

Cover Letter Guidelines

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.

If you include the cover letter as an attachment, use proper letter format, as shown here.

Dear Professor/Dr. Last Name: (or if not known: "Dear Members of the Search Committee:")

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. Give a brief introduction of yourself and your status, e.g. "I am completing my PhD in [department or field] and I expect to finish [or defend, or graduate] in [Month, Year]. You could add to this sentence, the name of your dissertation or the topic of your research, as well as the name of your advisor.

Middle paragraphs: 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. Typically, these include a paragraph about your dissertation/current research, one about your future research plans, and one or two about your teaching experience/interests/approach/courses you could offer.

Disciplines differ on the length and level of detail required for cover letters, so be sure to get feedback from others in your department. Junior faculty members who have recently been on the market themselves are often the best people to ask. For example, the amount of detail you provide about your teaching depends on the position, the type of institution, and the norms in your field.

Think about how your interest in both the *job* and the *institution* 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 area.

Closing paragraph: Indicate that your CV and other supporting documentation are enclosed. Express interest in speaking with the addressee further in a personal interview, especially if you plan to attend a conference where first-round interviews typically occur. Thank them for their time and consideration.

Sincerely,

(signature)

Name (typed)

Vidita's letter exemplifies the traditional structure of an academic cover letter: Introduction, current research, future research, teaching, conclusion. Following the formulaic structure allows the reader to focus on Vidita's engaging writing and key points without having to hunt for each critical component.

Remember that each document in your package should stand alone, telling the same story in a different way. For example, the CV lists all of your academic accomplishments, while the cover letter will emphasize the most important and relevant parts of your background. The letter should not read as a CV in prose, and should summarize and encapsulate the points you expand upon in your research statement and teaching statement. Allow your professional voice to shine through in your writing to express your sincere enthusiasm for your work and the confidence that you are the best candidate for the particular position, department, or institution.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY • DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

MUSIC BUILDING

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138, USA

617-495-2791

January 14, 2018

Professor Rosalie Cork
Search Committee Chair - 51674
School of Music
1017 N. Pemagasset Road
Seattle, WA 98195-1234

Dear Professor Cork and Members of the Search Committee:

I write to apply for the position of Assistant Professor of Musicology in the University of Washington School of Music. Under the direction of Dieter Fischer, I am completing my Ph.D. in historical musicology at Harvard University with an expected degree date of May 2019.

My interdisciplinary research unites two strands of recent, significant musicological inquiry: the development of American musical modernism as a transatlantic phenomenon, and the transmission, reception, and circulation of music in interpersonal networks. In my dissertation, "The American Mahler: Musical Modernism and Transatlantic Networks, 1920–1960," I argue that the growth of Mahler's reputation shaped musical modernism in the United States. I draw from historical musicology, oral history, sociology, American studies, and Jewish studies to examine the relationship between Mahler's music and an intimate network of four influential figures in American modernism: Nadia Boulanger, Aaron Copland, Serge Koussevitzky, and Leonard Bernstein. Boulanger's score collection shows that she encountered Mahler's music in Amsterdam in 1920 and taught his music to her American students, including Copland. On his return to the United States, Copland drew on his engagement with Mahler's music to construct his own identity as an American modernist. Copland also encouraged Koussevitzky and Bernstein to promote Mahler; Koussevitzky enlisted Mahler's music to reinforce his own advocacy of modernism in the concert hall, while Bernstein did so to bolster the stature of modern tonal composition. The discovery of these figures' shared relationships with Mahler's music reveals that their articulations of Mahler's significance were deeply bound to their priorities as members of a transatlantic modernist community.

My next major research project will make use of the University of Washington's archival holdings to interrogate long-held assumptions about art music as a written tradition by examining a practice that most onlookers today reject as sacrilegious but that was once quite common: the abridgment of orchestral works

in performance, by conductors, in the United States in the first half of the 20th century. In the course of my dissertation research, I discovered performing scores, as well as marked orchestral part books and concert reviews, that document this practice. A comparison of these sources illuminates a written record of the transmission of such changes among performers and across generations. Scholars usually approach symphonic works as permanently fixed entities, but my own published research on Chant transmission has prompted me to treat abridgment as evidence that performers and audiences have negotiated symphonic music through complex patterns and channels of oral and aural transmission. I look forward to enriching my perspective on American musical culture during this period by exploring the papers of Helen Hopekirk and of the Club Filarmónico Tucsonense.

