



CVs and Cover Letters

Getting Started with CVs and Cover Letters

What is a CV, or curriculum vitae, and how does it differ from a traditional resume?

While a resume is generally a one to two page document, a CV is usually two to ten pages in length. A CV is a document which is used when pursuing a position within academe or other areas where your field specific knowledge and academic accomplishments are required. This marketing tool is used to introduce you, to communicate your qualifications, to establish your professional image and to pique the interest of the reader to encourage an invitation for an interview.

In addition to using a CV to pursue positions, an academic may also be asked to submit a CV for merit and tenure reviews, for support when submitting manuscript proposals for publication, for submission with grant proposals, for publicity or introductions for speaking engagements, when applying for membership in a professional society or organization, when offering services as a consultant, when being considered for leadership roles, awards or special recognitions, or when pursuing a sabbatical or fellowship opportunity.

It is important to choose a format for your CV which will highlight your strengths, achievements and experiences. Your CV should contain a record of your educational background, professional accomplishments (including teaching and research), publications, presentations, recognitions, collegial activities and professional affiliations. Some additional categories to consider include Teaching Interests, Research Interests, Administrative Experience, Leadership, Language Competencies, and Cross-cultural Experience. References may be included but are often listed on a separate reference page instead.

As with a resume, sentence fragments with action verbs are recommended rather than complete sentences. Pronouns are not used. It is important to arrange the CV with the most important pieces of information being listed first. All information should be in reverse chronological order within each category. Highlighting should be used but judiciously. The presentation must be professional, so be sure to proof it carefully and have it critiqued by advisors, colleagues, people in the field, and career counselors. Remember that the CV is a work in progress and should be revised regularly as you develop your professional career.

Should I have more than one version of my CV for different types of employers?

Yes. Think about who will be reading your resume. For academic jobs, you use a CV so that people in your field will appreciate the specifics of your research and your accomplishments within your field. If you are applying to a small, liberal arts college that puts a premium on teaching experience, you will want to highlight your experience as a teaching fellow, and any tutoring experience you have had. If you're applying for a nonacademic job—such as in a research institute, or a research position in industry—then your CV may downplay teaching and go into more detail on any nonacademic or applied experience you may have had.

Are there formatting guidelines I should keep in mind?

Stick to a common font like Times New Roman or Garamond, and avoid text boxes, underlining, or shading. Font size should be between 10 and 12 point, and kept consistent throughout the document. Margins should be equal all the way around the page, and should be at least three quarters of an inch in size.

Can someone at OCS review my CV?

Yes. Each semester the GSAS counselors hold weekly walk-in hours, as well as two days of special drop in sessions (typically in September and May) for GSAS students interested in having their CVs or resumes critiqued. In addition, during the academic year there are OCS counselors available on a walk-in basis daily from 1:30-4:00. Students and alumni/ae may also have their CVs reviewed as part of a counseling appointment with a GSAS staff member (to schedule, call 617-495-2595).

Consider describing your experiences with these “action verbs”:

Achievement

accelerated
accomplished
achieved
activated
attained
competed
earned
effected
elicited
executed
exercised
expanded
expedited
generated
improved
increased
insured
marketed
mastered
obtained
produced
reduced
reorganized
reproduced
restructured
simplified
sold
solicited
streamlined
succeeded
upgraded

Help/Teach

advised
clarified
coached
collaborated
consulted
counseled
educated
explained
facilitated
guided
helped
instructed
modeled
participated
taught
trained
tutored

Administrative

arranged
channeled
charted
collated
collected
coordinated
dispensed
distributed
established
executed
implemented
installed
maintained
offered
ordered
outlined
performed
prepared
processed
provided
purchased
recorded
rendered
served
serviced
sourced
supported

Lead/Manage

acquired
administered
approved
assigned
chaired
contracted
controlled
decided
delegated
directed
enlisted
governed
handled
initiated
instilled
instituted
managed
motivated
presided
recruited
retained
reviewed
selected
shaped
supervised

