AFRI-A 731 Contemporary Africa Speaker Series Spring 2017:
African Mobilities and Expressive Culture

Professor Ryan T. Skinner
Ethnomusicology, The Ohio State University
“A Colder Congo:” An Afro-Swedish Chronotope of Race, Politics, and Culture

Wednesday, March 22 | 5:30-7:00pm | SGIS 1122

Bio: Ryan Skinner is Associate Professor of ethnomusicology in the School of Music and the Department of African American and African Studies at The Ohio State University. Dr. Skinner’s research focuses on popular culture, ethics, cultural politics, public piety, intellectual property, and new social movements and modes of identification in Africa and its diasporas. He is the author of Bamako Sounds: The Afropolitan Ethics of Malian Music (University of Minnesota Press, 2015), and a children’s book, Sidikiba’s Kora Lesson (Beaver’s Pond Press, 2008). He is also an accomplished kora (21-stringed West African harp) player.

Abstract: In this lecture, Ryan Skinner will explore the deep but fragmented and perhaps even surprising history that binds (post)colonial Congo to contemporary Sweden. It is a story told from multiple perspectives and through a patchwork of popular media, including comic books, cinema, poetry, and music. Such disparate fragments of text, image, and sound reveal a striking feature of contemporary Afro-Swedish public culture: a collapsing of spatio-temporal distance in which ideas of Africa and Europe conflate; white supremacy and colorblind politics intersect; and obscured histories of early twentieth century colonial conquest commingle with the living memory of mid-century decolonial diplomacy and more recent postcolonial and antiracist activism. By reading, viewing, and listening to this Afro-Swedish chronotope of race, politics, and culture, Skinner observes the uncanny, but no less real connections between mercenaries and diplomats, artists and aid workers, immigrants and veterans, in Congo and Sweden, over the past century, from Conrad’s Heart of Darkness to Hollywood’s latest take on Tarzan.