Film and Television
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Dr. Conor Mckeown
Curriculum Vitae

COVERING LETTER, HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

To the application board of Hong Kong Baptist University,

I am writing regarding the position(s) of Assistant Professor, Research Assistant Professor or Post-Doctorate Researcher within the University's Creative Media and Practice Research Cluster. I believe I would be an excellent addition to the research cluster at any level, dependent upon the experience of the other accepted candidates. Although I am predominantly a teacher and researcher, I am also a practitioner of digital arts and have been involved in game design and creative coding both as a lecturer and designer for many years. My work, therefore, crosses disciplinary boundaries, and combines the various elements of creative writing and visual art. The culmination of my research has been the agreement to publish my thesis as a monograph with the Open Humanities Press that will ensure open-access readership across the globe. Alongside this, however, in the previous three years I have published numerous articles in high-quality journals (printed by Springer, Taylor and Francis and transcript Verlag). At the same time, I am dedicated to helping the work of others flourish. As such, I have developed several online projects with independent writers and publishers, enabling their work to reach new audiences and enable new forms of expression. Over and above my dedication to research and practice, however, I believe it is my desire to expand beyond the limitations of English-language only research, into a multi-cultural (multi-lingual) research environment, that would allow me to stand out from other applicants. If I was successful in my application for this position at HKBU, I would hope my research could assist with the themes of helping the socially disadvantaged and allowing innovation in socially motivated design.

My PhD research explored the relationship between videogames and ecologies. I found that although games currently have a detrimental impact on the environment, their changeability and existence on necessary platforms most used for other applications hinted at a bright future. Beyond this, by investigating the code structures of several videogames, I identified repeating patterns in game algorithms. Within these repeating patterns, interesting dependencies between code and players came to light. As such, I found that it may not be playing videogames that can have the most impact on players or society at large. Rather, by teaching others to design games, we can learn and question a lot about our environment and the world we live in. If accepted to the HKBU I would seek to extend my research, with the help of the research hub, to produce a more socially motivated, impactful study, building on my initial findings. The most pressing need would be to find a focus group on whom I could test a series of readings and design challenges before asking them if or how their thinking on computers and the environment has changed. I believe this could help HKBU to maintain their ambitions at being a socially invested institution by educating a new

generation to think about their relationship with technology in an engaged manner. Instead of viewing themselves as the masters of their technology, I would hope to educate students to consider how they fit into a larger picture of technological and natural interactions that extend through the world. These are important skills in our society as we become increasingly entwined with one another.

During and since completing my doctoral study, I have published numerous articles to widen access to my work. At present I am working on reformulating my PhD thesis, "Videogame Ecologies" into a monograph for publication with the UK based Open Humanities Press, an open-source publisher who print on-demand for ecological and social reasons and who have published high profile scholars like Timothy Morton and Alain Badiou. I have opted to work with OHP for ideological reasons, following publication offers from numerous other publishers including I.B. Taurus international. I believe my monograph has the potential to open videogame design up to new, socially engaged and experimental forms of game design. If accepted to HKBU I would welcome the challenge of attempting to teach a class based on the game-design principles I identified in my work.

Although I am a researcher, I am also a practitioner, designing my own videogames and web-applications. At present, I am attempting to enact my research through several projects with Glasgow-based writers. Working with independent publishers *Vagabond Voices* (https://www.vagabondvoices.co.uk/think-in-translation-home) I have helped them develop a series of interactive maps that chart the international reach of their authors. This helps highlight how *VV* are determined to reach wide audiences but also provide opportunities of connecting authors from around the globe with an engaged English-speaking readership.

Similar to my work with independent publishers I am also working on a project with a local poet to create an online poetry generator themed around Witchcraft and Tarot-reading. This project will be completed in May 2018 and publicised through several feminist and poetry magazines in the UK and USA.

I hope to maintain this project-based work after leaving Glasgow, advertising my digital literacy to artists, writers and designers who wish to reach new audiences. Different from average web-design companies, I hope that my education within the humanities would ensure a greater cohesion between form and content. It would be an enormous opportunity to work with Hong Kong-based writers, artists and activists, enabling them to reach a wider audience while maintaining the spirit of their work.