Communication

addressed
arbitrated
articulated
briefed
communicated
conducted
contacted
conveyed
corresponded
delivered
demonstrated
edited
entertained
interviewed
informed
lectured
mediated
negotiated
persuaded
presented
promoted
proposed
publicized
reported
represented
responded
suggested
translated
wrote

Plan/Organize

allocated
anticipated
arranged
catalogued
categorized
classified
collected
consolidated
convened
edited
eliminated
employed
gathered
grouped
monitored
organized
planned
regulated
scheduled
structured
summarized
targeted

Creative

authored
changed
conceived
constructed
created
developed
devised
drafted
established
formulated
founded
illustrated
influenced
introduced
invented
launched
originated
revamped
revised
staged
updated
visualized

Research/Analytical

assessed
compared
critiqued
defined
derived
detected
determined
discovered
evaluated
examined
explored
found
inspected
interpreted
investigated
located
measured
observed
predicted
rated
recommended
researched
reviewed
searched
studied
surveyed
verified

Financial

allocated
analyzed
appraised
audited
balanced
budgeted
calculated
compiled
computed
controlled
disbursed
estimated
figured
financed
forecasted
projected
reconciled
tabulated

Technical

adapted
adjusted
applied
built
computed
constructed
designed
diagnosed
engineered
experimented
maintained
modified
operated
prescribed
programmed
proved
reinforced
repaired
resolved
restored
solved
specified
systematized
tested
united

CV Sample for Academe 1

CATHERINE RYAN

History and East Asian Languages
Harvard University
Cambridge, MA 02138

000 K Street, #40
Boston, MA 02000
(617) 001-1234
ryan999@fas.harvard.edu

EDUCATION

Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

PhD, expected November 2006. History and East Asian Languages (late Qing/Republican China)
General Examination Fields: Pre-modern China, Modern China, Social Anthropology

University of Paris III (Oriental Languages and Civilizations), Paris, France

Diplôme Supérieur, 1995. Field: Contemporary Chinese Studies. Focus on PRC international and regional relations

Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

AB, *magna cum laude*, 1994. Concentration: East Asian Languages and Civilizations (China)
Semester Abroad at Peking University (CIEE Chinese Language Program)

DISSERTATION

“The Power of Mercy: The Early History of the Chinese Red Cross Society, 1900-1937”

Advisor: Professor Philip Kuhn

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

Albert Gallatin Fellowship in International Affairs	2005
Harvard University Graduate Society Dissertation Fellowship Alternate	2005
Harvard University Center for International Affairs Summer Research Grant	2005
Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Grant for dissertation research	2004
Committee on Scholarly Communication with China (CSCC) Research Grant Extension	2004
CSCC Research Grant for twelve months of dissertation research in Nanjing, PRC	2003
Harvard University Sheldon Travel Grant for dissertation research	2003
Academic-year FLAS for preliminary dissertation research	2002
NCR Foundation Research Grant for research in Taipei, ROC	2002
Harvard Club of the Republic of China Research Grant for research in Taipei, ROC	2002
Summer FLAS for third-year intensive Japanese, Harvard University	2001
Tower Fellowship for study in France	1994

CONFERENCE PAPERS AND PUBLICATIONS

“Social Action and Elite Identity: The Chinese Red Cross Society in Late Qing and Republican China,” in *Papers on Chinese History* (2006), forthcoming.

“Co-opting the State: Philanthropy and Local Government in Republican China.” Delivered at Annual Meeting of the Association of Asian Studies, Washington, DC, April 7, 2005.

“The Introduction of International Humanitarian Norms into China: The Case of the Chinese Red Cross Society.” Delivered at the Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, March 22, 2005, and the Fourth Annual Graduate Student Conference on Asia, Columbia University, February 12, 2005.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Harvard University, Core Program & Anthropology Department, Cambridge, MA

Teaching Fellow, Anthropology of China (Professor James Watson), Spring 2003

Taught two sections of introductory anthropology of China.

