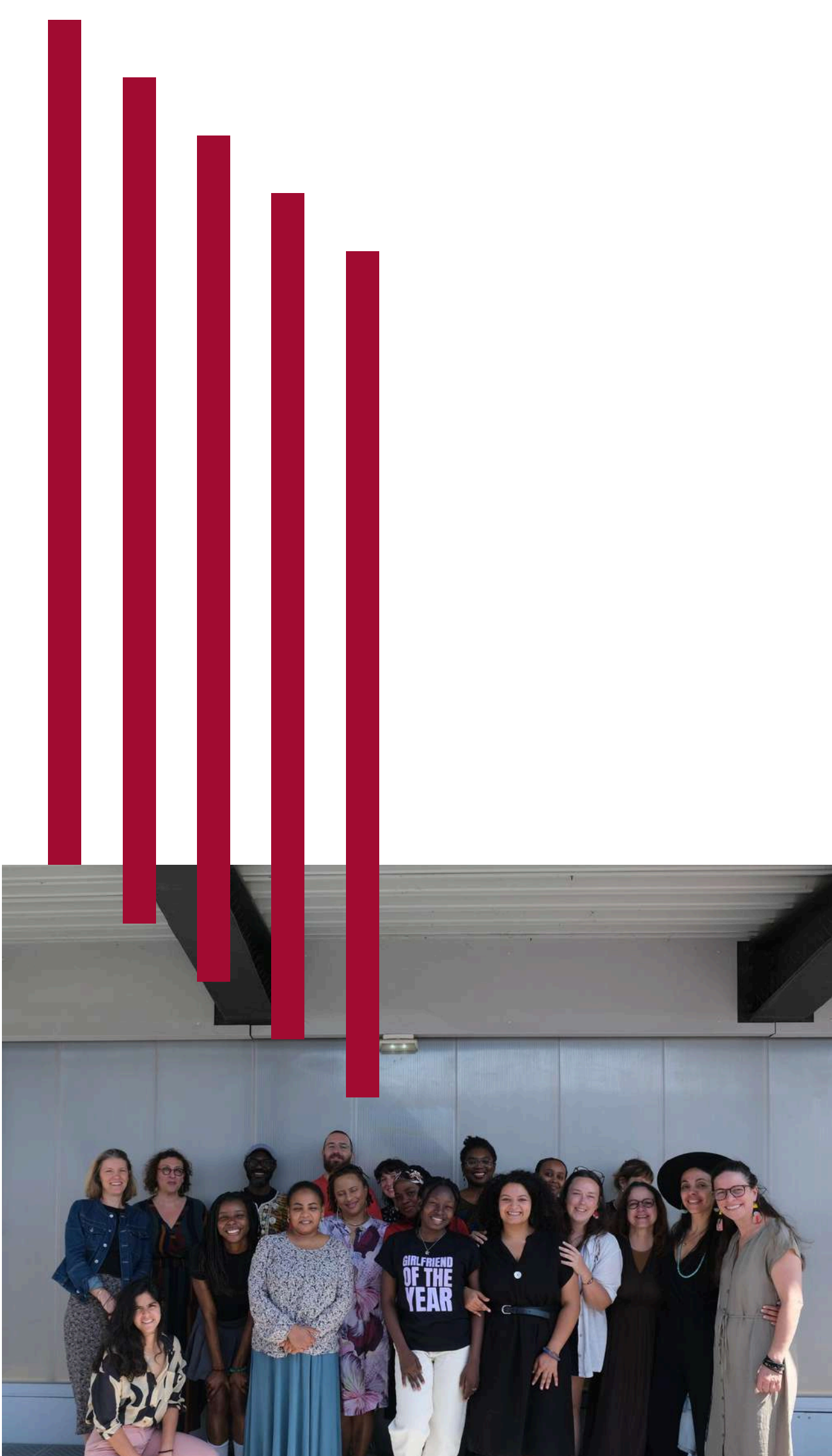
The June 2025 workshop explored radical epistemic and methodological shifts in hospital care, asking: How do we imagine hospitals of the future from the Global South, using social science and humanities perspectives that centre human dignity? Participants critically interrogated the ethical, social, and technological implications of AI in African healthcare systems, mapping its impact on patient care, workflows, diagnosis, and data management.

This phase in Paris follows the first phase held in Cape Town (November 2024), where HUMA and Ceped research fellows explored questions around AI, big data, and the evolving idea of the hospital in Africa. The project foregrounds Africa as a space from which to critically engage with contemporary technological transformations, while maintaining a focus on care, ethics, and human-centered approaches.

Objectives of the Project:

- Build a core network of young scholars and strengthen collaborations from Africa, Europe, and beyond.
- Develop exchange programs promoting human dignity and social justice in hospital imaginaries.
- Support innovative public engagement, including podcasts, illustrated texts, and long-form publications.
- Produce a final scholarly output: a special journal issue or edited volume.

For the full program and participants, visit [HUMA Coverage](#).





HARNESSING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

AI and the Humanities: Insights from Professor Ryan Nefdt



As AI becomes increasingly integrated into research and teaching, its potential impact on the Humanities is both exciting and complex. In this interview, Professor Ryan Nefdt explores how AI can support students and scholars beyond writing assistance, from sourcing literature efficiently to promoting underrepresented languages and perspectives. He also discusses the ethical challenges, including bias, cultural nuance, and the importance of transparency and academic integrity, while highlighting the unique opportunities for African universities to lead in responsible AI scholarship.

- **What are some realistic ways you think AI could enhance or support teaching and learning in the Humanities beyond just helping with writing or summaries?**

AI tools (like Perplexity) can be excellent resources for finding relevant articles and citations for research, when used properly. The task of finding the prominent literature in a particular domain can be daunting and arduous for students especially. These tools can source important work at lightning speed. However, we should be careful that certain artificial metrics don't promote certain kinds of work inappropriately (sometimes articles which intentionally use words and terms like "revolutionary", "cutting edge" etc can fool AI tools). So it's a balance and we always need to be vigilant when using AI in research and teaching.

- **With AI becoming more common in research, how do you think this might change the standards or expectations around scholarly work and academic integrity?**

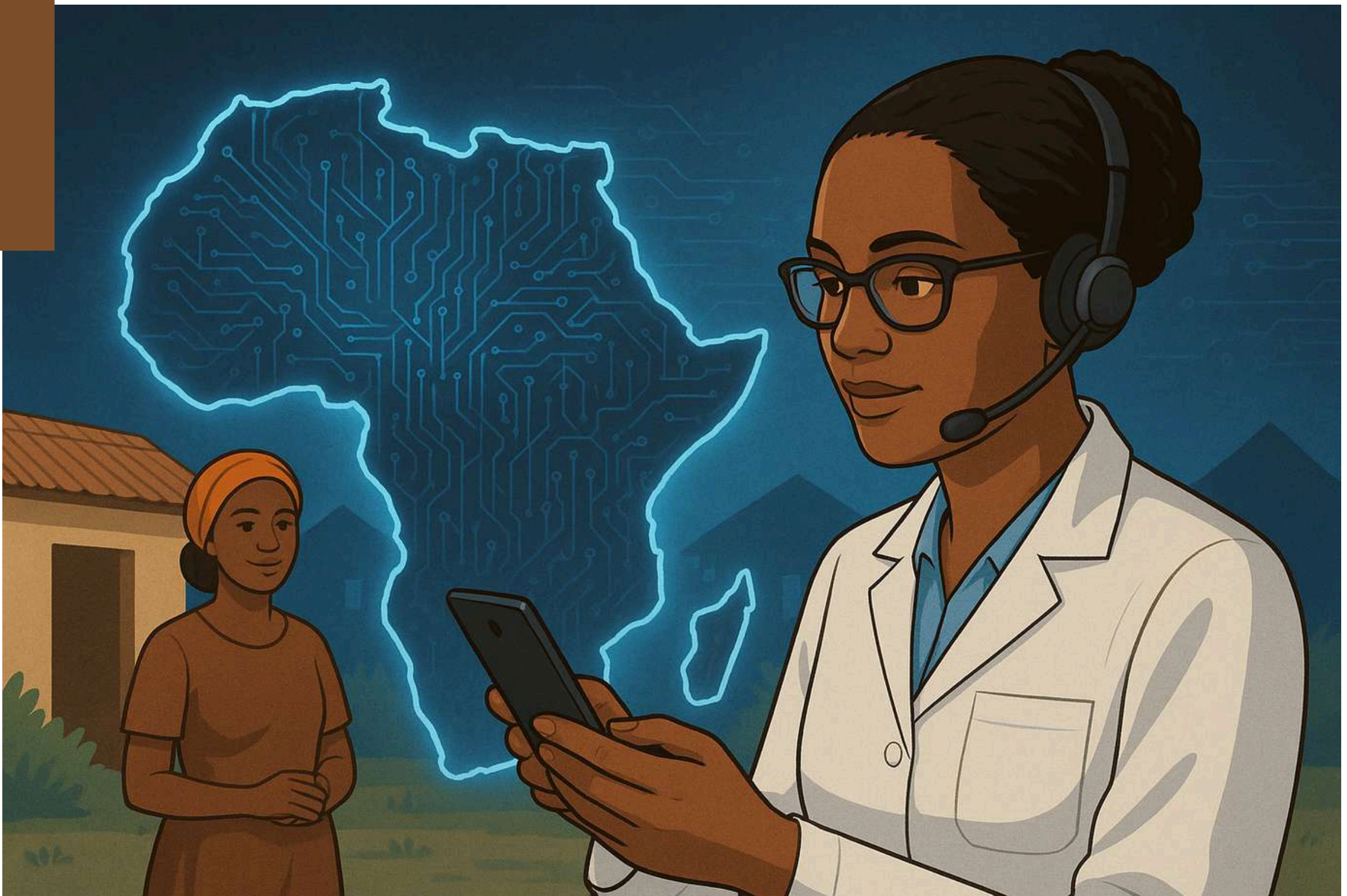
For one thing, we will and should be required to start stating exactly how we have used AI in a particular work, and when required we should produce the evidence of such usage. Standards of academic writing will naturally improve across the board as proof-editing is easily outsourced to language models. AI tools also offer decent text organisation suggestions at times. Again, this comes with a caveat. Privileged dialects will be reinforced and idiosyncrasy might be sacrificed for the sake of homogeneity. Unlike the sciences, Humanities scholars tend to express themselves in different styles and registers.

- **Do you see potential for AI tools to help us better include under-represented languages and perspectives in teaching and research, or is that still quite limited?**

There is certainly potential for the inclusion of underrepresented languages but it needs to be an active pursuit. Without pressure, the opposite is likely to occur. For instance, standard tokenisation techniques in natural language processing (like Byte-Pair) offer compressions of linguistic structure that are unnatural for more agglutinating languages (such as Nguni languages). Manually inducing morphological structure can come at the cost of efficiency. Under-resourced languages tend also to have less available data which the kinds of algorithms in use today require mountains of for their tasks.

