

## **Elite Africa: Creativity, Expertise, and Power Call for Research Assistant Applications**

We invite applications for twelve RA positions that will provide outstanding opportunities to work closely with a diverse team of leading Africanists on an exciting research and outreach project.

### **The Project:**

This Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Connections project seeks to leverage the insights of an interdisciplinary group of scholars to shift how Africa and its elites are understood. We ask what it means to study the prominent, the powerful, and the prosperous—Africans who wield power on a continental or global scale—in a part of the world often dismissed as marginal. The project centres on a high-profile workshop featuring leading scholars of Africa, scheduled for January 2022. Wider public outreach will include a website, pilot podcasts, and op-eds aimed at a more popular audience. For further information, contact [erica.frederiksen@utoronto.ca](mailto:erica.frederiksen@utoronto.ca).

### **Opportunities:**

**Two (2) Undergraduate RAs** will assist with the organization of the Project's online workshop and with podcast production tasks. Each undergraduate RAship will comprise up to 26 hours of work at a rate of CA\$20 per hour.

**Two (2) Quantitative Audit RAs** will work under the close supervision of the Principal Investigator to develop a unique dataset capturing the range and extent of African elites working across six domains of professional activity from 1960 to the present. This dataset will allow us to pinpoint distinct zones where elite expertise in Africa has quantifiably flourished and will provide content and direction to the whole project.

These two graduate positions provide the opportunity to develop a novel dataset, to inform the discussions at our January workshop, and may lay the basis for a subsequent presentation at a major international conference. For the right candidate, this data could also inform their own dissertation/academic work. High-level quantitative skills are not necessary here; rather, we are looking for a team that is resourceful and able to uncover and deploy unusual data sources to build a composite picture. Each Quantitative Audit RAship will comprise up to 80 hours of work at CA\$32 per hour.

**Six (6) Collaboration and Network RAs**, one in each of the following domains:

*Economic Power*: economic and business elites

*Coercive Power*: military elites and those in security agencies

*Status Power*: royalty, nobles, "traditional" rulers

*Aesthetic Power*: art, literature, architecture, design and music-based elites, including new online influencers

*Religious/Spiritual Power and the Power of Ideas*: religious and spiritual leaders, and intellectual/academic elites

*Political Power*: state-based or state-focused elites including international techno-/bureaucrats.

The domain-specific RAs will each work with the guidance and mentorship of a Project team leader to collate both extant academic research and popular media coverage associated with that domain. The Network RAs will also map the associated human and knowledge networks for each domain,

developing contacts with and for the scholars and professionals most prominent in their area, as well as with relevant organizations and associations/social media platforms.

These six unique graduate RAships will provide an opportunity to review and collate cutting-edge research in their area of focus and to build an invaluable network of contacts in Africa and in the field of African Studies. Each Network RAship will comprise up to 60 hours at CA\$32 per hour.

**Two (2) Media Strategy RAs** will work to maximise coverage of the workshop and publicity for the project, including developing and using the website as a project hub. Their remit will include tweeting/blogging in the lead up to, during, and in the aftermath of the workshop to amplify its impact and audience. The Media RAs will also be responsible for notetaking at the conference. They will collaborate with team members and paper presenters to share, employ, and publicise project-relevant research in a range of ways, including feeding relevant material into the podcast and op-ed scripts.

These graduate RAships will provide strong training in communication and writing skills, as well as in developing and implementing a media strategy to disseminate research and maximise its impact. Each Media RAship will comprise up to 80 hours of work at CA\$32 per hour.

## FAQs

### **Who can apply?**

We prefer students with a background in African Studies and the skills appropriate to the specific position being applied for. We are looking for self-starters who are flexible, resourceful, and eager to learn and contribute.

Because of the terms of our project funding, we are primarily looking to hire Canadian students and/or students studying at Canadian universities. However, we may hire a limited number of students who do not fall into this category, so if you think a position is a good fit for you but do not meet those criteria, please apply.

### **Can I apply for more than one position?**

Yes! Just be sure to indicate clearly on your letter of application which positions you are applying for and in what ranked order of preference.

### **If I'm successful, when would I start work?**

Successful candidates will be notified by September 27 and will begin work that week. The project runs until the end of June 2022.

### **How do I apply?**

We need three items for your application:

1. A letter of application, clearly specifying which position(s) you are applying for, why you would be a good candidate for that/those position(s), and contact details for your referee.  
NB: If you are applying for one of the Network RAships, you must specify which domain you are particularly interested in working on and what your expertise/interest in that area is.
2. A one-to-two-page cv/résumé
3. A brief letter of reference, sent to us directly by the referee

Send these to [erica.frederiksen@utoronto.ca](mailto:erica.frederiksen@utoronto.ca) no later than September 15, 2021.