Harvard University, East Asian Studies Department, Cambridge, MA

Tutor, Junior Tutorial, China, Fall 2000; Fall, Spring 2001-2002

Developed syllabus and taught seminar on late imperial through contemporary China to third-year EAS honors concentrators.

Clark University, Worcester, MA

Instructor, Nathan Mayhew Seminars (Summer School), Summer 2000

Designed and taught course for summer students on the Tiananmen Square incident in historical perspective.

RELATED PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Harvard University, East Asian Studies Department, Cambridge, MA

Assistant Head Tutor, Fall, Spring 2004-2006

Administrative director and academic advisor for undergraduate East Asian Studies program. Oversee seven teaching fellows and 50 third-year students. Organize publication of *East Asian Studies Newsletter*.

Harvard University, Winthrop House, Cambridge, MA

Non-Resident Tutor, Fall 2000-present

Provide academic and non-academic advising; organize and run weekly Chinese language table; serve on House grant selection committee (Rockefeller and Truman grants).

Papers on Chinese History, Cambridge, MA

Editor, Graduate Student Journal, 2002, 2003, 2005 editions

Worked with four-member student board to edit and prepare publication of student papers on issues of Song, Ming, Qing and Republican history.

Harvard University, Graduate Student Council, Cambridge, MA

History and East Asian Languages Representative, Fall 2000-2002

Represented department at monthly meetings; served on Spring 2001 GSC travel grant selection committee.

International Student Host, 2000-2002.

Committee on Scholarly Communication with China, Washington, DC

Program Assistant, National Program for Advanced Study and Research in China, 1997-1998

Administered grants for study in China to American students and scholars.

RESEARCH AFFILIATIONS

Graduate Student Associate, **Harvard Center for International Affairs**, 2004-2005

Visiting Scholar, **Nanjing University**, Nanjing, PRC, 2003-2004

Research conducted at Number Two Historical Archives, Nanjing; Municipal Archives, Shanghai; Number One Historical Archives, Beijing; Municipal Archives, Beijing; Archival Section of the Chinese Red Cross Society, Beijing

Visiting Scholar, **Archives of the Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**, Geneva, Switzerland, 2003

Visiting Scholar, **Academia Sinica**, Taipei, ROC, 2002

LANGUAGES

Mandarin Chinese: excellent. Classical Chinese: reading knowledge. French: excellent. Japanese: reading knowledge.

REFERENCES

Three academic references with full contact information have been removed in the interest of space.

CV Sample for Academe 2

ELLEN R. JOSEPH
josepher@neuron.ucla.edu

3400 West Chester Blvd.
Apartment 109
Los Angeles, CA 90669
(813) 566-4321

Department of Neuroscience
Science Center, Room 5480
18000 San Bernardino Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90620
(813) 321-1234

EDUCATION

Columbia University PhD, Neuroscience Dissertation: Development of synaptic plasticity in <i>Aplysia californica</i>	New York, NY 2006
Dartmouth College BS, <i>magna cum laude</i> , Biology. Phi Beta Kappa	Hanover, NH 1998

GRANTS AND AWARDS

Post-Doctoral National Research Service Award National Institute of Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, National Institutes of Health	2006-2009
Department of Neuroscience, Emerging Faculty Award Columbia University	2006
Pre-Doctoral National Research Service Award National Institute of Mental Health, National Institutes of Health	2002-2004
University Teaching Award Columbia University	2002, 2003
Graduate Fellowship Columbia University	1998-2002