- **Many worry that AI might unintentionally reinforce existing biases, especially in African contexts. From your perspective, what safeguards or approaches should we consider in our universities?**

This is a constant concern in AI ethics. Shannon Vallor recently wrote a book called "AI Mirror" which details the ways in which AI reproduces and sometimes amplifies our worst biases (as does the internet upon which it is trained). Our universities can mitigate this problem by investing in the curation of better (more inclusive) datasets as well as apply constant vigilance and awareness of the issues. The most important thing is to disabuse ourselves of the still prevalent idea that AI is somehow neutral or unbiased as opposed to human beings.



Graphic supplied

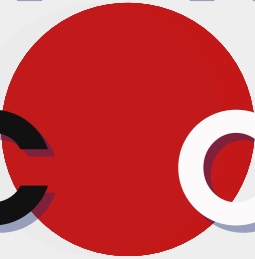
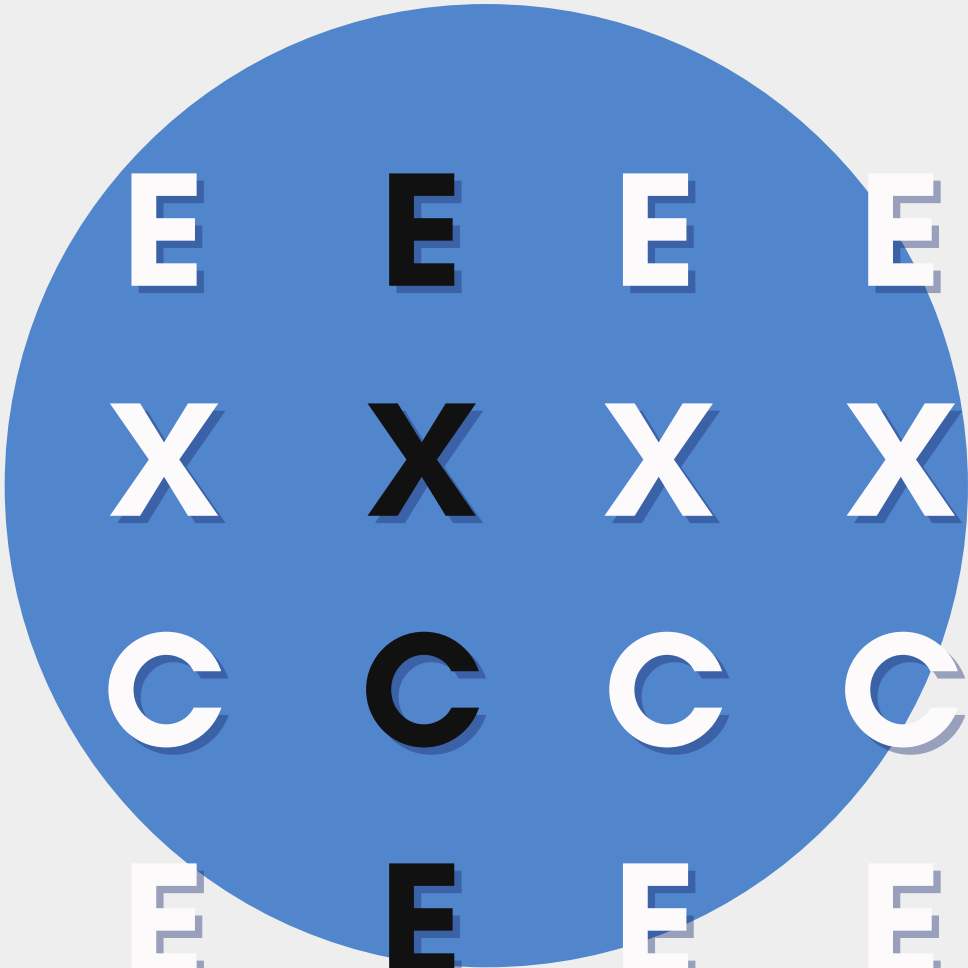
- **Given how much language and meaning are tied to culture and context, what should we be careful of when using AI in Humanities classrooms or research?**

Always! Cultural context, umwelt, our lived experiences are only fractionally (if at all) captured in the texts we write. In Africa, much of our cultural transmission is via oral history. Humans pass this knowledge down like memes across generations (an idea the cognitive scientist Daniel Dennett explored at length). This is expressed in how we speak, act, interact, and are disposed to act. It is not clear that purely textual input can approach any understanding of the complexity of this social and historical context. Cognitive and social scientists are grappling with this question everyday.

- **Finally, looking ahead, what kinds of collaborations or focus areas do you think would be most valuable for universities in Africa as we explore AI's role in education and scholarship?**

This is difficult question. Clearly, we need to work on the infrastructural side as well as the ethical, humanistic elements. African universities should invest in so-called 'foundational AI', which is a computational project. But what we can do differently, and the AI initiative at UCT aims to do, is explore challenges facing the continent both through computer science and ethics side-by-side, not with ethics and the Humanities as an uncomfortable afterthought.

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IN CONVERSATION WITH **PROFESSOR NOMUSA MAKHUBU** – NEW ICA DIRECTOR

“I was attracted by the fact that ICA has, over the years, forged new paths in interdisciplinary creative practice under Jay Pather’s directorship, it has supported and developed the careers of many creative practitioners in South Africa and, more broadly, the African continent”

Can you share a little about your background and how it has shaped your approach to leading the ICA at UCT?

As an art historian, artist and curator, I have placed emphasis on collaborative socially responsive arts. My interest in art and social justice shapes my approach to the ICA. I consider the arts as a public good and a catalyst for civic engagement, activism and social action.

What attracted you to this position, and what do you see as your primary goals in the role of head of ICA?

I was attracted by the fact that ICA has, over the years, forged new paths in interdisciplinary creative practice. Under Jay Pather’s directorship, it has supported and developed the careers of many creative practitioners in South Africa and, more broadly, the African continent. As such, it has become one of key platforms for interdisciplinary creative practice oriented towards justice. Working with artist collectives and artist organisations, the ICA has established a broad network of practitioners from different backgrounds. In all its events, emerging curators are invited for collaborative work, collective planning and realisation of projects. This approach tackles the inherent inequalities where emerging practitioners struggle to find spaces to realise their strengths and to explore working differently and working in spaces accessible to multiple publics. Addressing topics such as land, restitution, public space, and inequality, the ICA has always opened and enabled spaces for difficult conversations that are open to all. Its symposia and colloquia have brought together a range of established and emerging public intellectuals within and beyond the institution. Recognising the legacy of the ICA, the aim is to ensure ongoing programming that fosters progressive practice and trans-disciplinary research in creative arts that is geared towards creating just societies.

How do you envision the ICA contributing to UCT’s broader mission, and what role do you see the arts playing in academic and community life?

The ICA is aligned with UCT’s commitment to engaged scholarship commitment and transformation. Through research collaborations, the ICA generates creative research in live arts. The arts can shape social values, produce ideas and influence perceptions. It educates and transforms. At ICA we see the arts as an essential contribution to the core pedagogic and research functions of the university.

What are some of the key challenges or opportunities you anticipate in this role, and how do you plan to address them?

It is in general a difficult time for universities. In the context of scarce resources, socio-economic inequalities, and restrained freedom, there is an opportunity to forge transnational networks based on resource sharing and solidarity.

What message would you like to share with the students, staff, and broader community at UCT as you begin your leadership journey at ICA?

The ICA is a collective space and we hope to work together with staff and students in the coming years.



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**DISTINGUISHED RESEARCHER SPOTLIGHT: PROFESSOR
CAROLYN MCKINNEY**



Championing Language, Literacy, and Social Justice with Prof. Carolyn McKinney

Prof Carolyn McKinney was recognized by SAWiSA in the Public Engagement Research – Distinguished Women Researchers category for Human and Social Sciences. Her work in language, literacy, and decolonial education has influenced policy, teaching practice, and community engagement, reflecting a career dedicated to transformative education and social justice. In this interview, we explore Carolyn McKinney’s journey as a leading researcher in language, literacy, and decolonial education, her impactful work in policy and teaching, and her recognition as a Distinguished Woman Researcher by SAWiSA in the Human and Social Sciences category.

What inspired your research focus on language, literacy, and decolonial approaches in education?

Carolyn: “This is not an easy question to answer as I’m not aware of a single experience or event that sparked my interest and later passion. But thinking back on it now, a number of experiences during my undergraduate years led me to this focus. As an undergraduate student at UCT I volunteered in the SHAWCO Adult education programme teaching English. The programme offered extra classes for adults studying at night school to complete their matric qualification. We ran a Saturday morning programme of lessons at high schools in Langa, Gugulethu and Khayelitsha. As a young student teaching English to mature adults, I questioned the inappropriate curriculum as well as my own positioning as a more knowledgeable teacher. I was also really moved by Ngugi wa Thingo’s essay on ‘The Language of African Literature’ from his book *Decolonising the mind* (1986, James Curry) in which he recounts his experiences of humiliation for using Kikuyu in his English medium school in Kenya, and which was prescribed reading in my first year of English language and literature in 1991. Then when completing my Honours degree at Rhodes in 1994, I again taught high school English, this time to students who were repeating the matric exams either to pass, or to improve their results. At the same time, I volunteered teaching adult literacy in a programme run in collaboration with NEHAWU. In my honours research project, two of the case studies I conducted were with adults in the literacy programme who lived in Jozini township. I wanted to understand how they navigated their lives as so-called ‘illiterates’. In all of these early experiences of learning about the politics of English as well as of language and literacy teaching, I was struck by how little I knew in relation to the adults I worked with...”



“I became aware of how my English proficiency positioned me as educated, knowledgeable and competent despite my young age, while the far more knowledgeable and experienced bi/multilingual students I was ‘teaching’ were positioned in deficit. It became very clear to me that marginalising and excluding African languages in school and higher education was robbing students of their full potential for meaning-making and limiting the world views of those who did not speak African languages. Fast forward to 2004 and the first post PhD research project I conducted together with my dear colleague Prof Pinky Makoe (now at UJ) was on the relationship between language, identity, inclusion and exclusion in desegregated schools in Johannesburg. Ethnographic research in a historically white girls’ high school where the learners were now black & bi/multilingual in African languages but most teachers were still white English speakers took me deeper into understanding the relationships between language, power and race. The research showed so clearly the process of how monolingualism in English (preferably White South African accented English) was constructed as superior to bi/multilingual proficiency including African languages. The relative linguistic deficiency of English monolinguals was twisted into an asset while the linguistic proficiency of multilingual students was constructed as deficient. Finally, my passion for bilingual education where children can learn through the medium of two languages, their home language and English, as has been available to Afrikaans speakers since Apartheid, was fully ignited by my experience of conducting fieldwork on language practices in Grade 4 in a Khayelitsha school where children had transitioned from isiXhosa language of instruction to English language of instruction. After spending days observing children awash in a sea of incomprehensible words and struggling to transcribe letters from the chalk board to the page, I returned home to my own son who was in Grade 4 completing homework with exactly the same textbooks and tasks as the children in Khayelitsha...”