My teaching, like my research, reflects a passionate interest in the specific circumstances in which musicians and audiences interact with music. My primary goal as a music educator—fueled by several years of experience teaching at the secondary level and in higher education—is to harness the powerful relationships that students already have with music in general, bridging the gap between those relationships and the music they encounter in academic settings. In exploring the melodic aesthetics of mass songs in the 20th century for a course on American musical theatre, I had students compare the experience of attempting to sing Marc Blitzstein’s song “The Cradle Will Rock” with “7 1/2 Cents” from the Richard Adler and Jerry Ross musical *The Pajama Game*. To approach a rhythmically complex passage from the scherzo of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony in a general education course on music appreciation, I led the class in conducting it from a recording; I also had students collaborate to create play-by-play podcasts of portions of the work in the style of sports commentary. Through such activities, I transform music history from an abstract phenomenon into a tangible part of students’ lives, generating entry points for discussions of how musicians and audiences in the past grappled with music.

My research and my recent teaching experience—which has included designing and executing a yearlong course for other graduate students on teaching methods, conducting video-based consultations on their classrooms, and advising faculty members on their syllabi—have primed me to create and teach inspiring music courses. I was selected to lead an intensive survey of Western music history for graduate students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst this spring. I am also prepared to lead classes on a wide array of subjects in art and vernacular musics, from medieval to 21st-century music, including surveys, for students with varying levels of musical knowledge and experience. I would enjoy planning courses that cover a variety of areas, including transmission and reception, modernism as transnational phenomenon, the intersections between Western art music and vernacular traditions, and the shifting relationships between musical institutions and their cultural contexts.

As a lifelong teacher who is committed to public service and working with members of diverse populations, I would look forward to serving the University of Washington community. Along with a colleague at Harvard, I applied for and received grant funds to establish the Harvard Mobile Music Lab, in which we teach various subjects through music to a diverse classroom of fourth graders in Boston. As a former Teach For America corps member who was recognized for teaching math through music to economically disadvantaged children, I would relish the opportunity to work with colleagues and students to inspire the next generation of musicians and scholars in Seattle and beyond.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Vidita Chatterjee
vchatterjee@xxx.harvard.edu, (617) 000-0123

Te Ning's letter is a good example of a highly tailored cover letter. She loosely follows the formulaic academic cover letter structure, but she chooses to expand on her relevant history, even as an undergraduate. She also refers to a presentation she gave at Oxford University, several years prior, to emphasize her connection with the institution. The letter also provides an excellent example of graceful transitions between paragraphs, something that is often difficult to achieve.

123 Broadway
Cambridge, MA 02139 USA

September 1, 2018

Dr. Bernhard Logan
Chair, Department of the Languages and Cultures of China and Inner Asia
Oxford University
Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square
Oxford MB1H 0XG
United Kingdom

Dear Dr. Logan,

I am writing to apply for the Lectureship in Traditional Chinese Literature and Culture as advertised in the Chronicle of Higher Education. I am currently writing a dissertation at Harvard University under the direction of Professor Dorothy Denny, entitled "*Qu* Writing in Literati Communities: Rediscovering *Sanqu* Songs and Drama in Sixteenth-Century North China." I will complete my dissertation by this spring and receive my Ph.D. in May, 2019.

My research focuses on Chinese vernacular literature of the later dynasties, especially on drama, *sanqu*, and fiction in the Yuan and the Ming dynasties. My dissertation, "*Qu* Writing in Literati Communities," discusses the production, transmission, and reception of *sanqu* and drama in sixteenth-century North China, a literary world which remains largely unknown in current scholarship. I suggest a new approach in studying these songwriters and dramatists not as solitary writers, but as members of a larger circle who collectively participated in an association with one another through writing, reading, commenting on, and performing *sanqu* songs and drama. I call these groups of writers "*qu* communities." Through this approach, we can see how songs and drama were produced, transmitted, and "used" among these writers, things less evident when we focus only on individual writers. I also argue that these *qu* communities constituted a textual space of their own, sharing common thematic concerns and stylistic preferences.

I see this project as the starting point for my long-term research goal of expanding the field of study of Chinese drama and songs beyond the focus in current scholarship on Yuan dynasty *sanqu* songs and late Ming drama in South China. My future research projects include a study of the Chinese dramatic tradition and its development from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, as well as a project exploring the ritualistic and religious aspects of a significant number of Ming dynasty *sanqu* songs.

I received broad training in Chinese literature during my undergraduate education in the Department of Chinese Studies at the National University of Singapore. I specialize in Chinese vernacular literature in the later dynasties in my doctoral program at Harvard. At the

same time, I have actively taken seminar classes in the earlier periods of Chinese literature, ranging from the *Shijing* to the *ci* lyrics in the Tang and Song dynasties. My teaching experiences have also prepared me to teach a wide range of courses. As a teaching fellow at Harvard, I have taught sections for a survey course on Chinese civilization for the Core Program, and also for an undergraduate course on Chinese film, literature, and culture.

