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Class of 2020  
Individual Major Proposal  
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### **Entrepreneurial Development of African Women**

*The individual major seeks to study the different aspects of businesses that could improve African women's economic independence. The Major Focuses on three areas;*

- 1. Understanding the “place” of the African woman in regards to how societies in which they live and how religions determine people's perception of these women.*
- 2. Examining the progress in the impediments that previously existed in the lives of African women and how they are slowly changing with policies and projects that exist thus create more change strategies.*
- 3. Establishing entrepreneurial skills that can be implemented in different women-owned businesses in order for them to be competitive in the male-dominated sector.*

*I am particularly interested in Southern Africa and West Africa, and therefore most of the works researched focus on these two region.*

#### **Academic Rationale:**

This major brings together different courses across the different disciplines offered by the liberal arts education. It incorporates courses from Management Studies, History, Social Anthropology, English, Psychology, Religion and Social Work. The interdisciplinary flavor and skills acquired will enable me to view African women from different perspectives and thus formulate a way to improve their social and financial position through business empowerment. For example, most prominent people in African societies are businessmen, who often see business endeavor as an avenue into politics. In the end, many African countries are stuck with mostly male lawmakers who pass laws which continue to oppress women in those countries. One of the ways in which women can be emancipated is by giving them access to business opportunities which could make it easier for them to determine the course of their lives.

The major will examine the current position of women and thus help formulate solutions to get more women into businesses that will be sustainable in the long term.

**Important questions:**

- Is there a correlation between public and public gender roles and the business sectors that the majority of men and women work in?
- Most African countries have more men represented in the formal business sector compared to women- what is different in the countries with more women in the formal business sector?
- How does the concept of gender and gender roles play out in the different cultures?
- Can women change their roles within a culture?
- What influence do culture and religion have on how women perceive themselves in African societies?
- What post-colonial/ post-protectorate issues make it difficult for women to flourish in African countries?
- What government and other policies can be implemented to help the African woman achieve economic empowerment?
- Which entrepreneurial approaches / skills can be the most helpful to women seeking in the business sector?
- How can younger girls be equipped with business skills that will make them empowered women?

**Courses:**

**Group 1: The place of women in African societies:**

*Examining the roles that were set out for women in African colonial history and how these shape up how post colonial African women, regardless of their location, interact with others. Examine how religion also influences these roles. This is important so that we understand the reasons why there might be less women than men in the business sector.*

1. ENGL 207: Women of the African Diaspora (Spring 2017)
2. REL 209: Introduction to Feminist Theology (Fall 2018)

3. HIST 395: Oral History Seminar (Spring 2017)
4. WMGST 399: Sem: Feminisms and Masculinities (Spring 2019)

ENGL 207: Women of the African Diaspora (Spring 2018)

*This class used different literary texts in order to share the experiences of African women in different settings. It highlighted the challenges that they face in different regions of the continent as well as outside of Africa. These experiences helped me to understand different situations which they deal with which may contribute to why they are less economically independent. One of the texts that we read, "So Long A Letter," focuses on the life of a widowed woman who lost all of her husband's property to his new wife which is common when a polygamous man dies in many countries. Her struggles are highlighted in the text as well as how she overcame them by working hard to feed her family. This shows the importance of financial independence of women because it helps them overcome such situations.*

*This course examines the life cycle of black women in Africa, Canada, the Caribbean, and the United States. Romance, marriage, family, interracial relations, mothers and daughters, urban environments, gender politics and sexual violence, relations among females, intergenerational depictions, historical experiences, public expression and private reflections, individual and communal identities, class considerations--all of these and more images and themes arise in the fictional readings required for this course. Students read such writers as Mariama Ba, Gordimer, Hurston, and Naylor*

REL 209: Introduction to Feminist Theology (Fall 2018)

*Africa has the highest population of Christians in the world and therefore christian traditions and morals are the foundation of many beliefs that Africans uphold. The class helped decode how the Bible portrays women and how it is a tool that was used to oppress Africans, especially women. The biggest takeaway was the need for African women, especially, to read the Bible with understanding and for them to step away from the notion of "glorified suffering."*

*Students examine traditional Christian doctrines in light of feminist critiques and reformulations. The course focuses especially upon language and images of God, the person of Christ and the work of redemption and understandings of human nature. Students evaluate arguments for and against the compatibility of Christianity and feminism.*

HIST 395: Oral History Seminar (Fall 2016)

*This class helped me understand the process needed in order to practice oral history. Apart from the fact that my final project in this class focused on female African students at St Olaf, who identify as feminists, the course enabled me to gather and analyse all the content that I will gather for my senior project.*

*The seminar focuses on the theory and practice of oral history. Students learn to conduct, transcribe and incorporate interviews in projects. Students interrogate conceptual issues - the interview as narrative, memory, identity, connections, motivations, and the silences inherent in oral history - and how these relate to gender, religion, and class in multiple global settings. Students learn such practical techniques.*

### WMGST 399: Sem: Feminisms and Masculinities (In Progress)

This course is an essential part of this major because it examines the relationship between masculinities and feminisms, which will enable deeper and more insightful analysis of the changing perceptions of women across the globe. My projects focus on nudity in relation to the rape culture and victim blaming as well as the concept of “feminism lite” in relation to white and male feminism.

