

## **Workshop Title: Sahelian Identities in Times of Crisis**

### **Organizers**

Dr Amy Niang, International Relations, University of the Witwatersrand

Prof. Baz Lecoq, History, Humboldt University of Berlin

Prof. Isaie Dougon, Anthropology, University of Bamako

### **Abstract**

Recent years have witnessed growing interest in Sahelian societies as they confront the effects of various forms of violence, internal and external, that have disrupted or modified the way individuals and groups relate to each other and conceive of self. The aim of the proposed workshop is to provoke a critical reflection around ongoing socio-political processes in the Sahelian region, particularly in Mali by linking them to historical and political configurations that have given shape, and continue to give shape and form to the Sahel as a geographical, a political, a moral as well as an ideological field of enquiry. In particular, the workshop aims to explore the nature of Sahelian identities in a context of political instability on one hand, and an increasing internationalization of local politics on another. It is therefore intended as a platform for a comparative theoretical and empirical engagement with a range of debates and methodologies on the interactions between state building processes, capitalism, migration, security regimes, economic production and shifting identities. Scholars will be invited to contribute to the discussion by revisiting social histories, cultural complexities, and political traditions amongst the various Sahelian groups. We are specifically interested in re-thinking the epistemological status of 'local' accounts in the context of overlapping narratives. This means, amongst other things, an interest in research projects that investigate articulations, practices, expressions, elaborations, imaginations of a 'Dogon' or 'Tuareg' or 'Hausa' identity in context; seminal examples of these are George Klute's work on the notion of 'work' or Helene Claudot-Hawad's work on the cultural and intellectual meanings of tea-drinking amongst the Tuareg. As the workshop seeks to initiate a close investigation on the lives of Sahelians in times of crisis, the ongoing political situation in Mali provides an adequate field of enquiry. We are interested in questions such as, given the current global context, "what does it mean to be 'Malian' and 'Tuareg' in the age of the War on Terror (WoT) and violent forms of activism across West Africa"? Elements of answer to this and similar questions will help us better understand how political crisis and violence affect individuals and communities' understanding and 'practice' of identity and crucially (dis)continued subscriptions to socio-cultural codes that seem to mark the present time.

### **Place and Date**

6<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2016 in Bamako, Mali