“This after he’d been immersed in English for 9 years by then while the isiXhosa speaking children had been exposed to only 2-3 hours a week of lesson time in English at most. I felt like I was observing linguistic child abuse in the Khayelitshan classroom. The contrast between the privileged situation of my own child and that of the participants in the research was profoundly disturbing and spurred me to action.”

Looking back, what has been a particularly memorable or meaningful moment in your work with students and colleagues?

It is hard to choose just one so here are a few: Conducting fieldwork in a historically white and then desegregated Johannesburg primary school with my colleague Pinky Makoe and learning to see the site through her eyes; attending the 17th AILA world congress in Rio de Janeiro with my then PhD students, Robyn Tyler, Xolisa Guzula and Soraya Abdulatief in 2017; the annual lecture & discussion I have with PGCE students in which we watch the film Sink or Swim and reflect on their own experiences of language in schooling; listening to my PhD graduates and colleagues Drs Xolisa Guzula and Robyn Tyler presenting on their research to the Department of Basic Education Multilingualism round table; residential writing retreats for collaborative journal and book projects with colleagues and finally the recent announcement of the previous Minister of DBE, Angie Motshekga, of the rollout of mother tongue based bilingual education (MTBBE) from 2025.

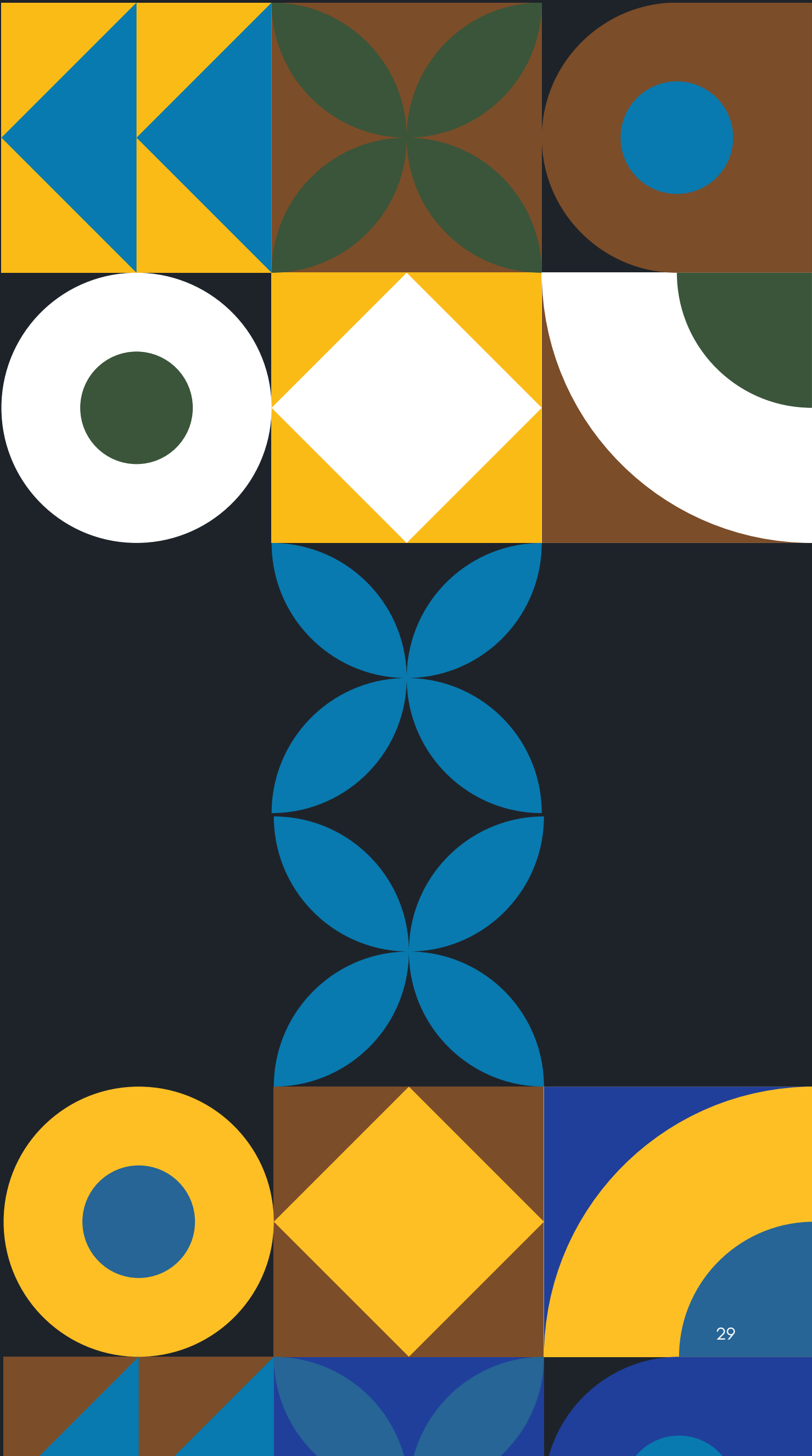
What advice or insight would you share with emerging researchers in your field?

Form a network of like-minded peers who share your research interests that you can collaborate and commiserate, strategise and celebrate with. I am so fortunate to have an amazing sisterhood with whom I work and continually learn from. If you want to be involved in policy change and transformative practice, be prepared for a long journey and celebrate the small steps forward along the way.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WITH RESEARCH – DISTINGUISHED WOMAN RESEARCHER (Humanities & Social Science category) Prof Carolyn McKinney alongside Prof Zilungile Mkhize-Kwitshana (PhD), (Natural & Engineering Science Category)

Department of Science, Technology and Innovation



2025 INAUGURAL LECTURES

FIRST SEMESTER

1



1. PROFESSOR SHOSE KESSI: “S#*T HAPPENS: A DECOLONIAL FEMINIST PSYCHOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON INSTITUTIONAL RACISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION”

WATCH LECTURE: [HERE](#)

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2025 INAUGURAL LECTURES

FIRST SEMESTER

2



**2. PROFESSOR URSULA HOADLEY:
“LIFE IN CLASSROOMS:
UNDERSTANDING INTERRUPTION AND
ENHANCEMENT THROUGH
PEDAGOGY”**

WATCH LECTURE: [HERE](#)

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2025 INAUGURAL LECTURES

FIRST SEMESTER

3



**3. PROFESSOR DICK NG'AMBI:
"TECHNOLOGY CHANGES WHAT
MATTERS - WHAT MATTERS CHANGES
TECHNOLOGY"**

WATCH LECTURE: [HERE](#)
Photos Supplied



F I N E A R T

M I C H A E L L I S

1 0 0 Y E A R S O F

C E L L E B R A T I N G

100 Years of Michaelis: A Century of Art, Change, and Creative Imagination

In 2025, the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town (UCT) marks a century of shaping artistic practice, critical thought, and cultural dialogue. Since its founding in 1925, Michaelis has served as a crucible for experimentation, a site for social reflection, and a training ground for some of South Africa's most influential artists, educators, and thinkers. More than 4,000 students have passed through its studios, each leaving behind their own marks, stories, and creative legacies. The school's centenary is not just a celebration of the past, but also an invitation to reimagine the future of art, knowledge, and community in South Africa and beyond.

Tracing a Transformative Journey: From Student to Leader

Among the many stories that make up the fabric of Michaelis, few capture its evolution as powerfully as that of Professor Berni Searle. Her journey with the school began as a student, when she completed her BAFA (Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art) in 1987 and later her MAFA (Master's in Fine Art) in 1995. Like many Black South African students entering historically white institutions in the late 20th century, her presence itself was an act of defiance, a step toward transforming who art education had been for and whose voices it represented.



Picture supplied Professor Berni Searle

Decades later, Searle returned to Michaelis not as a student, but as a leader. In 2018, she became the first person of colour to be appointed as Head of School, and in 2022, the first person of colour to be promoted to full Professor in Michaelis' history.

Her leadership came at a pivotal time. Appointed in the aftermath of the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements, Searle's empathetic and creative leadership approach helped guide the school through a period of deep institutional reflection and necessary change. She oversaw a democratisation process that expanded opportunities for Black scholars and future leaders, while addressing the complex legacies of exclusion that had shaped Michaelis over the decades.

"The historical juncture of post-Apartheid South Africa inspired me to contribute to reconfiguring UCT's institutional ethos and to affirm historically marginalised communities," she reflects. "As an internationally established artist, I viewed myself as a protagonist for embracing diverse ideas and grounding transformation perspectives that were expressed creatively." Searle's tenure was defined by tangible impact. She launched the Siyakhula Scholarship, raising close to R5 million to support Black students and significantly diversifying the student body. She also played a vital role in reconstituting UCT's Works of Art Committee, reshaping the way artworks were curated and displayed across the university to better reflect a multiplicity of perspectives and histories.

Curating a Century: *100 Years: 100 Objects*



At the heart of the centenary celebrations was the exhibition *100 Years: 100 Objects*, a deeply considered reflection on Michaelis' past, present, and future. Curated by Associate Professor Fritha Langerman alongside Michaelis Galleries curator Jade Nair, the exhibition gathered a hundred artworks, artefacts, and archival fragments that together traced the evolution of the school across a century.

Far from a linear historical narrative, the exhibition offered a constellation of stories, a weaving together of memories, tensions, and re-imaginings. It explored questions that had always animated Michaelis: Who got to create? What stories were told? How did art engage with society?

Langerman and Nair's curatorial approach invited visitors to think critically about what was remembered and what was forgotten. It was an exhibition about knowledge and power, about presence and absence, about reordering the past to imagine new futures.

A Living Legacy

Over the past century, more than 4,000 students have passed through Michaelis, teaching, learning, experimenting, and transforming not just their own practice but the cultural landscape of South Africa and beyond. The school's story is not one of seamless progress. It is a story of tension and transformation, of exclusion and inclusion, of resistance and reinvention.

As Michaelis celebrates its centenary, it stands as a space of creativity and critique, of memory and imagination. It is a space where art is not only made but also questioned, where new ideas are born and old ones are re-examined.

At the launch of *100 Years :100 Objects*, Dean Shose Kessi reminded us, the centenary is not only about looking back. It is also about looking forward, about the possibilities that still lie ahead. "Each of us, students, staff, alumni, friends, carry a part of this school with us. And it is together that we will shape its next hundred years."



Picture: HOD Strategic Workshop March 2025

FACULTY LEADERSHIP



DRIVING EXCELLENCE WITHIN FACULTY LEADERSHIP

The Faculty of Humanities proudly announces the official appointments of Charlton Esterhuizen as Faculty Manager and Sashni Chetty as Director of Operations.