Feminisms & Masculinities invites the study of power and privilege in context of changing myths and realities of masculinities. We'll draw from historical and contemporary feminist theory and men's studies, as well as from memoir, film, photography, and popular media, to explore the relationship between masculinities and individual, collective, and cultural expressions of gender. Projects will include key concepts research, blogging, and an autoethnography. In addition to select articles, reading will include *Dear Ijeawele, or a Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions* (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie), *Intersectionality* (Patricia Hill Collins & Sirma Bilge), *Trans\** (Jack Halberstam), *New Black Man* (Mark Anthony Neal), and *Black Panther*, (Ta-Nehisi Coates and Brian Stelfreeze).

### **Group 2: Progress of African Women:**

*Observing the different ways in which the contemporary African woman's personal development is impeded. Focusing on socio-economic and political issues, the aim is to develop policies and projects which could be implemented in order to protect African women from these issues as well as empower them.*

5. SOAN 261: Gender in Cross Cultural Perspectives (Fall 2017)
6. SWRK 258: Social Policy (Spring 2019)
7. PSYCH 254: Culture and Place in Psychology (Spring 2019)

### SOAN 261: Gender in Cross Cultural Perspectives (Fall 2017)

*This course gave a better understanding of the expectations and roles of men and women in different cultural contexts. Because most countries in Africa have clearly defined roles, this course showed how these differ across the world and suggested improvements that could be made to make lives of women in African countries better. My final project focused on the objectification of Swazi girls in Western media, during and after the annual Reed Dance Ceremony and the impact that this has on the girls and the Swazi culture.*

*This course compares gender patterns and issues in various cultures around the world, such as Latin America, the Middle East, India, the U.S., and East Asia. How do cultural expectations for women and men vary? Why do some societies have more gender equality than others? How do economic and political change, including globalization, impact gender roles? How do U.S. and Third World feminism compare?*

### SWRK 258: Social Policy (In Progress)

*This course will help formulate programs that could be used to improve the lives of women in different African countries from; giving them safety from the crimes and social injustices they face, down to helping them move to financial independence.*

*Social welfare policies exemplify how society's values and needs translate into policies and programs. Social workers create, implement, and evaluate policies in all areas of social policy. Students study policy formation and analysis that reflect interests and powers of diverse groups as well as economic and social realities of certain populations at risk of poverty and discrimination. The course emphasizes policy impact on women, people in poverty, people of color and the LGBT community, and empowerment in policy practice*

### PSYCH 254: Culture and Place in Psychology (In Progress)

One of the most important aspects that African countries pride themselves in, is their cultures and traditions, many of which tend to oppress women in various ways. This course will help examine and understand the concept of culture and how this influences the way in which different groups interact. My research project for this class will focus on the sexualisation of

black women from early colonial times to how the media portrays them today. The paper focuses on women from the Asante tribe from Ghana in comparison to Swazi maidens at the Reed Dance.

*Many psychological processes once assumed to be similar around the world are actually powerfully influenced by culture. This course explores ways in which cultural context affects psychological experience, including cognition, emotion, personality, values, social behavior, and subjective well-being. Students study the methods, constructs, and findings of cultural psychology, and reflect on their own cultural experiences; thus this course is particularly appropriate for students returning from or preparing to study abroad.*

### **Group 3: Skills and Principles of Business:**

*Successful businesses are those that help solve existing problems. Since there are existing issues which impede the development of women in business on the African continent, knowledge on different aspects of business could be used to solve these. The knowledge can also be transferred to African women in order to encourage more of them to tap into the business sector.*

8. MGMT 250: Marketing (Spring 2018)
9. MGMT 251: Management (Fall 2017)
10. MGMT 231: Personal Finance (Interim 2019)
11. MGMT 257: New Venture Formulation (Interim 2018)
12. MGMT 383: Management Policy and Strategy (Fall 2018)

MGMT 250: Marketing (Spring 2018)

*Marketing is one of the most important components of business because it is how you get your business to the people. Therefore, having an understanding of marketing help transform business ideas to success. The class helped examine marketing for large and small scale businesses and how those differ - the final group projects were to create a marketing plan for existing businesses. My group worked with "Clothes Closet" a small non-profit, thrift store in downtown Northfield and the skills gained from this experience could be transferred to businesses of all sizes.*