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

University of California, Los Angeles Postdoctoral Fellow Advisor: Young X. Shen Project: Developmental regulation of NMDA receptor-mediated synaptic transmission in zebra finch brain <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Developed single cell PCR method to study developmental changes in NMDA receptors, correlated with developmental stages of song learning.– Analyzed developmental changes in juvenile song using customized LabView software.– Altered development of song with behavioral and circadian manipulations.	Los Angeles, CA 2006 – Present
Columbia University Graduate Researcher Advisor: Thomas J. Schmidt Thesis Research: Serotonergic modulation of synaptic transmission in developing and adult <i>Aplysia</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Used <i>in vitro</i> single cell neurophysiological recording and stimulation to study developmental emergence of two serotonin-mediated forms of synaptic plasticity.	New York, NY 1999 – 2006
Marine Biological Laboratory Participant, Neural Systems and Behavior course	Woods Hole, MA Summer 2001

Columbia University

Graduate Research Assistant

Advisor: Emily Chester

Project: Expression of Lupus antigens in fetal rat brain

- Characterized developmental changes in expression of numerous lupus antigens using immunocytochemistry and fluorescence microscopy.

New York, NY

1998 –1999

Biosure Corporation

Assistant Scientist

Project: Optimization of production of bacterial and yeast enzymes necessary for antibiotic synthesis

San Diego, CA

Summers 1996, 1997

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of California, Los Angeles

Guest Lecturer and Consultant, Seminar in Animal Communication

Written and Oral Communication Advisor

Los Angeles, CA

Spring 2007

Spring 2006, Spring 2007

Columbia College

Guest Lecturer, Introductory Psychology

Head Teaching Assistant, Cellular Basis of Behavior

Teaching Assistant, Cellular Basis of Behavior

Teaching Assistant, Neurobiology

New York, NY

Summer 2003, 2004

Spring 2003

Spring 2002

Fall 2001

Dartmouth College

Teaching Assistant, Special Topics in Psychology

Teaching Assistant, Introductory Biology

Hanover, NH

Spring 1998

Fall 1997, Fall 1998

RELATED PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Columbia Graduate Women in Science (CGWS), Columbia University

Co-Founder and President

- Organized and led student representatives from 25 natural science departments to promote issues of concern to women scientists at Columbia
- Co-chaired Invited Speakers committee. Managed 3 public symposia featuring nationally-renowned women scientists

New York, NY

2004-2006

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Society for Neuroscience

International Association of Electrophysiologists

New York Academy of Sciences

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

Joseph, E.R. and Shen, Y.X. (2007). Two-stage, input-specific synaptic maturation in a nucleus essential for vocal production in the zebra finch. *Journal of Neuroscience*. 22:9107-9116.

Joseph, E.R. and Schmidt, T.J. (2006). Developmental dissociation of serotonin-induced spike broadening and synaptic facilitation in *Aplysia* sensory neurons. *Journal of Neuroscience*. 21:334-346.

Joseph, E.R., Chang, A.R., Kline, N.J., and Schmidt, T.J. (2005). Pharmacological and kinetic characterization of two functional classes of serotonergic modulation in *Aplysia* sensory neurons. *Journal of Neurophysiology*. 78:855-866.

Smythe, M.I., Vaidya, A.F., **Joseph, E.R.**, Belema, J.F., and Denny, K.M. (1999). Fetal expression of renin, angiotensinogen, and atriopeptin genes in chick heart. *Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypertension*. A15: 617-629.

REVIEW ARTICLES

Joseph, E.R., LeBlanc, R., Kline, N.J., Bliss, E.A., and Schmidt, T.J. (2005). Central actions of serotonin across the life span of *Aplysia*: Implications for development and learning. In H. Koike, Y. Kidokoro, K. Takahashi, and T. Kanaseki (Eds.), Basic Neuroscience in Invertebrates (pp. 249-265). Tokyo: Japan Scientific Societies Press.

Kline, N.J., Bliss, E.A., **Joseph, E.R.**, and Schmidt, T.J. (2003). Differential modulatory actions of serotonin in *Aplysia* sensory neurons: Implications for development and learning. *Seminars in Neuroscience*. 9:21-33.