Alongside research and project work, I have also worked as a lecturer since completing my thesis. My first role was in Fife College, Scotland, where I taught game design, web-design and digital art to many hundreds of students. I gained a great deal of experience during this position, listening to student's desires and balancing industry expectations and standards against a range of student needs and abilities. My work was constantly assessed during my time and both my relationships with staff and students and abilities as a teacher were recorded as having steadily improved. During my time at Fife College, I was offered a contract to teach at Glasgow University and undertake research

into computer programming with the computer science department. I undertook that appointment and have had great success working with the staff and students in that institution.

I would hope to put my abilities to teach game design and computer programming to good use in HKBU, either assisting other members of the research hub or in designing new and engaging interdisciplinary syllabi for undergraduates and postgraduates alike. I am most excited by the prospect of a course that would combine digital design (whether this takes the form of a game, website or other software) with other active artistic pursuits. As noted, the new research hub will seek to combine music, visual design and creative writing with activities such s game design and creative code. I believe my interdisciplinary background and experience make me the ideal candidate to develop a syllabus that fits these requirements and allowing for future social engagement to take place.

I hope you will peruse my attached resume, paying attention to my publications and detailed teaching experience. I look forward to the opportunity of discussing my work and suitability for the role in more detail in person.

Sincerely,

Dr Conor Mckeown.

RESUME

Overview

My research investigates the intersection of interactive digital media, moving image studies and philosophy. My primary area of research is the interactive, aesthetic and affective potential of experimental videogames, from an interdisciplinary perspective that blurs the line between theory and practice. I have produced numerous publications on videogames, but have also published on film and digital art. I have experience teaching a range of subjects, both theoretical and practical at varied levels, including film history, film aesthetics, introductory film studies, digital cultures, videogame design, 3D modelling, programming and web design. My doctoral research on the on independent videogames was completed at The University of Glasgow with Professor David Martin-Jones and Timothy Scott Barker. Using the philosophy of Karen Barad, I utilised a range of research methods, including controlled group-play, and the close-reading of source code. Where source code was not accessible, I developed programs to illustrate my arguments. Since completing my thesis, I have developed my theoretical practice by studying interactive technologies with the department of computer science at the University of Glasgow. This has since blossomed into several projects at the intersection of the arts at technology. With publishers, Vagabond Voices, I am working with local authors to develop interactive narrative apps for their work, including interactive maps and a tarot-inspired poetry web-app. At the same time, with researchers at the University of Glasgow I am developing an interactive history of the Viking board-game, 'Tafl'. My work has received numerous grants from the AHRC, SGSAH (Scottish Graduate School of the Arts and Humanities) and a variety of smaller institutions. I am an active member of British DiGRA, the leading academic research group for videogames and digital media, and a member of the editorial board of the Glasgow based "Press-Start" Journal.

Publications (Last 5 Years)

Peer-reviewed journals

Forthcoming (2018) "Videogames Beyond Representation: Intra-Acting with Independent Videogames", Proceedings of the Trans-Image Conference, Edinburgh 2018.

Forthcoming (2018), "Playing with Materiality: An Agential-Realist Approach to Videogame Code-Injections", Information Communication and Society: Special Issue on 'Work and Play'

(2016) "Alternative Trajectories: Structuring Play Through Videogame Physics Engines", Performance Research, Vol 21. Issue 4.

(2016 with Tim Barker) "Unearthing techno-ecology: on the possibility of a technical media philosophy of ecology", Digital Culture and Society, Vol 1. Issue 1.

(2014 with Jenna Ng) ""You have all the weapons you need" — Sucker Punch and the Multiform Gaze", Computer Games Journal, Vol 3. Issue 2

Book Chapters

(2017) "The Colossi" in Jaime Banks, Robert Mejia, Aubrey Adams (eds.) *100 Greatest Videogame Characters* (MD: Rowman and Littlefield).

Book reviews

(2016) "Our Combative Past and Co-operative Future: Review of The Play Versus Story Divide in Game Studies: Critical Essays", Press-Start, Vol 3. Issue 2.