*This course introduces the key elements of marketing principles. Topics include evaluating market opportunities; buyer behavior; market segmentation, targeting, and positioning; market strategy and planning; development of marketing mix; and marketing organization and control. Students are challenged to apply the principles learned in class to current and real world marketing issues. The course includes readings, case study analysis, in-class exercises and group projects*

### MGMT 251: Management (Fall 2017)

*This course is an important part of the major because it is key to be able to carry out different business functions in order for one to try and communicate these to others.*

*This course familiarizes the student with the major management functions of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. The study of management theory is linked with application exercises. Students begin to develop the management skills necessary in any organization, whether it be a for-profit or not-for-profit venture, a small business, or a large corporation.*

### MGMT 231: Personal Finance (Interim 2019)

The main reason that many business ventures fail is the mismanagement of funds. This course taught me various skills of managing funds on a personal scale which could be transferred to small businesses as well. Some useful topics include budgeting, saving and managing loans as well as property investments.

*This practical course provides information needed for informed decision making in major areas of personal finance, including budgeting, basic tax planning, insurance, investments, major purchases and retirement planning.*

### MGMT 257: New Venture Formulation (Interim 2018)

*This course taught the first part of forming a business, creating a business plan. From this course, I learnt the easiest way to create a business plan - the value proposition mode which is a simpler tool to use and transfer to entrepreneurs with different literacy levels.*

*This course teaches students how to develop a business or not-for-profit venture concept into a business plan. Students choose whether to develop a real business plan for a local entrepreneur or pursue an idea of their choice. Students work in teams to identify a market need, design a strategy, and determine feasibility of the proposed venture. Ethical practice permeates these discussions. Weekly assignments develop the necessary speaking skills that prepare students for the final plan presentation. Local entrepreneurs and fellow students critique the final plan and offer suggestions.*

### MGMT 383: Management Policy and Strategy (Fall 2018)

*This course is mainly different cases of real businesses; studied and evaluated. This simulated me to be better prepared to tackle these issues, should they arise in my business setting.*

This is a capstone course for students with a management studies concentration or management area of emphasis in the economics major. Students have the opportunity to further develop their planning and decision-making skills through focused study of the management literature and case analysis exercises. Emphasis is given to identifying, analyzing, and solving organizational problems, which are strategic in nature and cut across all functional areas of the organization.

### **Other Supporting Courses and Experiences:**

- ECON 121 : Principles of Economics (*Interim 2017*)
- FAMST 253: Human Sexuality (*Fall 2018*)
- HIST 151: Slavery in African History (*Fall 2016*)
- MGMT 252: Legal Aspects of Business (*Spring 2018*)
- PSYCH 250: Industrial/Organisational Psychology (*Fall 2017*)
- Public Relations Officer, Secretary and Events Coordinator for KARIBU
- Management Studies Concentration
- Africa and The Diaspora Concentration
- Women's and Gender Studies Major

### **Learning and Life Experience**

*In High School, I took Business Management up until International Baccalaureate level and this helped build a strong interest in entrepreneurship and business.*

*I was part of a community service group that got trained to teach entrepreneurial skills to unemployed youth from Nkoyoyo, Swaziland. This group had more women than men and this brought the revelation that more men tend to have an interest in the formal business sector whereas women in Swaziland are limited to aspire to informal businesses.*

*I also participated in a Women's Empowerment group which brought about my interest in issues of minorities, mainly women's issues because this is the biggest economic minority group in Swaziland. This helped me seek a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by Swazi women, from different perspectives because each of them had a different story to tell, most of which could have been avoided with financial independence. These two encounters helped me develop the idea for a major that aims to free women from some of their burdens through entrepreneurship.*

*I also got the opportunity to visit schools in the poorest part of Swaziland, Shewula, on a school trip. Most of the children at the schools we visited, had torn and worn out school uniforms which inspired my friend and I to create a non-profit organisation which raised funds to buy school uniforms for these children. From my experience, I realised an interest in making others' lives*



*easier and more bearable which has helped grow and cultivate my interest in serving vulnerable groups.*

*Over the 2018 summer, I had the opportunity to intern as a Programmes Director at Gender Links Swaziland. Gender Links is an organisation which has various programmes in place to assist women, who have faced different kinds of abuse. I had the opportunity to help out with the Sunrise Campaign which is a programme that equips abuse survivors with entrepreneurial skills. The feedback from people who had attended this programme in past years was that the skills that they learnt helped them establish themselves thus find it easier to leave abusive relationships because they were now independent. Working on this project helped reinforce the fact that entrepreneurship could be a solution to the issues faced by African women by empowering them.*

