



2008

## African Studies Symposium Panel to be Presented

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### Recommended Citation

Gallian '09, Allegra, "African Studies Symposium Panel to be Presented" (2008). *News and Events*. Paper 220.  
<http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/220>

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March 17, 2008

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### **African Studies Symposium Panel to be Presented**

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Participants of an African Studies Symposium will present a panel discussion on Monday March 31 at 4 p.m. in Beckman Auditorium of The Ames Library (1 Ames Plaza, Bloomington) sharing their revisionist agenda for re-writing the history of the Kenya coast.

This event is free and open to the public.

This presentation will be the culmination of a three-day symposium occurring March 29-31. During the symposium, eight African Studies scholars will gather to edit essays submitted on the history of the Mijikenda (a confederacy of nine coastal tribes) and other non-Swahili peoples for a volume titled, *Contesting Identities: Re-Centering Kenya Coastal History and Society*. Cynthia Brantley, a pioneer in the field of Kenya coastal studies, will write the forward for this volume and provide mentorship on the project. The panel presentation will begin with an overview of the project by Brantley followed by short presentations by symposium participants, each sharing the section of the volume on which they are focused. The presentation will provide an overview of the volume's contribution to East African history in general and our understanding of Kenya coastal society in particular, as well as discuss the project in terms of identity politics in contemporary Kenya.

The panelists will include Jesse Benjamin, associate professor of sociology at Kennesaw State University in Georgia; Cynthia Brantley, professor of history at the University of California, Davis; Diane Ciekawy, professor of anthropology at Ohio University; Rebecca Gearhart, associate professor of anthropology at Illinois Wesleyan University; Linda Giles, independent scholar and visiting assistant professor at Illinois Wesleyan University; Thomas Hakansson, associate professor of human ecology at Lund University in Sweden and adjunct associate professor of anthropology at the University of Kentucky; Celia Nyamweru, associate professor of anthropology and African studies at St. Lawrence University and Monica Udvardy, associate professor of anthropology at the University of Kentucky.

This group of scholars first presented their work in 2005, at the annual African Studies Association meetings, on a panel titled, "Expanding the View: New Perspectives on the Role of

Mijikenda and Other Non-Swahili Peoples on Kenyan Coastal History.” The session called for a major revision of the history of what is commonly referred to as the “Swahili coast,” and created a level of support and enthusiasm that has inspired the scholars to edit a volume of essays dedicated to this revisionist agenda.

For more information please contact Rebecca Gearhart at [rgearhar@iwu.edu](mailto:rgearhar@iwu.edu).

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