Charlton Esterhuizen – Faculty Manager

Charlton Esterhuizen, officially assumed the role at the start of the second semester in 2025, has been a central figure in the faculty's administration for several years. He previously served as Manager of Postgraduate Administration and Records, where he oversaw the full administrative lifecycle of postgraduate students from admissions and student records to graduate research management.

In his current role, Charlton provides strategic guidance to the Dean, Faculty Executive, and faculty structures, driving policy planning, governance through committee support, and stakeholder engagement. Known for his dedication to operational excellence and staff development, Charlton continues to play a pivotal role in shaping the faculty's administration and supporting its academic mission.

We are delighted to have Charlton and Sashni officially on board and are confident in their leadership to continue driving excellence, innovation, and efficiency across the Faculty of Humanities.

Sashni Chetty – Director of Operations

Sashni officially took up the role of Director of Operations on 1 April 2025, after serving in an acting capacity. With over 15 years at UCT, including extensive experience in faculty administration and governance.

She also serves as residence warden at Graça Machel Hall, supporting over 400 students. Her leadership and operational expertise continue to strengthen the Faculty of Humanities.



CHARLTON ESTERHUIZEN

HUM FACULTY

Staff Achievements



FEATURED SCHOLAR

PROFESSOR SA'DIYYA SHAIKH

SPIRITUALITY, JUSTICE, AND FEMINIST DECOLONIAL FUTURES

Photo supplied



Prof Sa'diyya Shaikh was one of eight international scholars invited to teach at the Critical Muslim Studies Summer Programme, titled "Decolonisations and Emancipations" in Istanbul from 26-30 May



Organised by the University of Leeds in the UK, the summer school had over 60 registered participants that included graduate students, scholars, and faculty from various parts of the world.

The aim of Critical Muslim Studies is to “investigate the genealogies and complexities of Muslimness—its cognates and variants—in relation to decolonial impulses and their limits in a world scarred by genocide and authoritarian populism.... (It) demands the cultivation of critiques drawn from diverse histories and positionalities, advancing logics of liberation from within the colonial-racial world towards a post-Western horizon.” (<https://criticalmuslimstudies.co.uk/>).

Hosted in Istanbul, a city where diverse histories and cultures intersect, the programme featured a week of immersive seminars, workshops, and discussions led by internationally recognised scholars, including Professor Shaikh. Topics included genealogy, counter-histories, gender, racism/anti-racism, coloniality, feminisms, political and cultural belongings, resistance, decoloniality, and political theology.

Participants were invited into an open, interdisciplinary learning space that fostered global connection and intellectual exchange. The summer school was followed by the 4th International Critical Muslim Studies Conference where Prof Shaikh also presented in the opening panel.

Prof Shaikh was the keynote speaker at the “Women and Sufism International Workshop” (June 14-16) also hosted in Istanbul. The workshop was co-organised by the University of Lancaster (UK) and the Turkish Women’s NGO “Kadem” (Women and Democracy Association). Her keynote paper was titled “Flourishing Feminist Friendships: Engaging Contemporary Sufi Ethic” (<https://kadem.org.tr/en/women-and-sufism/>)



Photos Supplied



- **What were some of the most inspiring or surprising experiences or insights you gained from participating in the Critical Muslim Studies Summer Programme in Istanbul?**

I was inspired by the fact that the pioneering founder of CMS summer programme, Prof Salman Sayyid, Chair of Decolonial Thought and Social Theory, at the University of Leeds (UK), intentionally hosted its first summer school in Istanbul, to make it more accessible to students from the Global South. As Turkey has a relatively easy and inexpensive visa process, participants hailed from places that included India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India and Morocco, to Malaysia, Mozambique, Indonesia, Prague, Australia, and the United States. It was a cosmopolitan cohort, whose rich and complex contexts of engaging Muslimness added enormous depth to the programme.

In particular, I was delighted and pleasantly surprised to learn from an engaging student from Kerala (India) that he had translated one of my articles into Malayalam on an online magazine called Campus Alive (<https://campusalive.net/author/sadiyasheikh/>)

Another inspiring element of the programme particularly in this historical moment, is that one of our leading faculty members in the teaching cohort included the brilliant, anti-zionist Jewish professor of philosophy, Kaufman Chair in Jewish Studies at Hofstra University, Prof Santiago Slabodsky.

Hailing from Argentina, his insights at the intersection of liberation theology, decoloniality, and Critical Muslim studies enabled rich conversations on epistemological and political projects of transnational solidarity, particularly in the context of Global South. More especially, he embodied a principled Jewish resistance to the genocidal politics of the current Netanyahu regime, which echoed with the courageous local activism of the South African Jews for a free Palestine.

- **Could you share how your keynote on “Flourishing Feminist Friendships” at the Women and Sufism International Workshop connects with current feminist and decolonial movements?**

My keynote address at the Women and Sufism conference critically and constructively engaged with questions of power in the context of religious authority. Through the lens of Islamic feminism, I provide both a rigorous critique of patriarchal modes of power, and propose ways to cultivate dynamic, transparent and accountable approaches to “competent authority”, that enable healthier forms of relationality within religious communities. My constructive approach to rethinking modalities of power offers a corrective to modes of power that enable spiritual and sexual abuse in religious communities.

My presentations at all 3 fora in Istanbul contributed to a decolonial project that offers a Muslim cosmology and Sufi resources as a set of foundational ways to engage the nature of existence and ethics outside of purely secular western enlightenment narratives. Foregrounding an integral relationship between spirituality, ethics and politics, my work renders visible how justice-making is connected to some of the deepest imperatives for spiritual cultivation within Muslim tradition. I offer constructive ways to engage spirituality as a powerful force for social transformation, rather than dismissing it as do more reductionist western secularist approaches.

Staff Spotlight: Rushdiyah Narker Brings Cape Town Communities to the Page

Rushdiyah Narker, a Master's student in Social Anthropology at UCT and staff member in the Faculty, recently published her debut novel *Some Unspoken Thing*. Set in 1990s Cape Town, the novel explores themes of love, friendship, and identity against the backdrop of social and political change. In this interview, she reflects on the intersections of her academic research, creative writing, and community, and what it means to tell stories rooted in Cape Town.

Your novel is set in 1990s Cape Town, a period that carries particular historical and social weight. What drew you to place Maryam's story in this context, and what kinds of conversations were you hoping to open through this setting?

"I write about what I know, and because I was a teenager in the '90s, the world and its nuances are familiar. I think I've centred the romance of the story, with the political changes happening around it, because for most of us, that's how we interact with the political. It shows up in the choices Maryam has to study further after school, in where the friend group is able to go when they hang out and in how they are perceived in public when they are together.

Maybe reading about the characters starts conversations about the readers own experiences with micro aggressions, not fitting in and the self-policing that happens within our communities."

Much of the synopsis suggests an exploration of first love and deep friendship under the weight of cultural expectations. How did you navigate writing these themes in a way that felt both specific to Maryam's world and accessible to broader readers?

"Honestly, I didn't focus too much on making the themes accessible to a broader audience. I wanted to write a book about Maryam, her world and how she navigates the challenges of being a teenager with societal expectations. I grew up reading avidly and would have loved to have a book where I saw parts of myself and my culture in it, so that's what I wrote."



As someone pursuing a Master's in Social Anthropology at UCT, how do your academic interests inform your fiction? Have your studies influenced how you think about narrative, representation, or community?

"Emphatically yes. My research is on menstruation and endometriosis. It might seem like a huge jump, but something I've noticed is how we talk about certain things in a very specific way. Muslims dating in Cape Town is one of those things. We know it happens, have heard the stories, even though dating in the traditional sense is not supposed to happen in the Muslim community, but there's a way we talk about it, or rather, there is a way we don't talk about it. And through writing this romance story, I explore that through the characters finding love.

Without the influence of my lecturers like Barbara Boswell, Francis Nyamjoh, Kharnita Mohamed, Susan Levine and Marlon Swai, I would never have considered writing a book. They have, in various ways, shown me how creativity can be explored in conjunction with academic research. Being introduced to ethnographic fiction has broadened how I think about and write stories. And anthropology has taught me to think about what would influence a character's choices, based on observations about that character and their specific background."

You also run a business in the wedding industry. What has working so closely with couples and families taught you about how love is performed, celebrated, or understood, and did any of that shape your approach to writing about young love?

“The wedding industry has shown me that there are so many variations of what it means to understand, show and celebrate love. The wedding day is the penultimate show of love, but it has always interested me how a couple gets to that point. I spent time with brides and would ask them how they met their partner, what drew them to that specific person. I learned what love means to them and could see how that influenced the partner they picked. I’d also have a front row seat to how mothers influence a bride’s choice. Which has been interesting to say the least. I think it all shapes my approach to writing about love.”

Writing a novel while managing postgraduate study, a business, and family life is no small undertaking. How did you sustain your creative practice amid so many demands?

“Making headpieces for brides and beading their wedding dresses takes a lot of time, but beading itself, is cathartic for me; the repetitive nature of the task means my brain can switch off. I’d alternate between academic writing and doing something creative, whether it was making an order, reading, writing or some days, doing nothing. I’m a big supporter of resting often, but that isn’t always possible so I tackle one task at a time and reward myself after the task is completed by reading a few pages from a book. I also have a wonderful support system. Without my family, I would not be able to do half the things that interest me.”



Many writers speak about storytelling as a way to reflect or honour the communities they come from. Was this part of your motivation with *Some Unspoken Thing*?

“For me, it was about having a book where I could see people who are like me, in places that I have seen and visited. We have stories of our pains and our struggles and I wanted to have a story that also reflected our joys. Ones of friendships, finding love, the slice of life story of a Muslim coloured girl growing up in Cape Town.”

What did you find most challenging or unexpected about bringing this book to life, and what aspects are you most proud of?

“The fact that I wrote a whole book surprised me. I write poetry, it’s what I’ve been drawn to. It’s much shorter and to the point. With a book, there is a slow build to the end. It takes a lot more out of a person. But through the process of writing this book, I have learnt, and continue to learn about the art of writing. I’m most of proud of the fact that my book has a girl on the cover who is wearing her scarf and that she is Cape Malay. ”

Looking forward, what kinds of stories or questions do you feel most compelled to explore next? Do you anticipate continuing to write within Cape Town’s communities, or are there other worlds and themes calling to you?

“Thus far, I write all my stories, exploring various genres, centred around women who live in Cape town. Magic, gothic, sci-fi, chick-lit, they all take place in here. We have such a rich culture in every space you can think of, each story is different with it’s own flavour.

I have a story about a gothic house set in Walmer Estate. I have story about a woman who has magic who owns a shop in Athlone. I have a story about a girl travelling to school from Salt River to Woodstock in a taxi. Why should we not write our stories set in Cape Town?