With this training and experience, I am prepared to teach survey courses on traditional Chinese literature and culture, and also more specialized courses on Chinese vernacular literature and the emergent popular culture of China in the later dynasties, focusing on drama, *sanqu*, vernacular fiction, and prosimetric literature. I will also be very interested in teaching Chinese language classes at all levels including literary Chinese, or offering reading courses conducted in Chinese language. I look forward to the opportunity to discuss with the department the design and development of courses based on my areas of specialty and also on what will best fit into the curriculum.

I presented a paper at a workshop at Oxford on “Literary Communities,” part of the research project “The Social Context of Literary Production and Consumption,” led by Professor Sonya Lee and Dr. Stefan Woolf and organized by the Centre for Asian and African Literatures in May 2017. My short stay in London over the workshop period has confirmed my knowledge of the dynamic academic environment and intellectual community at Oxford, of which I hope to be a part and toward which I hope to contribute.

I am enclosing my Employment Application Form and my curriculum vitae. You will receive letters of reference from Professors Dorothy Denny, Sing Wei Lung, and Robert S. Belwether under separate cover. Please let me know if I can provide additional information or materials such as a sample publication to aid you in the evaluation of my application. Thank you for considering my application, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Te Ning Chang

The tone and content of this letter are appropriate for a faculty position at a small liberal arts college. Margot has effectively communicated why she is a good fit for the position, while expressing enthusiasm for working at Dickinson. To express your interest in a school, in addition to the faculty or department, you might bring in your experience having lived in a similar geographic region, studied in a similar institution, experience or interest in working with a similar population of students, or personal reasons. Note, also, that Margot discusses not only the courses she can teach and her pedagogical approaches, but she also indicates how her research would appeal to undergraduates. If she were an experimental scientist, it would be important for her to address not only how accessible her research is to undergraduates, but also how feasible it would be for the college to support the research facilities, equipment, etc.

Margot Page Cook
Department of Mathematics
Harvard University
1 Oxford Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
mpcook@xxx.harvard.edu
617-123-4567

2 November 2018

Professor Cynthia Fern
Chair, Mathematical Sciences Search Committee
Dickinson College
134 Chapel Road
Carlisle, PA 17013

Dear Professor Fern,

I am writing to apply for the tenure-track position in mathematics as advertised on the Employment Information in the Mathematical Sciences List. I am a graduate student at Harvard University working in Algebraic Combinatorics under the direction of Professor Stanton Lochs. I expect to complete my PhD by May 2019. My teaching, mentoring, and tutoring experiences, along with my research background, make me a strong candidate to teach both lower-level and upper-level mathematics courses and to make substantial contributions to the academic environment of Dickinson College.

My current research centers on enumerating shuffles of permutations. I am very excited to have solved the problem as originally posed, that is: if you shuffle two permutations words with each other, so as to preserve the relative order of the letters in each of the two words, how many distinct shuffle words can be obtained? I have found a formula that gives the number of such shuffles, even when the permutations are allowed to differ in length and am presently working on discovering generalizations. I propose to continue looking at the enumeration of various types of shuffles, but also to branch off into other problems in permutation enumeration. I believe that my projects will address topics that will also be accessible to undergraduate researchers, and I would be thrilled to have the chance to direct undergraduate research projects in combinatorics as well as guide independent studies in any mathematics-related area.

As my CV illustrates, I have a broad range of teaching experience, from extensive tutoring and individual mentoring to teaching undergraduate courses in Calculus and Linear Algebra with Differential Equations. In the undergraduate courses at Harvard, I prepare and deliver my own lectures

thrice weekly, hold office hours and review sessions, help to write and grade exams, and am always accessible to students by email. One of the highlights of my teaching career was team-teaching a summer school course on proof from a seminar approach. Almost the entire course unfolded as student presentations and student-led discussions of assigned homework exercises, and I found it an invigorating challenge to tease out the difference between when I should interfere, give feedback, or gently nudge students in the right direction, and when they would learn more from my silent observation.

I embrace every teaching opportunity that I can find, and I have worked enthusiastically and effectively with students at a variety of levels. I believe in keeping all my courses and tutoring sessions student-centered, and so I focus on creating a dialogue with the students and to help them discover answers for themselves. Courses in your catalogue that I would particularly enjoy teaching include Precalculus, Calculus I, II, & III, Fundamental Mathematics I & II, Linear Algebra, Probability, Modern Geometry, Sequences and Series, Algebraic Structures, and the Senior Seminar. In addition, I would be glad to learn the material needed to teach courses such as Statistical Reasoning, Applied Statistics, and Mathematical Statistics.

