

Dr Conor McKeown

Letter of Motivation

To the application board of the Media Studies Department of the University of Groningen,

I am writing regarding the position of Assistant Professor of Media and Digital Culture. In your description of an ideal candidate, you state, 'candidates should have cutting-edge knowledge of the study of Digital Culture, especially in relation to the social and informative functions of digital media in society'. This resonated deeply with me, as through my research, publications, teaching and practice, I have dedicated myself to furthering our societal understanding of the impact of digital media in the formation and constant re-modelling of society. In this letter, I will outline my motivations for applying to this position and detail exactly what I can offer your department. I will first discuss my research and its applicability to media studies at Groningen. Following this, I will discuss how my teaching experience has prepared me to undertake this role. Finally, I will discuss my other various skills, and how I envision my future within your institution. Thank you in advance for taking the time to read my application and allow me to express how excited I am by this opportunity to continue to develop alongside the Groningen Department of Media Studies and Journalism.

I was particularly drawn to the interest expressed in platform, software and internet studies in your listing. My own research focusses on the efficacy of digital media and software as a tool for shaping perceptions of ecologies, both biological and non-biological. I cross disciplinary boundaries and combine various elements of visual media studies with a focus on computer code and software design. For instance, in my most recent published work, I explored how videogames can function as a method to understand contemporary philosophies through play. I analysed the algorithms behind one element of a complex digital game, unpacking the role this software plays in enabling new experiences. It is my hope that my research interests could come to have an impact on the current 'Media, Culture and Society' as well as the 'Media in Everyday Life' courses here, as digital technology – and games in particular – have a growing impact upon how we formulate concepts and interpersonal relationships.

To that end, of my plans to teach at Groningen, my previous teaching experiences are of paramount importance. My first full-time role was in 2016 in Fife College, Scotland, a further educational institution, offering degrees and vocational certificates. While there I taught game design, web-design and digital media studies to almost two hundred 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. I thrived in delivering the digital media studies course there, being given the opportunity to shape the syllabus within the framework of the UK HND criteria. I introduced elements of racial, intersectional, feminist, queer and non-binary theory and cultural criticism into the course that were missing from previous iterations. For example, I formed an assignment

around analysis of the then contemporary 'gamer gate' phenomenon, asking students to engage with both social media and print media of the time. This led to a range of discussions uncommon to the department at that time. I hope to bring my pioneering spirit to the already forward-thinking department here to continue a cycle of growth and development.

During my time at Fife College, I was offered a contract to teach at Glasgow University's Department for Film, Television and Cultural Policy. There, I taught numerous courses on Film History, Aesthetics and Film Theory. Although distinct, in some ways, from media studies, these courses, nevertheless, allowed me to continue refining my approach to teach. I prioritise student satisfaction, student-focused and activity-based learning alongside and preoccupation with transferable skills and a knowledge of contemporary issues. I was drawn to Groningen in particular as I felt my approach to teaching to be in line with those of the University. I would hope to become an active member of the staff/student community if given this opportunity.

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 continue to develop new and interesting research and I hope that with the inspiration of new colleagues and students I could continue to foster engaging contemporary research responding to the current media landscape, boosting the research profile of Groningen.

During my PhD research and beyond I have continued to develop my skills as a programmer and web-designer. To this end, I have developed several online projects with independent writers and publishers, enabling their work to reach new audiences and enable new forms of expression. At present, I am involved in several projects with Glasgow-based writers. Working with independent publishers *Vagabond Voices* (accessible [here](#)). 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. Similarly, I am working on a project with a local poet to create an online poetry generator themed around Witchcraft and Tarot-reading. This project, publicised through several feminist and poetry magazines in the UK and USA, is available at [here](#).

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.