If a story idea pulls me to another place, I will follow the characters lead, but I still have so much to explore right here.

Some of my short stories can be found here:
<https://archiveofourown.org/users/RushdiyahNarker>”





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FROM HARRISMITH TO **GREEN** AND **GOLD**: NTOKOZO MAKHAZA'S INSPIRING JOURNEY





LEADING UP TO THE MILESTONE: A CONVERSATION WITH NTOKOZO MAKHAZA

1. Who is Ntokozo Makhaza beyond the rugby field? Can you tell us a bit about where you're from, your family, and what shaped you growing up?

Ntokozo: "Sure, so my full name is Ntokozo Sibusiso Makhaza. I come from a small town in the Eastern Free State called Harrismith. When I was 10, my family moved to Durban because my parents had work opportunities there. I went on to completed the rest of my primary schooling in Durban, grade 5 (2012) Collegevale Primary School, grade 6 to 7 (2013-2014) Northlands Primary School. My entire high school career was started and completed in Durban (2015-2019) at Northwood School. Moved to Cape Town in 2020 to attend UCT. ". Shortly afterwards, I moved to Cape Town to pursue my studies at UCT. Beyond rugby, I'm someone who values learning and growth. I come from a supportive family that's always emphasized hard work and perseverance. My parents have been my pillars of strength, guiding me not just in sport, but in life. They taught me that challenges are opportunities to grow, and that's shaped the person I am today. Even when life got tough, having a dream and a support system kept me going."

2. What does UCT mean to you? How has your experience at the University of Cape Town – both in the classroom and on the field – influenced the person you are today?

Ntokozo: "Choosing UCT was the best decision I ever made. I've learned invaluable lessons, built incredible friendships, and made memories I'll cherish forever. Academically, I was challenged to grow; on the rugby field, I was pushed to my limits, which forced me to mature. UCT fosters excellence, not just in academics, but in sport and society. It shaped me into a more well-rounded human, someone who strives to be the best both on and off the field."

3. Can you take us back to that moment – how did it feel hearing you were selected for the Springboks squad? Was it a call, an email? where were you, and what went through your mind in that moment?

Ntokozo: "I remember waking up one morning around nine-ish after a late night. I got a call from an unknown number, and the moment I heard the voice, I knew who it was. A month and a half earlier, my coach had encouraged me to just be myself and be proud of my achievements, so I'd been expecting this call. Hearing Rassie tell me they'd noticed me during the Varsity Cup and connecting me with the Springbok coaching staff-it was surreal. I was overjoyed, and even now, reflecting on that moment, I still feel a sense of disbelief. It was a huge milestone, one I'll never forget."

LEADING UP TO THE MILESTONE: A CONVERSATION WITH NTOKOZO MAKHAZA



4. You've made history moving directly from Varsity Cup to the national squad.

What does this breakthrough mean to you personally, and what do you think it signals for other young athletes following unconventional paths?

Ntokozo: "It's incredibly humbling. Personally, it shows that hard work and consistency pay off. For other young athletes, especially those not immediately assigned to professional unions, it's a sign that there's another path. You can pursue academics and still reach professional sport. I hope my journey motivates others to chase their dreams without having to choose one path over another."

5. What have been the biggest challenges on your journey so far? Was there ever a moment you considered giving up, and if so, what pulled you through?

Ntokozo: "Doubt was always there, you know, wondering if I was good enough or if I'd make it. What kept me going was my support system: my parents, my teammates, my coaches, and the positive environments I've been fortunate to be part of. Every day, I was motivated to work harder, to not become just another statistic. Those everyday doubts became fuel for growth, and by the grace of God, I'm now officially a professional rugby player."

6. You've spoken about hard work paying off. What does hard work actually look like in your day-to-day life? How do you balance your studies, training, and personal growth?

Ntokozo: "Hard work, for me, is consistency. Showing up every day, even when I'm not at 100%. It's planning well, putting in the hours, hitting personal bests in the gym, improving on the field, and staying disciplined in academics. Some days are harder than others, but the goal is always the same: progress, growth, and staying consistent."

7. We know your success isn't in isolation. Who are the people - teammates, mentors, family, lecturers - who've played a role in helping you get to this point?

Ntokozo: "It's my family first, they've sacrificed so much and are my pillars of strength. My parents' support and my desire to make them proud motivate me daily. Then my teammates, who push me to be better in every training session and match, and my coaches, who've guided me technically and mentally. Outside of rugby, mentors have helped me with personal development. Honestly, I'm happy because of other people, and all these blessings are truly humbling."

LEADING UP TO THE MILESTONE: A CONVERSATION WITH NTOKOZO MAKHAZA



8. What message would you give to a first-year student sitting on Jammie Steps today, unsure of their own journey ahead? What do you wish you had known when you first arrived at UCT?

Ntokozo: “It’s going to get tough! Don’t expect sunshine and rainbows all the time. But you can get through it. I’d say, remember, someone has been here before you, someone has done it, and there’s nothing stopping you from doing the same. When things get heavy, think about the end goal, like graduating. Believe in yourself. If someone else has achieved it, what’s stopping you?”

9. What are your hopes – not just for your Springbok career, but for your life beyond rugby? Where do you see yourself making a difference in the long term?

Ntokozo: “Of course, one of my big goals is to play for the Springboks. But beyond that, I want to give back, just like I was given opportunities through financial aid, sponsorships, and bursaries. If I can help someone else access opportunities and chase their dreams, that would mean a lot. I also want to build a prosperous career, not just in rugby but in business or whatever I dedicate myself to outside the sport.”

10. What does it mean to wear the green and gold not just as a player, but as a student from UCT – from the Humanities Faculty, from the Ikeys team – standing for something bigger? What legacy would you like to leave behind?

Ntokozo: “For me, it’s about leaving a legacy of belief. I wasn’t a highly rated player coming into UCT; I was overlooked in many ways. But through hard work and faith, I reached milestones like being called into the Springbok camp straight from Varsity Cup, something that hasn’t been done before. I want people to look at my journey and draw inspiration, to know that with belief in God, belief in yourself, and hard work, anything is possible.”

HUMANITIES STUDENT COUNCIL 2025



Pictured HSC 2025 TEAM

The Humanities Students’ Council (HSC) plays a pivotal role in representing and supporting students across the Faculty of Humanities. This semester, the Council has focused on fostering academic excellence, student wellbeing, and a strong sense of community. In this reflection, we share the HSC’s key priorities, initiatives, lessons learned, and ways for students to engage with the Council in the months ahead.

1. What are your key priorities or focus areas for Humanities students this semester?

Our key focus this semester is to mobilise Humanities students through the Academic Imbizo, which will serve as a platform to engage with peers and promote academic excellence. We also want to foster pride in the Faculty through a visibility campaign, where we highlight Faculty Merchandise and showcase every department under our jurisdiction.

2. How does the HSC plan to build community and support students in the second half of the year?

The Humanities Students’ Council is deeply focused on the wellbeing of its students, both intellectual and social. We have planned a series of student-oriented activities that encourage engagement, wellness, and academic success. By consistently connecting with students, we aim to facilitate what they need most in order to thrive and perform at their best potential.

3. What has been a standout moment (or a big lesson) for the HSC so far this year?

One of our biggest lessons has been the importance of ensuring that our financial processes are not left unattended. Allowing management to handle our financial business without close monitoring can cause delays. We’ve learned to always plan ahead, follow up proactively, and ensure all deadlines are met.

4. How can Humanities students reach out or get involved with the HSC in the coming months?

We believe strongly in visibility and accessibility. That’s why we are creating more public events where students can engage with the HSC and feel a sense of ownership. A proper advertising structure is being put in place to lift the face of the HSC. Students can always reach us through our social media platforms and emails, and we encourage them to participate in upcoming campaigns and events.

UMTHOMBO CENTRE for Student Success

Humanities Faculty Curriculum Change Workshops

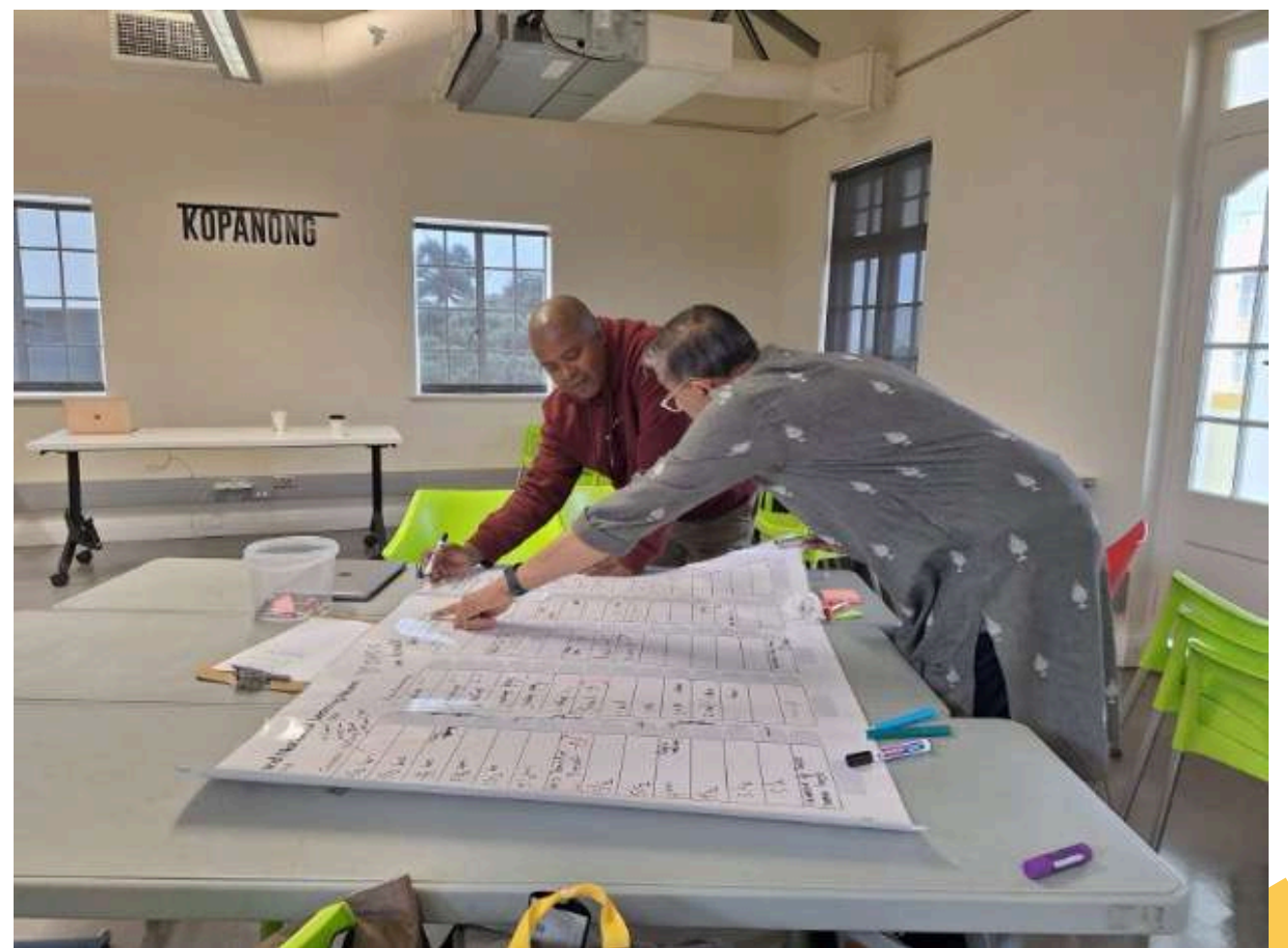
The Umthombo Centre for Student Success and the Humanities deanery ran three curriculum workshops over May and June 2025, with colleagues from all the departments in the faculty. This project aims to help the faculty achieve its aim of reducing the overall credit load of the Humanities general degrees from 2026.