I have found teaching at the college level very rewarding, and it is my goal to secure a position where I can put my energies into both mathematical inquiry and high-quality undergraduate education. I know that I could reach this goal at Dickinson College. My research interests in Algebraic and Enumerative Combinatorics would nicely complement those of your own faculty. Moreover, because my own undergraduate experience was broad, including majors in English and in French Literature as well as in Mathematics, I know that I would thrive in a liberal arts environment where I could distill the beauty of mathematics and make it readily accessible to others.

Enclosed you will find my CV, research and teaching statements, and copies of transcripts. A dossier of reference letters will arrive under separate cover. I can provide further evidence of teaching effectiveness, such as student evaluations, or other materials, on request. I will be giving a talk at the AMS Joint Mathematics Meetings in Washington, DC this January and will be available for an interview during the week of the conference, or by phone at any other time. I can be reached by email (mpcook@math.harvard.edu) or at 617-123-4567.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Margot Page Cook
Harvard University

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(732) 000-0000
slkim@xxx.harvard.edu
<http://people.seas.harvard.edu/~slkim>

November 1, 2018

Faculty Search Committee
Department of Management Science and Engineering
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305

Cover letters in many quantitative fields are typically one page or less, with much less detail on research and teaching than is found in other fields. In some cases, a cover letter in these fields can be only one or two brief paragraphs, as candidacy tends to be evaluated by other parts of the application package, such as the research statement and publications. Sung Lim received an offer from a research university.

Dear Members of the Faculty Search Committee,

I am writing to apply for the tenure-track position of Assistant Professor in the Department of Management Science and Engineering at Stanford University. I am completing my Ph.D. in Computer Science in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences at Harvard University. As a member of the Economics and Computer Science (EconCS) research group, I am particularly interested in the Information Science and Technology Group at Stanford, which currently contains several faculty members who are part of the EconCS research community.

My research interests lie at the intersection of computer science (particularly artificial intelligence) and economics (particularly microeconomic theory and game theory). My research contributions have been to design efficient and fair mechanisms for resource allocation, and to leverage machine learning and search methods in application to mechanism design.

I am excited about the opportunity to teach both undergraduate and graduate classes. I have had several enriching and rewarding teaching and advising experiences during graduate school, and I view teaching as an essential and enjoyable part of being a faculty member.

I have enclosed my CV, research and teaching statement, and representative published papers. I have asked the following people to write letters of recommendation on my behalf:

Charles Rosemont (advisor)	rosemont@xxx.harvard.edu
Funishi Okido	okido@xxx.harvard.edu
Robert LaPrista	laprista@xxx.cmu.edu
Stephania Craft	stephania.craft@xxx.ac.il

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my application.

Sincerely,

Sung Lim Kim

(via email)

Dear Dr. Keshilian -

My Ph.D. advisor, Martin Rothberg of Harvard Medical School, suggested I write to you to inquire about the possibility of a postdoctoral position in your laboratory. I am currently completing my Ph.D. in Immunology at Harvard, and expect to defend by May, 2019.

I am interested in immune responses to viral infection, and my research with Dr. Rothberg has concentrated upon defining the role of IL-21 in the development of CD8+ T cell responses to viral antigens. Using an *in vitro* system, we have demonstrated that IL-21 can induce Bcl-2-mediated apoptosis of memory CD8+ T cells specific for an SIV antigen. We have also demonstrated that IL-21 plays a crucial role in the development of primary and secondary responses to virally encoded antigens in IL-21Ra-deficient mice. This study has indicated that IL-21 directly stimulates CD8+ T cell proliferation and survival. Our *in vitro* work has been published in *The Journal of Immunology* and we anticipate submitting a manuscript describing our *in vivo* results soon. This work is described in more detail in my accompanying CV.

I hope to complement my understanding of the CD8+ T cell response to viral infection and CD8+ T cell apoptosis with postdoctoral training that furthers my understanding of innate immune responses to viral infections. I have followed your lab's work in this area and am particularly interested in your work on autophagy, RLRs, and NLRs in viral infection. I would be very interested in working with you for my postdoctoral training to further my understanding of innate immune responses to viruses.

If you anticipate a position becoming available, I would greatly appreciate an opportunity to further discuss my research interests with you. I will be attending the upcoming Gordon Conference on Immunochemistry & Immunobiology in La Jolla, and I would be available to meet with you there or at UCSD that week.

Sincerely,

Melanie Porter

This is a concise email inquiry about a potential postdoctoral position in the laboratory of Dr. Keshilian at University of California at San Diego.

As the email is going to an expert in her field (rather than to a disciplinarily-diverse committee), Melanie's use of jargon is appropriate in this case.

Note that Melanie leaves open the possibility of meeting with Dr. Keshilian at an upcoming conference, but she could also have dropped the last sentence if she wasn't already planning to be in the area.