*In my Oral History Seminar class, my final project focused on female, African students at St Olaf, who considered themselves as feminists and how they practice feminism differently at school and at home because of the differing dynamics. This project would be much different if I had taken the class now because I know more things now that could shape the paper. In my Gender in Cross Cultural Perspectives class, my final project focused on how the media portrays the Swazi Reed Dance Ceremony; as an event that objectifies women. However, from speaking to young women who had attended the ceremony, I realised that most of them felt empowered and this showed the misconceptions that the West has on aspects of many African cultures (as different variations of the reed dance exist in different cultures.) This, then, brings up the question of the impact that colonialism brought on the “pure forms” of different cultures as many cultures were greatly changed by colonialism.*

*I also had the opportunity to work for the “Vote for Women Campaign” for the elections that Swaziland had this year. The campaign aimed to breach the gender representation gap in the Swazi parliament because Swazi women are under-represented. The legislations passed are not in favour of women’s rights which could potentially be improved with more representation. Also, many of the people that people tend to vote for are established business persons, men mainly, as they have “larger businesses” which can help fund for their political campaigns. Therefore,*

*getting more women into the business sector, would give them more leverage in political campaigns too.*

### **Potential Research Projects**

- *Women in Politics : examine how Swazi women have made it into politics, a space that was originally established for men and how they navigated that space once they were in it.*
  - *Would require interviews with current and former female politicians in Swaziland to establish how they got into politics and their journey in politics.*
  - *Observation of the dynamics in the Swazi parliament conducted from the public gallery section*
  - *Interview business owners who got into politics to ascertain what benefits they got by being business people when campaigning for their parliament seats.*
  - *Get perspectives of male politicians to examine what benefits (or drawbacks) they think having more women in parliament could bring thus the role men should/ could play in making this happen.*
  - *Presentation to a group of faculty and professors, women's and gender studies students, international relations/ political science students to give them a deeper understanding of the gender dynamics in politics in developing countries. This would also be beneficial to Africa and the Diaspora concentrators to give an insight of the political position of African women in Africa - which could benefit their perspectives on the topic.*
  - *Also produce a booklet on the topic to give to Swazi women who want to venture into politics, to provide them with information on how they can get into politics, what to expect in their position, and resources available to them.*
  - *Gather information around the topic of politics in Nigeria, to examine other factors that come into play when there are multiple tribes in a country, as far as getting women into politics. Also compare to Rwanda because they have the most number of women in parliament compared to other countries.*

- *African Business women in the informal business sector: examine how women in small businesses (ie market stalls) make business decisions compared to men*
  - *Establish the reasons why women get into business. Compare these to men.*
  - *Investigate the relationship between the industry that businesswomen get into and gender roles.*
  - *Investigate the sources of capital. Men are more likely to get capital from loans which are barely available to women so do women get capital from the men in their lives?*
  - *Figure out how they tackle competition because marketplaces are very competitive since everyone is selling the same products at similar prices.*
  - *How do they decide how much product to grow, make or get from their suppliers.*
  - *How do they ensure that their business stays sustainable/ money goes back into the business after restocking and paying expenses?*
  - *Are there chances for collaboration within their business sector? If so, how could this be done?*
  - *How do they compete with big shop? Look into the concept of charitable selling- allowing the customer to bargain such that there is very little profit for the seller but you also get rid of stock that would otherwise, go to waste.*
  - *Compare business women in Swaziland and Minneapolis.*

Description of the structure of web portfolio:

- Home page describing the outline of my major and why I chose this major
- An “About Me” page that will relate my interests and goals to why I chose this major
- A page explaining more about the logistics of the major, including the proposal outline and key questions that have guided my study
- A coursework page organizing my classes into the 3 core areas
- A page explaining my capstone project

- A page with any other related experiences or internships relevant to my major
- A potential career path- how this major will prepare me for my future career

Summary of consultation with reference librarian:

Meeting with Maggie was helpful because she showed me different resources that would be of great assistance with my research project and projects for my classes - in general. Some of the resources that she recommended were Catalyst and World Catalog as sources of information and Zotero for saving articles and other sources that may be useful in my final project.

Summary of peer review session:

My peer felt that my proposal had a strong rationale that connects to my classes and experiences. They suggested structural changes so that the proposal is easier to read and follow. The overall feel was that my major sounded like it was meaningful to me.

Summary of meeting with other faculty member:

During my meeting with Nancy Thompson, we she expressed the question of whether or not the name of the major was too broad and suggested that instead of Africa, I should consider narrowing it down to a region or the country in which it mostly focuses on - Swaziland. However, I have chosen to keep the name broad because my projects focus on different regions of Africa, that cannot be described in any way but "Africa."