

Critical Thinking and Writing Skills for Postgraduate Students

Call for Applications: Cohort 1 (October 5 – December 7, 2023)

A. Course description

This is an online short course funded by the [Volvo Research and Educational Foundations](#) (VREF) under its '[Mobility and Access in African Cities](#)' programme. The course is aimed at helping postgraduate students based in African universities develop the critical thinking and writing skills they require to effectively analyse and communicate their research. The course will last for ten weeks and will address six core themes, namely: *the elements of a scientific argument; critical thinking and writing; the use of theoretical frameworks; thematic analysis; citation and referencing; and navigating the scientific publishing cycle.*

Participants will develop skills in these core areas through interactive exercises and individual writing tasks spread throughout the duration of the course. The course is targeted at mid- to late-stage Ph.D. students in any area of urban studies. By the end of the course, participants will be equipped with a set of cognitive and practical tools that will prove indispensable to their academic and professional growth. The course will be delivered in English. This is the second of two calls planned for 2023.

B. Course objectives

At the end of the course, participants who have engaged fully with the process will have gained knowledge and experience in the following areas:

1. Identifying the elements of a sound scientific argument.
2. Applying critical thinking skills to articulate and address theoretical and empirical gaps in the literature.
3. Situating empirical data within theoretical frameworks in scientific research and writing.
4. Analysing and presenting empirical data thematically, while balancing academic convention with creativity.
5. Understanding how to avoid plagiarism using proper citation and referencing conventions, including the use of plagiarism checkers and reference management systems.
6. Navigating the scientific publishing cycle.

C. Course structure

The course will be delivered in six main sessions, corresponding to the six themes/objectives outlined above, over six consecutive weeks. An additional four weeks will be devoted to essay writing and grading, for a total of 10 weeks. Individual mentoring sessions will run in parallel with teaching and essay development.

D. Course materials

Participants will have access to relevant learning resources, including lecture notes, lecture recordings and topical bibliographies.

E. Course conveners



Dr Temilade Sesan holds a Ph.D. in Sociology and Social Policy from the University of Nottingham, UK. Her research interrogates the social, political and cultural dimensions of sustainable development initiatives in the areas of energy, waste management, transportation and urban planning – particularly as they intersect with issues of gender and informality in the sub-Saharan African context. Temilade has received funding for her research from the African Research Universities Alliance, the International Network for Government Science Advice, the International Science Council, the Partnership for Economic Policy, the UK Economic and Social Research Council, the UK Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council and the United States Agency for International Development.

She has published extensively on pathways to co-creating inclusive urban development with marginalised groups in international peer-reviewed academic journals. She teaches postgraduate modules in qualitative research and writing and renewable energy policy at the Centre for Petroleum, Energy Economics and Law, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.



Dr Peter Elias holds a Ph.D. in Geography from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria and works as a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Geography, University of Lagos, Nigeria. His expertise is in Regional Planning and Development with competences in Development Geography, Urban Planning, Science-Policy Interface, and Environmental Sustainability. He is a World Social Sciences Fellow and LIRA 2030 Fellow, a Lead Author both in the Africa Regional Assessment and Land Degradation and Restoration Working Groups of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and a winner in the Leading Integrated Research in Africa

(LIRA 2030). Two of his current research projects are: i. Standardizing City-Level Data-Gathering for Achieving SDG 11 in Africa (SCiLeD) being implemented in Lagos and Accra, and ii. Enabling the Science-Policy Interface for Knowledge transfer (ESPIK) between scientific community and policy makers for achieving SDG 11 in Ghana.

F. Guest lecturers



Dr Sylvia Croese is an urban sociologist who is a Senior Researcher at the South African Research Chair in Spatial Analysis and City Planning at the School of Architecture and Planning of the University of the Witwatersrand and Research Associate with the African Centre for Cities (ACC) at the University of Cape Town. She has conducted extensive research on urban politics, policy and governance through the lens of housing, land, urban infrastructure and mobility, with a focus on Southern and Lusophone Africa. She has published widely on this work in major international journals, as well as three co-edited books: *Refractions of the National, the Popular and the Global in African Cities* (African Minds, 2021), *Reframing the Urban Challenge in Africa: Knowledge Co-production*

from the South (Routledge, 2021) and *Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals in African cities* (Springer, in press). Currently, her research examines the transcalar workings of developmental policy circuits as part of the ERC funded comparative research project *Making Africa Urban: the transcalar politics of large-scale urban development*.



Dr Nathaniel Babajide is a Lecturer in Energy Economics at Coventry University's School of Energy, Construction and Environment. He bagged his M.Sc. (Oil and Gas Economics) and PhD (Energy Economics) degrees from University of Dundee, UK in 2013 and 2017 respectively. Dr Nathaniel has taught applied economics, management and business related courses in various capacities at higher institutions in the UK, including University of Dundee, University of Bolton, Glasgow University GIC, Sheffield University International College, Regent College London as well as overseas. His research interest includes energy systems economics, management and modelling, energy access improvement, energy policy and planning, renewable energy integration alongside environmental and climate change issues. Nathaniel has written several peer-

reviewed papers that have appeared in reputable journals and textbooks. In addition, Dr Nathaniel has been providing economic consulting services to small enterprises, energy companies, environmental groups, governmental and non-governmental agencies on energy issues in developing countries. He is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA) and reviewer for reputable academic journals globally.



Dr Sandra Boatemaa Kushitor has academic training in sociology, psychology and a Ph.D. in population studies. She draws on theoretical and methodological perspectives from the social sciences to understand population health in her research. Currently, her research focuses on three distinct yet related areas of population health: population shifts (disease patterns and mortality, urbanization, dynamics of family change,); public health nutrition (nutrition-related non-communicable diseases (NCD), foodways, the nexus between food environment and health) and governance (food system governance, health system governance). Sandra is skillful in both qualitative and quantitative research methodology. Her recent work has transcended boundaries through the use of transdisciplinary research methods. Her publications have

focused on NCD risk factors, hypertension prevalence, treatment and control, health system response to NCDs, and food system governance in Ghana, Eswatini, and South Africa. Her work has influenced food system innovations in the Oforikrom Municipality in Ghana and the Western Cape Province in South Africa through Transformation-labs and policy dialogues with public officials and market women. Sandra was a Queen Elizabeth Scholar through McGill University and University of Ghana. Sandra is currently a lecturer at the Ensign Global College, Kpong, Ghana and research fellow at the Centre for Sustainability Transitions, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa.

G. How to apply

Applications are now being accepted for the course, which will run weekly from October 5 to December 7, 2023. Applicants must be in at least the second year of a transport/urban studies Ph.D. programme at an African university (applications from masters and first-year Ph.D. students will not be considered).

The application form can be accessed via the following link:
<https://forms.gle/E8sbn579CUL1UpQ56>

The deadline for receiving applications is September 11, 2023. Successful applicants will be notified of their acceptance by September 25, 2023.