(2016) "Book Review: Shigeru Miyamoto: Super Mario Bros., Donkey Kong, The Legend of Zelda", Cultural Sociology, Vol 10, Issue 4.

Education

PhD, University of Glasgow, 2017.
Advisors: Professor David Martin-Jones and Dr. Timothy Scott Barker.

Doctoral Thesis:
"Videogame Ecologies: Interaction, Aesthetics and Affect."

My thesis focused on current ideas of interaction with software and digital games. I proposed that deep, technological readings of the software and hardware behind new-media yields a uniquely ecological model with which to reconceive of activity commonly thought of as a one-to-one relationship. Using Karen Barad's notions of intra-action and agential-realism, I further suggested that the dependencies that digital media exhibit on a micro-level (and that some allow us to explore on a macro level) are telling of the complicated material world we inhabit.

MSc, University of Glasgow, Interactive Technology, 2018.
Following a year of teaching digital media design and production, I have engaged in a study of interactive technology at the University of Glasgow, developing networked software with fellow researchers to explore HCI concepts and digital technology in a more practical, less philosophical manner than in my doctoral research. I also furthered my experience with both non-parametric and statistical data gathering/analysis, broadening my knowledge of quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

MPhil University of Cambridge, Screen Media Cultures, 2013.

M.Phil Thesis: "Biopower as Gameplay: Reading Lars Von Trier's *Melancholia* as Expanded Cinema"

Throughout my time at Cambridge I worked with a variety of different tutors to develop an interdisciplinary approach to screen media. With Dr. Sarah Wood I engaged with Youtube video and performance as forms of protest, with Dr. Jenna Ng, explored cinematic gaze as a site of potential interactivity while with Professor's Jacqueline Wilson and Steven Connor I developed my thesis that attempted to further a broader understanding of cinema as an interactive medium.

University of St Andrews, Film Studies/English, M.A. 2012.
I developed the fundamental research skills that have served as the basis for my academic career since. What is more, I developed working relationships with a number of academics that have grown into research partnerships over the subsequent years.

Research Interests

My research specialisation is in media-theory and the intersection with screen-media and viewer experiences. In my doctoral thesis – forthcoming under contract – I build on existing theories of interactivity and propose a novel theory of how digitality can shape ontological philosophy. My work is inspired by technologically centred ideas such as media-ecology, media archaeology, platform studies and software studies, but I also have expertise with recent philosophical trends such as posthumanism, new materialism and object-oriented ontology. As such, though I explore the social and philosophical ramifications of digital and screen media, I am also interested in the ecological, aesthetic and social factors that extend from them. I employ media-practice in my research, developing software to illustrate points and would welcome the chance to develop or continue any mixed-curriculum subject or to teach practice-focused courses.

Teaching Experience

University of Glasgow, Film, Television and Theatre Studies

2018, with Dr. Rebecca Harrison, "Film History Aesthetics and Genre", Level 2
Working with Dr. Harrison, we have developed a course that seeks to challenge the established canon of film-history and introduce a focus on feminist discourse throughout cinema's birth a development. We encourage all 80 of our students to adopt a material, object-centred approach to history, curating a collection of objects and responding to these objects' place in history in lieu of an essay or exam that merely engages with rapidly outdated modes of thinking within film history scholarship. To that end, I have encouraged students to develop their project-lead research in the direction of digital theory, with an emphasis on media-archaeology and platform studies.

2017, "Film Aesthetics", Level 3/4
In 2017 I managed and developed a new iteration of this core-course with Dr. Tim Barker. The purpose of this course was to ensure honour-level students had an ability to sufficiently contextualise close-reading of film aesthetics within a specific cultural/historical moment. While staying true to the requirements of the course and liaising with the university at School level, to meet the requirements of an honours level course, I placed a much stronger emphasis on digital media, taking the stance that digital-media is a dominant form of global film making on all production scales. The course, delivered to every University of Glasgow film-studies single-honours students, provided students with the ability to research conventional cinema and cinema/visual-theory, but also to undertake leading research into cutting-edge digital media with a comprehensive knowledge of digital theorists. Students responded very positively in end of year feedback and produced a strong grade average across the class.