In their teaching teams, colleagues worked to establish current credits and workloads on individual courses, and then to reduce (or rather to 'balance', as the Deputy Dean pointed out) the credits on our 1st and 2nd year courses. The workshop space facilitated fruitful discussion amongst academics who immersed themselves in the task at hand and generated a productive and collegial atmosphere.

The 'counting boards' that Umthombo developed to map course credits proved very popular as they helped colleagues visualise their course workload. After many requests, the counting boards will be distributed among departments to continue their credit reduction and curriculum design work over the coming months.

For additional support, each department can also apply for funds towards teaching buy-outs or to help pay for the re-design of course materials.

We look forward to a second instalment of these workshops which will be held in October 2025, focusing on assessment, alignment within majors, and connections across different departments, especially those hosting common co-majors.



UMTHOMBO CENTRE for Student Success



On 23rd May 2025, **Umthombo Centre for Student Success** hosted the inaugural Humanities Faculty Postgraduate Indaba. With close to 50 participants, the Indaba provided an opportunity for Humanities postgraduates as well as academic staff to connect and reflect on the postgraduate journey.

Associate Professor Leigh Schrieff-Brown, Deputy Dean – Postgraduate Studies and Funding, gave an inspiring welcome address, reflecting on her own research journey. Four students participated in a 3-Minute Thesis competition and 25 took part in a poster-making workshop and competition.

The Indaba marked the closing of the first year of Umthombo's Postgraduate Writing Support Programme, funded by DVC of Teaching and Learning (UCT) and the University Capacity and Development Grant (DHET).

The PG Writing Support Programme aims to build a healthy postgraduate community in the Humanities at UCT and assist postgraduate students in their scholarly journey within a peer-learning framework. Since November 2024, the Programme organised two residential writing retreats, attended by 28 students, as well as fortnightly writing circles, attended by almost 30 students.

To know more about the programme or express interest in participating, please get in touch with Geetika Anand at anng001@muyct.ac.za.



Photos Supplied



ANNUAL COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

Thomas Stranex is a distinguished classical scholar with a strong foundation in ancient languages and history. He completed a Bachelor of Arts in Classical Studies, French, and German at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 2022, funded by NSFAS. Following this, he pursued an Honours degree in Ancient Greek, supported by the National Research Foundation (NRF), also at UCT.

He is currently undertaking an MPhil in Greek and/or Roman History at the University of Oxford, funded by the prestigious Ertegun Graduate Scholarship in the Humanities. His research focuses on Phrygia during the second and third centuries CE, exploring the social, political, and cultural dynamics of the region in this period.

In recognition of his exceptional linguistic and scholarly abilities, Thomas was awarded this year’s Gaisford Prize for Prose, an annual prize awarded for the best translation of a passage of English into Ancient Greek. This accolade highlights his mastery of classical languages and his dedication to the study of the ancient world.



Photo Supplied





HOD

REFLECTIONS

Kurt Campbell: Celebrating a Catalytic Tenure at Michaelis

Director of the Michaelis School of Fine Art: 2019, 2021-2025

Associate Professor Kurt Campbell's tenure as Director of the Michaelis School of Fine Art was marked by continued transformation, resilience, and a commitment to both local and international artistic excellence. First appointed as a sabbatical replacement to Prof Berni Searle in 2019, Campbell stepped into a period of profound change, with a focus on curriculum overhaul, staff renewal, and the development of new intellectual and creative frameworks for teaching and learning.

We asked Kurt to reflect on his term as Director of the Michaelis Art School and he shared this with us:

Kurt: "When I was appointed for my first year as director (2019) of the Michaelis School of Fine Art, I found myself at a space that was dramatically changing both in terms of what was taught at the art school, and indeed who would do the teaching. What I mean by this is that the faculty was looking closely at departmental curricula at the time, and 'how we train our students' had become a leading question at Michaelis that invited dynamic changes. In addition to this epistemic overhaul, I was faced with multiple staff retirements and early exits of individuals that had, in some instances, served the university for up to thirty-five years leaving many pedagogical gaps. The nature and scale of the ensuing challenge of ultimately appointing six academic staff and five PASS staff was daunting, and demanded a great deal of thinking. I am proud to say we have at the end of my term filled all these positions, in essence constituting the core of a brand new Art School. Michaelis has always attracted the very best of individuals who are capable of thinking at, and beyond the limit. I am confident that we have, in my estimation, created an intellectual engine that will continue to drive the newness of thought so vital in Contemporary artistic praxis and scholarship in South Africa and beyond.

Let's talk about challenges, what were some of your experiences in this regard?

Kurt: "During my term as director I was challenged with two computer lab invasions resulting in the theft of millions of rands worth of computers. These were very hard times, as I struggled to ensure the return or purchase of computers for our students so that the academic programme was not irrevocably interrupted.

Photo supplied: Hosting the VC at Michaelis during the "Holding a Thought" exhibition in 2025



"The net positive effect of these unfortunate incidents was that we were given sufficient focus from the COO and university executives allowing us to receive more than three million rand investments including new iron gates at the front and back of our school, along with many new cameras and an electric fence.

The other big challenge I faced included management of the COVID pandemic: this saw our staff forced to innovate so as to offer intellectually and creatively astute projects to students far removed, and thus to deploy a species of pedagogy that would not require human presence – a unique challenge for a Fine Art school! Indeed that season was a very melancholy, as we navigated the death of a staff member due to the virus and supported another staff member who, though not infected by the virus personally, lost both her parents in the same month as a consequence of the pandemic."

Let's talk milestones, what achievements, legacy and notable highlights you are taking with you?

There are too many milestones to mention during my term as director. In terms of the most recent one, as Michaelis reaches one hundred years of existence this year, I am pleased to end my term by increasing our international reach, having been successful in a joint application with Beaux Arts Paris that will see the school benefit from generous funding to enable the travel of staff and students to this esteemed Fine Arts institution in France over the next three years. In addition, I am very proud of local networks we have developed, especially with the Centre for Humanities Research at UWC.

Kurt: “Beyond inter-institutional milestones I am thrilled that many staff achieved promotion during my term, ranging from Principle Technical Officer to Professor. In terms of the epistemic milestones, I am well pleased that we are the only Art school in South Africa (to the best of knowledge) to now have employed a dedicated archaeologist to train our undergraduate students in aspects of San Rock Art appreciation and theory. This new development is a great moment in the school, as the training of artists from Africa must start (in my considered view) with a sustained study of the San modes of aesthetic production as far as is possible. This move allows us to now build on the foundational work of the Centre for Curating the Archive (who painstakingly digitized the famed Blake and Lloyd Archive) as well as exploiting our relatively close position to the Cederberg for fieldwork where many Rock Art treasures are to be found on the cave walls.”

Advice to current and future leaders at Michaelis.

Kurt: “There is much to be said about the ‘art of managing artists’. The crucial interpersonal posture I would commend comes from Plato, thousands of years ago, that still rings very true today:

“Be gentle, with all people you meet, for silently they are fighting a hard battle”

To conclude I would like to reflect upon this image (below) that will be featured in our upcoming exhibition *100 years: 100 objects* to celebrate our centenary:



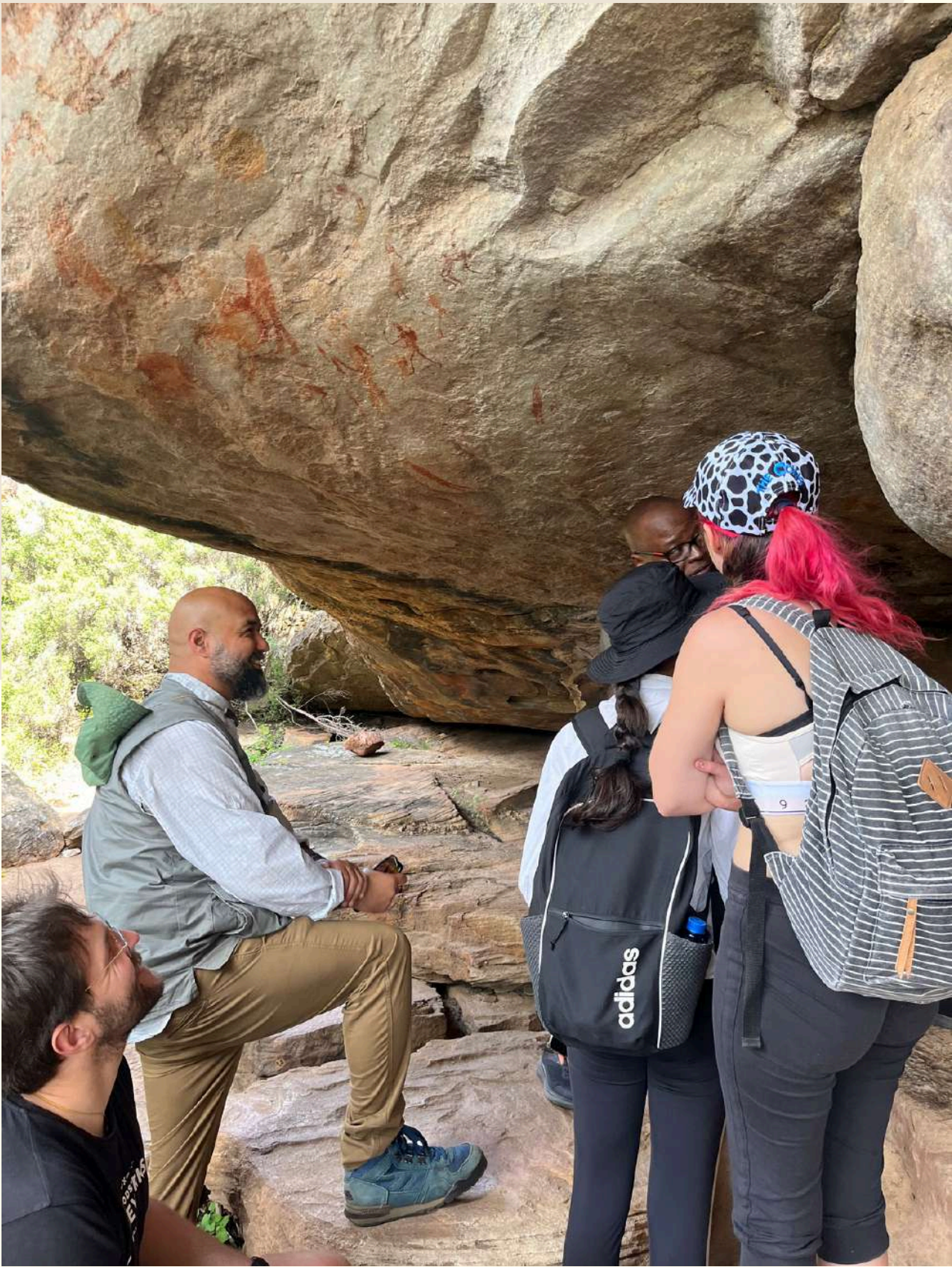
Kurt: “The photograph was taken in December 2024, at our annual Michaelis academic planning meeting. Not all the staff could be present, yet the image carries a great deal of information about the radically changed social dynamics of the school in comparison to the early years of its existence. Indeed, an art school such as we currently have could perhaps not even have been conceived by the founding directors in 1925. My own term as director ends this year, it has been a privilege to lead the school in its 100th year, leaving behind this idea beyond the administrative – that research is integral to artistic praxis and that at University the text and the image protect each other in ways that are still unfolding! In addition to this thought on how the passing of time discloses intriguing facts: the image contains three new appointments – serving less than twelve months at the time the image was taken – and a staff member who has served the school for more than forty years! It is an honour to work with such a cohort of startling minds who have supported me so very well, all the while being acutely aware of the many individuals who have come before us and made crucial contributions to the world of ideas that we benefit from today.”