ABSTRACTS

Joseph, E.R. and Shen, Y.X. (2007). Synaptic maturation is input-specific and occurs in two phases in nucleus RA of the zebra finch. Society for Neuroscience Abstracts. Poster presentation to be delivered at the Society for Neuroscience meeting, San Diego, CA., November, 2007.

Joseph, E.R. and Shen, Y.X. (2006). Developmental regulation of NMDA receptor-mediated synaptic currents in nucleus RA of the zebra finch. Society for Neuroscience Abstracts. 25:191. Poster presentation delivered at the Society for Neuroscience meeting, Atlanta, GA, November, 2006.

Joseph, E.R. and Schmidt, T.J. (2005). Synaptic facilitation is independent of spike duration in sensory neurons of juvenile *Aplysia*. Society for Neuroscience Abstracts. 25:695. Poster presentation delivered at the Society for Neuroscience meeting, Washington, D.C., November, 2005.

Joseph, E.R. and Schmidt, T.J. (2003). Serotonergic facilitation of synaptic transmission in juvenile *Aplysia*. Society for Neuroscience Abstracts. 23:814. Oral presentation delivered at the Society for Neuroscience meeting, New Orleans, LA, November, 2003.

Joseph, E.R., Kline, N.J., and Schmidt, T.J. (2001). Temporal dissociation of 5HT-induced spike broadening and excitability in *Aplysia* sensory neurons. Society for Neuroscience Abstracts. 21:941. Oral presentation delivered at the Society for Neuroscience meeting, St. Louis, MO, November, 2001.

Joseph, E.R. and Schmidt, T.J. (2000). Teaching neuroscience through a laboratory experience: you can't start too young. Society for Neuroscience Abstracts. 20:518. Poster presentation delivered at the Society for Neuroscience meeting, Orlando, FL, November 2000.

REFERENCES

Young X. Shen, Ph.D.
Horton W. Smith Professor of Neuroethology
Department of Neuroscience
University of California, Los Angeles
Science Center, Room 5485
18000 San Bernardino Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90260
(813) 321-1233
shenyx@neuron.ucla.edu

Dr. Akaysha M. Lin, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Psychology
University of California, Los Angeles
William James Laboratories, Room B18
Los Angeles, CA 90243
(813) 321-9999
linam@psych.ucla.edu

Thomas J. Schmidt, Ph.D.
Elias T. Young Professor of Psychology
Department of Neuroscience
Columbia University
2649 Washington Blvd.
New York, NY 12345
(212) 999-5678
tjschmidt@fas.columbia.edu

This CV is appropriate for applying to tenure-track faculty positions at research universities. If Ellen were applying for a faculty job at a liberal arts college, she might have chosen to place Teaching Experience on the first page and would have included descriptions of her teaching experience.

CV Sample for Industry

ELLEN R. JOSEPH
josepher@neuron.ucla.edu

3400 West Chester Blvd.
Apartment 109
Los Angeles, CA 90669
(813) 566-4321

Department of Neuroscience
Science Center, Room 5480
18000 San Bernardino Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90620
(813) 321-1234

EDUCATION

Columbia University
PhD, Neuroscience
Dissertation: Development of synaptic plasticity in *Aplysia californica*

New York, NY
2006

Dartmouth College
BS, *magna cum laude*, Biology. Phi Beta Kappa

Hanover, NH
1998

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

University of California, Los Angeles
Postdoctoral Fellow

Los Angeles, CA
2006 – Present

Advisor: Young X. Shen

Project: Developmental regulation of NMDA receptor-mediated synaptic transmission in zebra finch brain

- Developed single cell PCR method to study developmental changes in NMDA receptors, correlated with developmental stages of song learning
- Analyzed developmental changes in juvenile song using customized LabView software
- Altered development of song with behavioral and circadian manipulations

