

HistGeogUni

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Source: <https://www.ucc.edu.gh/news/60-years-quality-higher-education-expanding-frontiers>

HistGeogUni Lecture 2024

Thursday, 9 May 2024, 9:00 to 10:30 (BST/UTC+1)

**James Esson, Amil Mohanan,
Michael Hoyer & Morag Bell**

Queen Mary University of London, Northeastern University London,
and Loughborough University

**Two peas in a pod?
North American philanthropic foundations and
the geopolitics of knowledge production
in West African higher education**

*Livestreamed in the James France building, room CC.0.21,
and online via Teams*

School of Social Sciences and Humanities
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Please register online via this [link](#) from April 2024 onwards.

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HistGeogUni Lecture 2024

Two peas in a pod? North American philanthropic foundations and the geopolitics of knowledge production in West African higher education



James Esson, Amil Mohanan, Michael Hoyler & Morag Bell

This lecture explores how key individuals within North American philanthropic foundations sought to shape pedagogical and epistemological dispositions in West African higher education in an era of decolonization. Specifically, we trace how the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Foundation articulated competing visions of ‘appropriate’ knowledge production in West African contexts during the 1950s and 1960s. Under the guidance of Alan Pifer, the Carnegie Corporation is found to have emphasised ‘applied knowledge’, which was influenced by the American land-grant university model associated with historically black colleges and universities (HBCU). This is contrasted with the Rockefeller Foundation’s promotion of ‘open-ended’ intellectual enquiry under its Director for the Social Sciences Norman S. Buchanan. Our analysis examines these contrasting perspectives and outlines their implications for teaching and knowledge production within higher education in West African contexts. Through doing so, we illustrate how key individuals within these foundations used, what on the surface appeared to be, contrasting approaches to knowledge production that ultimately both worked to achieve the same goal of dictating geopolitical post-colonial relations with West African actors. Unravelling these complex relations provides new insights on the pivotal question how ways of teaching and knowledge production in the social sciences were entangled in interventions aimed at maintaining a colonial ethos of trusteeship during a period of decolonial critique and activism.