Picture with the Dean of Humanities at the Graduate exhibition during the tail end of Covid - photo supplied



Beaux Art Paris meeting with the directors 2024 - photo supplied



Rock Art Fieldwork with MFA students: 2024 - photo supplied



A narrative about headship with Professor Azeem Badroodien

Photo supplied

What was your vision for the School of Education when you stepped into the role of HOD, and how has that vision evolved over time?

This is a question that is always asked of HoDs and yet is a very contestable question in the UCT and faculty context – given that HoDs take over positions mainly to keep things moving along operationally and are allocated (limited) budgets from faculty level with which to work. Visions normally come with certain levels of agency and with some access to funds with which to shape a new inviting and invigorating space– something that HoDs have very limited or no access to.

Now link the above scenario to a situation where you become HoD during a time of extreme crisis (COVID) and at a time where you lose key colleagues to the pandemic and where death becomes the pervading terror, then ‘having a vision’ as Director in January 2021 was always going to be fleeting and extremely hopeful at best.

I became Director of the School of Education on 1st January 2021, at the heart of COVID. We had just spent 8 months under lockdown where we simply did not know if there was a life or a world that we would possibly return to. It was also a period where we started to return to work wearing masks and where everyone was very tentative about coming to campus and in contact with each other at all. And then one month into my term, our long-serving main administrator passed away, followed soon after by another period of lockdown and uncertainty. As Director, I was thereafter stuck at home trying to figure out my new role under COVID and also did not have an administrator that could help me understand the complexity of the roles and functions that I had just inherited. Add to that we had also just appointed a (new) Head of the Schools Development Unit before the second lockdown –who I was meant to line-manage and guide, and with whom I needed to construct a vision for the SDU alongside one for the SoE – and you can only imagine the nightmare that I had walked into as new Director.

It was also a very dark and fragile time for everyone and I immediately realised that my main role as HoD would need to be to keep up the hopes and desires of all staff members, to offer emotional and other support, to offer a moral guide through some of the academic dilemmas that we were facing, to not hold colleagues to some kind of bizarre performance criteria and instead defer to their intrinsic goodness and goodwill in continuing to work under adverse conditions, and to try to bring calm to a situation where everyone was panicking (inside and outside) and where the word ‘loss’ was being used loosely in so many different ways– pedagogically, socially, and in relation to knowledge. We really underestimate the enormous responsibility that was placed on Heads at that time to keep things going, to keep people calm, and to ensure the safety and security of all whilst fulfilling contractual responsibilities as department and as academics. The whole university was having to develop new ways of doing things and developing new mechanisms by which to communicate, and Heads were asked at the time to both help build these but also to implement them and then oversee their roll-out, whilst continuing their academic work.

The above is an overly long answer – feels almost like an excuse for my not having a vision when I became Director– but it both captures and exaggerates the difficulty of becoming a head at a time of crisis, and asks big questions about how departmental heads are inevitably asked to always lead colleagues out of situations of hopelessness to ones of hopefulness, and how they are prepared to confront such a challenge. That was certainly my first and foremost challenge when I became Director of SoE.

My second challenge when becoming Director was to oversee the planning, building, construction, and finalisation of a new building (named after Neville Alexander) that the School of Education and SDU would be moving to in 2022. This raised all sorts of difficulties in terms of overseeing a project where one could not visit the site and had to watch online and through pictures how it unfolded. Decisions had to be made on a new foundation for the building, diverting a spring river running under the building, rethinking reorganised room venues, blind systems, teaching materials, new furniture, ventilation systems and sump pump functions, on an almost adhoc basis and with limited collective engagement.

And then in 2022 my bigger challenge was in moving everyone and their books and belongings from upper campus to lower campus– all under COVID conditions– whilst also trying to convince all colleagues to physically return to work and start using their new offices in the new building. It was only in June 2022 that most colleagues started coming to work and to inhabit the Neville Alexander building, that one could begin to think and speak about what an expanded and new SoE/SDU vision could be in the new space, whilst seemingly exiting the darkest health crisis moment in our recent history. It was also only then that we could work out how systems worked in the building and what we needed to make it operational to serve our needs.

My third challenge as Director emerged in 2023 when we were told that SoE/SDU would undergo a departmental review and institutional program audit. This added a third layer of difficulty in that colleagues had to suddenly balance their teaching and supervision responsibilities in new teaching spaces, help collectively to figure out how to operate and coexist in a new building space, and start thinking about a new vision and mission for the SoE and SDU, and then develop the evidentiary basis on which to build this and report on what was found. This process was not helped by a string of retirements in the period before and after the departmental review, which needed to be factored into the planning of the document, the pathways taken, and its reportage. This was followed by a period of numerous workshops and engagements around what 'constituted SoE/SDU and where it was going' that led into the visit of the Panel Review team in late 2023 and the final submission of the Self-Review Report and Panel Review Report in 2024.

My point noting the above is that my vision as Director of SoE throughout my tenure was shaped by contingent and structural challenges (especially in the first 3 years) that undoubtedly fed and created the logic of the subsequent unfolding vision.

And yet with that said, I did have a firm vision when I started at UCT as Professor of Education Policy of building the reputation and breadth of knowledge within the School of Education from the bottom up, to bring fresh eyes and approaches to education development and change, and to help create structures and cultural dispositions that would embed and sustain such a vision over time.

As Director, I can say that my vision also unfolded in how new and less established colleagues were recruited to take up the responsibility of forging new pathways for our programs and teaching within the school, in rethinking the new space that we were indebted with to create new communities of practice and new ways of interacting and partnering with schools and marginalised communities, and in challenging colleagues to think differently about how they worked together and sharing their knowledge forms.

My vision also unfolded in using the new and unpredictable structural shifts that we had been confronted by (above) to develop different and innovative ways of rethinking education change, education programs, and departmental systems and infrastructures. Of course, many decisions and approaches were not always fruitful and there were many colleagues that were not convinced by the changes and refused to support them, but what did emerge was a deep and exciting conversation within SoE/SDU about the numerous possible ways by which change could be tackled and embraced. It offered the opportunity to 'see something else'.

What key priorities or strategic shifts have you focused on to strengthen the school's academic offerings, partnerships, or impact?

From when I began at UCT my priority was to connect SoE/SDU more firmly to local educational communities and schools, as well as to education faculties at other universities, and system partners like the WCED and DBE. As a sociologist and historian of education and as someone who had just recently conducted a range of empirical research projects on teacher education, my priority was to change the way in which the SoE/SDU was perceived by external communities and to slowly get them to regard us as the main service providers or consultants to approach on important educational debates. SoE/SDU have always had strong academic offerings and the academic outputs of individual staff were inevitably impactful and extremely value-laden, but my view from the outside coming into UCT in 2018 was that SoE was not an fully integrated member of the wider educational community within South Africa. My goal was to change this perception through the partners we worked with, through regaining the confidence of local schooling communities and practitioners, and to create a conversation around the ethos that we needed to embed to make this possible.

The further challenge was how to forge a common conceptual vocabulary that defined the SoE/SDU as an educational site of change. And this would also be defined by the partners that the majority of colleagues chose to work with, the set of conceptual drivers that colleagues committed to collectively ensconce and emphasise in their teaching and research, and the networks of similarly-minded collaborators – both national and international – that would add reputational value and substance to the work that we were forging.

Building academic programmes in education is more than the content and intellectual ideas that we work with. It is about creating an environment and models of practice that bring educational communities and partners together to collectively think through and agitate on what changes were necessary and dire at given policy moments.

Thus my main focus was on building those partners, connecting different communities to the NAB and the SoE/SDU through public events, creating educational hubs of debate and engagement through seminars, colloquia, and inviting a host of international speakers to visit us and to work alongside us.

It also involved forging new relationships with our emeritus professors, honorary research associates, and applying for the appointment of honorary professors that worked with colleagues and students on projects that were global and connected different networks of ideas. This is something that I gave particular attention to during my term. We have a formidable team of retired colleagues that continue to bring value to our work and conversations, aided by 4 recently-appointed honorary professors from across the world. The outputs and contributions, and attendance at our weekly seminars and bigger events, of these luminaries brought different viewpoints and ideas into conversation with each other and helped shape how we thought about the work that we were doing and also how we included this in our individual teachings.

How has the school responded to national and global debates around transformation, access, and the future of teacher education and what role has your leadership played in this?

The School of Education is internationally respected for the nature and value of the academic outputs we produce. Historically, SoE has always been connected to larger educational debates and the development of theoretical approaches to new global, national and local challenges. Under Professor Pam Christie, in particular, the focus on the future of teacher education and its various dimensions became more pronounced, and I have tried to add to that work by focusing on education policy developments that shape how education provision and the role and functions of teachers are unfolding. We have initiated a number of teacher education and education policy development projects with international collaborators over the past 5 years that have brought new insights and ideas into conversation with how to connect this to the localised challenges of different African contexts.

