



Graduate Arts & Sciences Career Services  
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## SAMPLE COVER LETTER: TENURE-TRACK JOB, SMALL LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

*GSAS Career Services note: In view of the audience, this applicant is wise to begin with a discussion of her teaching qualifications. She writes with a clear voice and includes reflections on her teaching values. She creates a nice segue from her teaching to her research, showing fluidity between the two. She demonstrates that she is thinking ahead by introducing her future research interests. Other strengths of this letter include reference to online materials, the offer to submit additional materials, and discussion of the author's availability for interviews.*

November 2, 2006

Professor Powerful Person  
Chair, English Search Committee  
Small Liberal Arts College  
Small Town, USA 789012

Dear Professor Person:

I wish to apply for the position of Assistant Professor of English with an emphasis in rhetoric and composition that you advertised in the October *MLA Job Information List*. I am a Ph.D. candidate at Prestigious University working on a dissertation under the direction of Professor Leading Scholar. Currently revising the third of five chapters, I expect to complete all work for the Ph.D. by May 2007. I believe that my teaching and tutoring experience combined with my coursework and research background in rhetoric and composition theory make me a strong candidate for the position outlined in your notice.

As my curriculum vitae shows, I have had excellent opportunities to teach a variety of writing courses during my graduate studies, including developmental writing, first-year writing for both native speakers and other language students, advanced writing, and business writing. I have also worked as a teaching mentor for new graduate students, a position that involved instruction in methods of composition teaching, development of course materials, and evaluation of new graduate instructors. Among the most satisfying experiences for me as a teacher has been instructing students on an individual basis as a tutor in our university Writing Lab. Even as a classroom instructor, I find that I always look forward to the individual conferences that I hold with my students several times during the semester because I believe this kind of one-on-one interaction to be essential to their development as writers.

My work in the composition classroom has provided me with the inspiration as well as a kind of laboratory for my dissertation research. My project, *The I Has It: Applications of Recent Models of Subjectivity in Composition Theory*, examines the shift since the 1960s from expressive models of writing toward now-dominant postmodern conceptions of decentered subjectivity and self-construction through writing. I argue that these more recent theoretical models, while promising, cannot have the liberating effects that are claimed for them without a concomitant reconception of writing pedagogy and the dynamics of the writing classroom. I relate critical readings of theoretical

texts to my own pedagogical experiments as a writing teacher, using narratives of classroom successes and failures as the bases for critical reflection on postmodern composition theory. After developing my dissertation into a book manuscript, I plan to continue my work in current composition theory through a critical examination of the rhetoric of technological advancement in the computer-mediated writing classroom.

My interest in the computer classroom has grown out of recent experience teaching composition in that environment. In these courses my students have used computers for writing and turning in notes and essays, communicating with one another and with me, conducting library catalogue research and web research, and creating websites. I have encouraged my students to think and write critically about their experiences with technology, both in my class and elsewhere, even as we have used technology to facilitate our work in the course. Syllabi and other materials for my writing courses can be viewed at my website: <<http://machine.prestigious.edu/~qualifiedapplicant>>. In all of my writing courses I encourage students to become critical readers, thinkers, and writers; my goal is always not only to promote their intellectual engagement with cultural texts of all kinds but also to help them become more discerning readers of and forceful writers about the world around them.

I have enclosed my curriculum vitae and would be happy to send you additional materials, such as a dossier of letters of reference, writing samples, teaching evaluations, and past and proposed course syllabi. I will be available to meet with you for an interview at either the MLA or the CCCC conventions, or elsewhere at your convenience. I can be reached by email at [qa@pu.edu](mailto:qa@pu.edu) or at my home phone number before December 19; between then and the start of the MLA convention you can reach me at (123) 456-7890. I thank you for your consideration and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Qualified Applicant

Enclosure