

**Buffett Undergraduate Research Fellowship Opportunity**

*Contemporary Global Receptions of Heart of Darkness*

**Faculty Mentor:** Christine Froula, Professor, Weinberg College of Arts & Sciences and Evan Mwangi, Associate Professor, Weinberg College of Arts & Sciences

**Project Synopsis:** This project explores the reception of and engagements with Joseph Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness* (1899) in contemporary global artistic production. In the judgment of anti-imperial activist Edward Morel, Conrad's novella was the most important act of witness to King Leopold's Congo ever written. Exquisitely crafted by a Polish-born author—"a better writer than the rest of us put together" (Virginia Woolf), who said that had he not written in English (his third or fourth language) he would not have written at all—the novella has had vibrant, complex, controversy-fraught reception by critical and creative interpreters and adapters across boundaries of nation and media in the anglophone world. This reception continues apace, notwithstanding Chinua Achebe's influential attack on Conrad as a "thoroughgoing racist" in 1972, which has given rise to debates on the existential question whether this work should be excluded from literary canons on that or other grounds.

Drawing on primary texts from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean to discuss global readings, adaptations, and critiques of Conrad's masterpiece, this collaborative study demonstrates the impact of Conrad's novella through its (primarily but not exclusively) anglophone world reception. What has this work offered its readers, and what does it continue to offer, during an age of rival and metamorphosing European and American imperialisms? How do the stakes in reading it differ for western anglophone readers and for colonial, semi-colonial, and postcolonial African, Asian, and Caribbean readers? How and why, with what purposes and effects, under what constraints and in face of what objections, have readers in various locales engaged with *Heart of Darkness*?

**Project Term:** Summer only

**Project Location:** Hybrid, remote and on-campus

**Job Description:** The student's responsibility will be to assist us in the project described above by:

- 1) Searching for and discovering relevant works with our guidance and that of our expert University Librarians. This task calls upon and will build the student's research skills.
- 2) Acquiring a copy of each work through the Library and online sources such as NUSearch, Hathitrust and Project Gutenberg;

3) Building a bibliography of all such works discovered;

4) Annotating each bibliographic entry with details of each writer's chosen form, approach to engaging Heart of Darkness, thesis or purpose, underlying and stated assumptions, main points, and relevance as a contribution to our study of global receptions of Heart of Darkness. This task calls upon and will build the student's critical, analytic, reading, and writing skills.

**Time Commitment:** The student will commit about 30 work hours a week for 8 weeks to the tasks described above, checking in by email and by weekly Zoom meetings. The student will spend those eight weeks in a location with easy access to the University Library, with its world-class Herskovitz Collection.

**Number of available positions:** One, preselected