I have personally worked on an international project that have connected partners across Africa, Central Asia, and the UK where we have grappled with how to think education anew in a neoliberal world that has increasingly become deeply anti-public. In that regard, the foci of different projects in the school have been deliberately focused on public provision and how to confront different forms of marginalisation, social justice-orientated, and engaged with how to embed transformation that always serves the majority of students. My leadership, if nothing else, has been preoccupied with how to connect local, national, and global ideas to forms of practice that bring meaning and value to communities and serve as models of what may be possible in our difficult unfolding contexts.

What moments, initiatives, or outcomes stand out as the most meaningful achievements of your tenure, and what lessons have you learned from leading through both successes and challenges?

I struggle with identifying successes and failures, as what I often regard as a success is invariably understood by others as failure. For me my most important contribution hopefully was the ways in which I tried to fill our different spaces with humanity, deference, and appreciation, always engaging with staff and students in respectful and calm ways, and embedding a culture of collective conversation that tried to not privilege one over the other (though that of course was always contentious). It was about not being frazzled by individual issues and staying focused on the bigger agenda. It was about 'drowning out the noise' and focusing on the more important outcomes that needed to be attained.

In that regard the ways in which colleagues currently collectively approach big national and international debates and challenges is perhaps my standout and most meaningful take-away, contributing to building a community of ideas that we share in our research and our teachings, and always trying to be fully human in our engagements with each other. I cannot take any credit for any of these. These happened because of the calibre of colleagues that I have. But my takeaway is that I was hopefully a key partner in how these new ways of knowing and doing was formulated. My main lesson has been to open myself up to criticism and dialogue - to learn from this and change leadership style accordingly- and to trust and believe in the gift of others and what they will do. The latter has also been my greatest weakness - but this was perhaps tied to my personal history and my age.

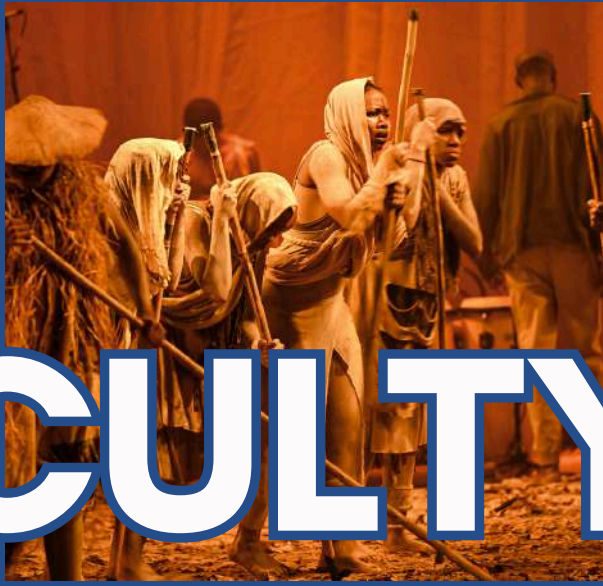
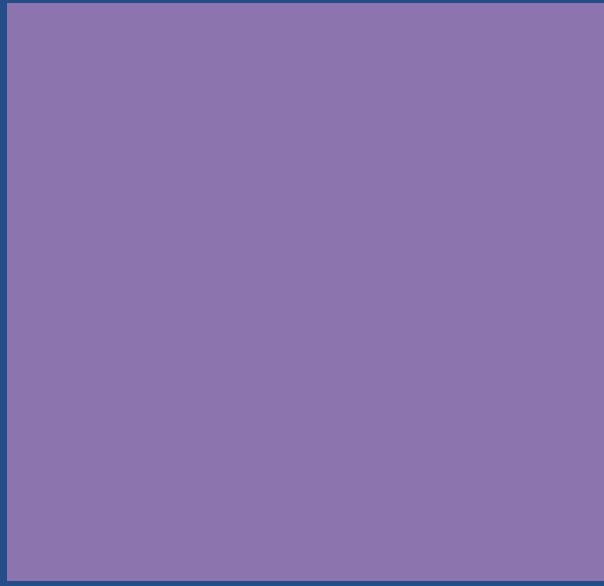


Looking ahead, what do you believe are the most pressing opportunities or challenges for the School of Education, and what advice would you offer to those who will lead it into the future?

I cannot imagine that another head will be confronted during their tenure by a pandemic, moving to a brand new building, undergoing a departmental review and having to initiate its recommended changes, the genocide in Palestine and its impact on our collective consciousness over two fraught years, not have substantive administrative support throughout the headship tenure, losing three colleagues to death, and having 5 colleagues retire. These were the challenges that I had to confront in ways that led to meaningful outcomes for members of SoE and SDU – and in many ways I both succeeded and failed in addressing most of them.

My advice to incoming heads would be to always be open to change, to embrace the challenges that come with conflict and turmoil, to know that most things will only happen through your individual headship action and attention, to anticipate failure and how to deal with it, and to always remain patient and human and true to the spirit of justice, collectivity, commonality, and mutual respect. And then to somehow retain your faith in all of those when you finally step down from headship.

The biggest challenge in the unfolding new form of the neoliberal university is that what constitutes being human and intellectual and thought-driven has been overridden by the demands of seemingly incontestable operational needs. How one navigates this new university space will perhaps be the principal encounter to all new heads moving forward.



FACULTY



FIRST SEMESTER HIGHLIGHTS '25



The Faculty of Humanities has donated 25 personal computers to the Saartjie Baartman Centre for Women and Children in Athlone, reaffirming the university's commitment to community engagement and social justice.

The donation comes at a time when access to digital resources remains one of the most significant barriers to empowerment, education, and employment for many vulnerable communities. The Centre, which provides a safe space and holistic support services to survivors of gender-based violence, will use the computers to strengthen its educational, training, and skills development programmes.

The Saartjie Baartman Centre is one of South Africa's leading organisations in the fight against gender-based violence, offering shelter, counselling, legal advice, skills training, and childcare. The 25 computers will be distributed across training facilities and administrative hubs, ensuring that both staff and beneficiaries benefit from enhanced digital capacity.

UCT HUMANITIES
DONATES 25 COMPUTERS
TO SAARTJIE BAARTMAN
CENTRE FOR WOMEN AND
CHILDREN



UCT FACULTY OF HUMANITIES HOSTS TRANSFORMING KNOWLEDGE FOR JUST AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURES FINDINGS WORKSHOP

On 3 March 2025, the Faculty of Humanities hosted the Transforming Knowledge for Just and Sustainable Futures research findings workshop at the School of Education.

The event marked the launch of an in-depth study on engaged research at UCT, led by Professor Leon Tikly (University of Bristol) and Associate Professor Lesley Powell (UCT).

UCT Vice-Chancellor Professor Mosha Moshabela delivered the keynote, joined by Professor Shose Kessi (Dean of Humanities), Associate Professor Divine Fuh (Director of HUMA), and Dr Linda Mtwisha. Discussions centred on how universities can foster collaborative, inclusive, and impactful research that extends beyond academia, aligning with global efforts to decolonise and democratise knowledge production.

The project findings will inform UCT’s institutional strategies to strengthen engaged research as a cornerstone of inclusive knowledge production.



REFLECTING ON
THE KOBO TABLE
TALKS: A
CELEBRATION OF
THE BASOTHO
BLANKET'S
CULTURAL AND
ACADEMIC
LEGACY

Earlier this year, on 20–21 February 2025, the Centre for African Studies at UCT, under the guidance of Dr Shahid Vawda, hosted the Kobo Table Talks, a two-day programme exploring the Basotho Blanket's layered cultural, political, and economic significance. The event opened with a striking fashion showcase tracing the blanket's journey from its colonial origins to its role today as a potent symbol of Basotho identity, blending art, scholarship, and performance to frame deeper conversations that followed.

Facilitated by cultural commentator Lesley Mofokeng, the discussions brought together academics, designers, and cultural leaders to examine themes of heritage, appropriation, and custodianship. Central to the programme was research from Dr Vawda and colleagues, *A Tapestry of Textiles and Music Over the Indian Ocean and Beyond*, which investigates how textiles like the Basotho Blanket illuminate African modern heritage. Award-winning designer Thabo Makhetha enriched the dialogue by reflecting on her reinterpretation of the blanket within global fashion while upholding its cultural integrity.

Beyond the debates, the event's pop-up boutique and craft displays celebrated Basotho creativity and highlighted the role of heritage industries in sustaining local economies. The Kobo Table Talks ultimately affirmed the blanket as more than fabric. It is a site of memory, resilience, and evolving identity. By positioning material culture within both academic and contemporary contexts, UCT underscored its role in advancing research-driven cultural dialogue with relevance for Africa and the world.



On 23–24 June 2025, the Faculty of Humanities, through the Centre for African Studies (CAS), hosted the International Symposium on Global Justice and Solidarity at UCT.

Anchored under the theme “Solidarity for One Humanity, One Future,” the gathering underscored the Faculty’s central role in advancing scholarship that bridges African realities with global governance debates, as South Africa prepares to assume the G20 Presidency.

UCT Humanities was at the core of shaping the event. Professor Horman Chitonge, representing CAS, delivered the academic welcome and set the tone by highlighting the critical contribution of African scholarship to frameworks of justice, inclusive policy, and transformation.

His participation as a panelist on debt justice further amplified this, as he illuminated the structural legacies constraining African economies and called for African agency in driving meaningful reform.

The symposium, co-convened with the South African Catholic Bishops’ Conference and global partners, explored concrete initiatives such as universal school feeding, ecological impact funds, and debt relief strategies.

Its conclusion, the Cape Town Declaration on Global Justice and Solidarity, will guide Africa’s engagement in upcoming G20, AU, and UN forums. By hosting and contributing substantively to this dialogue, the Faculty of Humanities reaffirmed its leadership in positioning African knowledge systems at the centre of international policy and solidarity frameworks.

HUMANITIES AT THE FOREFRONT OF GLOBAL JUSTICE CONVERSATIONS



Emeritus Professor Hendrik Hofmeyr, who retired in 2022 from the South African College of Music at UCT as Head of Theory and Composition, is the recipient of the triennial Huberte Rupert Prize for Classical Music, awarded by the South African Academy for Science and Art. He received this prestigious prize in recognition of his lifetime achievement in classical music at an award ceremony in September.

Hofmeyr, who holds a doctorate from UCT, spent ten years in self-imposed political exile in Italy before returning to South Africa in the 1990s. He has been described by The Musical Times as “perhaps South Africa’s most prolific composer,” and his oeuvre includes some 150 commissioned works. Three of his works have won international competitions, including the venerable Queen Elisabeth of Belgium Competition, and the CD *Partita africana*, comprising six of his works, was chosen as Discovery of the Month by the French magazine *Classica*. In 2023, another CD featuring three of his works was selected as Contemporary CD of the Week on Radio France.





Stay in touch

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UCT FACULTY OF HUMANITIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA



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