Columbia University
Graduate Researcher

New York, NY
1999 – 2006

Advisor: Thomas J. Schmidt

Thesis Research: Serotonergic modulation of synaptic transmission in developing and adult *Aplysia*

- Used *in vitro* single cell neurophysiological recording and stimulation to study developmental emergence of two serotonin-mediated forms of synaptic plasticity

Marine Biological Laboratory
Participant, Neural Systems and Behavior course

Woods Hole, MA
Summer 2001

Biosure Corporation
Assistant Scientist

San Diego, CA
Summers 1996, 1997

Project: Optimization of enzyme production necessary for synthesis of a B-Lactam antibiotic

- Increased yield of yeast enzyme by 25% through selective mutagenesis
- Increased yield of bacterial enzyme by 15% through manipulation of media composition
- Improved efficiency of yeast enzymatic assay by 20% and developed method for mass production and harvest

SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES

Single cell PCR

In vivo and *in vitro* intracellular recording (patch clamp and sharp electrode)

Confocal, fluorescence, and electron microscopy

Immunocytochemistry

Statistical Analysis

TEACHING AND TRAINING EXPERIENCE

University of California, Los Angeles

Written and Oral Communication Advisor, Department of Psychology

Los Angeles, CA
Spring 2006, Spring 2007

Columbia University

Head Teaching Assistant, Cellular Basis of Behavior

Teaching Assistant, Cellular Basis of Behavior

Teaching Assistant, Neurobiology

New York, NY

Spring 2003

Spring 2002

Fall 2001

Dartmouth College

Teaching Assistant, Special Topics in Psychology

Teaching Assistant, Introductory Biology

Hanover, NH

Spring 1998

Fall 1997, Fall 1998

GRANTS AND AWARDS

Post-Doctoral National Research Service Award

National Institute of Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, National Institutes of Health

2006-2009

Department of Neuroscience, Emerging Faculty Award

Columbia University

2006

Pre-Doctoral National Research Service Award

National Institute of Mental Health, National Institutes of Health

2002-2004

University Teaching Award

Columbia University

2002, 2003

Graduate Fellowship

Columbia University

1998-2002

RELATED PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Columbia Graduate Women in Science (CGWS), Columbia University

Co-Founder and President

New York, NY

2004-2006

- Organized and led student representatives from 25 natural science departments to promote issues of concern to women scientists at Columbia.
- Managed 3 public symposia featuring nationally-renowned women scientists.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Society for Neuroscience

International Association of Electrophysiologists

New York Academy of Sciences

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Gave 4 posters and 2 oral presentations at Society for Neuroscience meetings: 2000-2007.

Abstracts published in Society for Neuroscience Abstracts.

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

Joseph, E.R. and Shen, Y.X. (2007). Two-stage, input-specific synaptic maturation in a nucleus essential for vocal production in the zebra finch. *Journal of Neuroscience*. 22:9107-9116.

Joseph, E.R. and Schmidt, T.J. (2006). Developmental dissociation of serotonin-induced spike broadening and synaptic facilitation in *Aplysia* sensory neurons. *Journal of Neuroscience*. 21:334-346.

Joseph, E.R., Chang, A.R., Kline, N.J., and Schmidt, T.J. (2005). Pharmacological and kinetic characterization of two functional classes of serotonergic modulation in *Aplysia* sensory neurons. *Journal of Neurophysiology*. 78:855-866.

Smythe, M.I., Vaidya, A.F., **Joseph, E.R.**, Belema, J.F., and Denny, K.M. (1999). Fetal expression of renin, angiotensinogen, and atriopeptin genes in chick heart. *Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypertension*. A15: 617-629.

REVIEW ARTICLES

Joseph, E.R., LeBlanc, R., Kline, N.J., Bliss, E.A., and Schmidt, T.J. (2005). Central actions of serotonin across the life span of *Aplysia*: Implications for development and learning. In H. Koike, Y. Kidokoro, K. Takahashi, and T. Kanaseki (Eds.), Basic Neuroscience in Invertebrates (pp. 249-265). Tokyo: Japan Scientific Societies Press.