2017, "Spectatorship, Audiences and Identities", Level 2
I acted as a lecturer and seminar tutor to more than fifty students developing fundamental ideas of applying theory and criticism to cinema.

2015, "Looking, Listening and Reading", Level 1
I was a seminar tutor covering the basics of the introductory film studies course, teaching more than sixty students, developing basic essay writing and presentation skills in preparation for more challenging concepts ahead.

2015-2018, Glasgow Film Studies Summer School, "Cinema and Digital Media".
I work with Dr Becky Bartlett (Univesity of Stirling) to produce a short course on the convergence of digital media and cinema for students preparing to enter university. A focus is placed on critical thinking and originality, attempting to foster confidence in independent thought.

Fife College, Centre for Creative Industries

2016	Digital Media, HNC
	Computer Game Design, HNC
	3D Modelling: Lighting and Textures, HND
	3D Modelling: Character Development, HND
	2D Animation, HNC
	Introduction to Digital Media.
	Online Asset Design.
	Introduction to Web Design.

Working within a FE environment but also teaching to degree level, I quickly became familiar with the administrative system at work and set about shaping several courses for the 100+ students I was placed in charge of. Working in tandem with the existing a previous staff at the college, I developed a demanding but industry-focused course that promoted self-reflection and analysis while also promoting the need for core skills in design and media production. I taught a range of ages skills in computer programming using an array of programming languages and development environments, computer game programming, Adobe Creative Suite design and basic animation and film production.

For example, in taking on the computer game design course, it was my responsibility to devise the delivery of required course skills. I used a number of different platforms to allow students to work through a range of different projects quickly, then use the platform they felt most comfortable with the develop a project that satisfied the assessment criteria. I began the year with an introduction to scripting and programming concepts using the visual language, MiT's Scratch. I then moved on to building the same project again in an interactive online environment, using Javascript libraries, Phaser and 3.js. All student groups, regardless of which platform they chose to adopt, were then able to develop assets for their projects in the Adobe creative cloud, to be integrated into their games. At the same time, algorithmic concepts such as recursion and 'big O' efficiency could be explored in a way that each was familiar with and felt relevantly able to access. Students for whom programming was a challenge were able to develop working prototypes of games in a visual language while more experienced programmers were able to develop stand-alone programs. Freeing up students in this way, allowed them to engage in relating their games to a specific context, identified from a number of readings discussed in seminar groups.

Grants

2017 Scottish Graduate School for The Arts and Humanities Research Grant
This grant enabled me to undertake the study Human Computer Interaction to an MSc level while teaching at Glasgow.

2016 Glasgow University Research Travel Grant
Funded my participation in a week-long symposium on videogames and digital media, focused on publishing research and developing networking activities.

2015 Glasgow University College Fund
Facilitated my ability to co-host an international conference "Techno-cultures" with Professor Wolfgang Ernst

2014 University of Gothenburg Travel Fund
I was invited to speak on my research into digital media at The University of Gothenburg and University of Skövde with the support of Dr. Anna Backman-Rogers

2014 AHRC Research Travel Grant
Allowed my participation in the Ecologies SiG at SCMS 2014

2013 AHRC Research Grant
Facilitated my PhD research for the course of three-years; encouraged a variety of internship and networking activities such as regular conference attendance throughout the UK

Relevant Skills

Computer Programming	I have with experience designing desktop programs in Java and Python and designing databases with SQL.
Web Design	I have proficiency in designing for web, using HTML, CSS, Javascript and SQL databases. I have also developed using Django and JSON. I frequently hosted my own web pages to allow easier access for students to class resources and easy integration into Moodle.
Classroom software	I am highly proficient using Moodle and other classroom software such as the YACRS online quiz system.
Digital Media Design	I have taught and created media using the Adobe Creative Cloud (Photoshop, Illustrator, Animate CC, Premier Pro and After Effects). I have also instructed in game design using Unity, Unreal and, for more basic users, MIT's Scratch.
Statistical Computing	I have extensive experience using the R programming language for statistical computing. This was used throughout my PhD and post-doctoral research to generate data through parametric testing.