Kline, N.J., Bliss, E.A., **Joseph, E.R.**, and Schmidt, T.J. (2003). Differential modulatory actions of serotonin in *Aplysia* sensory neurons: Implications for development and learning. *Seminars in Neuroscience*. 9:21-33.

This version of Ellen's CV is quite similar to the academic CV, with the following changes:

- Greater emphasis on Research Experience; moved Grants & Awards to page 2
- More detailed description of industry experience at Biosure Corp.
- Added list of Skills and Techniques
- Fewer details in Teaching Experience (removed Guest Lectures)
- Condensed Conference Presentations
- Removed References

Cover Letter Template

Your Name
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Month Day, Year

Contact Name
Title (if known)
Organization Name
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Note that in an e-mail message, you would omit both your and the addressee's contact information, as well as the date. Simply start with the salutation.

Dear Professor/Dr. Last Name:

Opening paragraph: Clearly state why you are writing. If applying for a specific job, indicate the position title and where you saw it advertised. If you were referred to the position from someone within the institution, or by someone the addressee knows, mention that as well.

Middle paragraph(s): You should have several paragraphs that elaborate on how your research and other experiences in graduate school have prepared you for the job as it is described. Disciplines differ on the length and level of detail required for cover letters, so be sure to get feedback from people in your department. Junior faculty members who have recently been on the market themselves are often the best people to ask.

Think about how your interest in both the *job* and the *organization* developed—in order to stand out from the potentially long list of applicants, you will need to make a coherent argument for why it was a logical decision on your part to apply for the position, and why it would be a logical decision on their part to hire you. What kind of contribution will you make to their existing department? How will you fit in? Make sure you are writing for your target audience. For instance, for a liberal arts college you may use more space addressing your teaching experience than you would for a large research university. For a school outside a major metropolitan area, you may also want to indicate why you are interested in living in that part of the country.

Closing paragraph: Indicate that your CV and other supporting documentation is enclosed. Express interest in speaking with the addressee further in a personal interview, and indicate that you will follow up within an appropriate time frame. Thank them for their time and consideration of your application.

Sincerely,

(signature)

Name (typed)

Sample Cover Letter

000 K Street, #40
Boston, MA 02000

November 15, 2006

Professor Jason Winter
Chair
Department of History
Williams College
Williamstown, MA 02167

Dear Dr. Winter:

I am writing to apply for the position in Chinese History advertised in the Association of Asian Studies Newsletter. I am currently completing my PhD at Harvard University under the direction of Professor Philip Kuhn, entitled "The Power of Mercy: The Early History of the Chinese Red Cross Society, 1900-1937." I expect to graduate in June, 2006.. An abbreviated version of my first chapter will be published this spring in *Papers on Chinese History* (Harvard University Press).

My research focuses on state-society relations in China in the early twentieth century. My dissertation, "The Power of Mercy," reveals changing patterns of elite participation in public affairs in the late Qing and Republican China by examining the transformation of Chinese philanthropy from a sporadic local initiative, led by elites, to a sustained national effort, engaging a steadily growing segment of the Chinese polity. I use the archives of the Chinese Red Cross Society, as well as other published and unpublished materials gathered in China, Taiwan, Switzerland, and the U.S., to chart this shift in elite activity from the local to the national arena and to map out a parallel transition in elite self-definition. China's merchant and educated elite, caught in the flux of a crumbling dynastic system and an onslaught of foreign influences, used philanthropy, particularly the medical philanthropy espoused by the Chinese Red Cross, to create a social niche for themselves that was at once traditionally sanctioned and, at the same time, appealingly "modern." My study links these trends to China's growing nationalism and emerging interest in becoming a member of the international community. This investigation into the politics of humanitarianism places China's present-day engagement in the global arena in historical perspective and uncovers some of the earliest bases for the dissonance between China's international behavior and Western expectations for that behavior.

My work on the Chinese Red Cross Society also contributes to current scholarship on the rise of "civil society" in developing nations, an issue of central importance in today's era of emerging democracies. My research reveals the growth of alternative loci of power in the realm of social welfare action in China, power sources developed in a notably *non-confrontational*, mutually beneficial relationship with the state. These finding challenge much recent work on "civil society" which claims that the public sphere must operate in opposition to the state; they underscore the need to re-examine how social actors and governments work together. This in-depth study of philanthropic development in China also fills a gap in scholarship on non-Judeo-Christian philanthropic traditions and makes important strides toward an understanding of the historic relationship between the government and the voluntary sector prefacing the growth of the welfare state.

As a graduate student, I have combined research and teaching. At Harvard, I have designed and led a year-long tutorial (seminar) on modern Chinese history for honors-track undergraduates and taught two sections of an introductory course on the social anthropology of China. In these courses, organized as discussion seminars, I stress a range of skills: writing, critical reading, and persuasive oral presentation; I also challenge

students to consider changing gender roles in Chinese society. Students have been generous in expressing their appreciation of my enthusiasm for the material and my dedication to improving their writing and analytical abilities; I would be glad to send their letters and course evaluations to you at your convenience.

My interdepartmental teaching experience and my training in pre-modern Chinese history, modern Chinese history, and social anthropology have made me a strong believer in interdisciplinary study. I am excited to see Williams's extensive course offerings in anthropology, political science, and Asian American history, all fruitful areas for cross-disciplinary cooperation, complementing and adding complexity to the teaching of history. I am particularly interested in working with Williams's Asian Studies and Women's Studies programs to build on these interdisciplinary opportunities.

At Harvard, I have taken an active role in fostering academic community. Skills I developed while working in academic administration in Washington have enabled me to build bridges within and between disciplines through activities such as organizing an interdisciplinary lunch series at Harvard's Center for International Affairs; founding and editing a graduate student journal; assisting in ongoing joint curriculum development of the East Asian Studies program; and serving as a non-academic advisor to Harvard undergraduates. My experience teaching and advising students, my administrative abilities, my familiarity with living and studying abroad and with the process of placing students in overseas programs, as well as my commitment to the larger ideals of a liberal arts education all combine to make me and Williams an ideal match.

I am enclosing my curriculum vitae and course descriptions; my dossier (including letters from Professors Philip Kuhn, William Kirby, James Watson, and Ezra Vogel) will be forwarded to you separately. Please let me know if I can provide additional information or writing samples to aid you in the evaluation of my application. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Catherine Ryan

Catherine Ryan's letter demonstrates tailoring to the teaching and community service needs of a small liberal arts college, particularly to the teaching needs of Williams, which she has researched. Her dissertation discussion is longer than usual, probably because she has not appended a summary. It effectively brings out the significance of her thesis, although she neglects to mention her future research. The CV places her impressive "Fellowships and Awards" at the beginning and her "Conference and Publications" ahead of "Teaching Experience" (it could go either way for a teaching college). She got the Williams job.

A version of this letter, with accompanying commentary, originally appeared in Newhouse, M. L. (1997). *Cracking the Academia Nut: A Guide to Preparing for Your Academic Career*. Cambridge, MA: Office of Career Services, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University.

To find out about career workshops or to have your application materials reviewed by OCS staff, contact the Office of Career Services at 617-495-2595, or check out our Web site at www.ocs.fas.harvard.edu.

For more information on the academic job search, see:

Heiberger, M.M. & Vick, J.M. (2001). *The Academic Job Search Handbook*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Newhouse, M.L. (1997). *Cracking the Academia Nut: A Guide to Preparing for Your Academic Career*. Cambridge, MA: Office of Career Services, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University. (Available at OCS).