

CONSTRUCTING YOUR LETTER OF APPLICATION

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1. The cover letter should provide a micro-narrative about who you are as a candidate and what you do. In this, it is an important supplement to the information provided by your C.V. In your letter, you want briefly to explain and to describe your work and its aims, in research and teaching. This is your opportunity to give the hiring committee a sense of your work's spirit and substance.

2. People reviewing your letter will not have time to read between the lines, so tell them what they need to know. Be concise and clear. Aim your letter at a general academic audience.

- Begin by saying what job you are applying for.
- Say what you are researching; how far along you are on your dissertation or writing project; say how this prepares you for teaching in the areas they are advertising.
- Do not just list topics or areas of interest (this is what your C.V. does) , but convey what connecting questions you bring to the areas, topics, or texts you work with. *What is the story you want to tell about what you do and why it is interesting?*
- Have you had other sorts of professional experience relevant to your application that it would be significant to mention?
- This is the place where you can suggest future directions in your writing and teaching.

3. Take care with your tone. Be confident but not arrogant. Be professional and dignified, and do not emote about your interest in the job. Avoid gung-ho business style rhetoric, such as "I am the best candidate for your position." Let the committee draw its own conclusions based on your credentials.

4. You may want to craft distinct letters depending on the kind of school to which you are applying -- i. e., either a research intensive school or a more teaching intensive/liberal arts college. Each kind of school will have specific questions and interests which you will want to speak to in your letter.

5. You can speak here about your commitment to teaching broadly and to the value of undergraduate (or seminary, as appropriate) education.

It is now typical to reserve your detailed teaching philosophy for a separate part of your dossier: the teaching portfolio. Such a teaching philosophy statement should be 1-2 pages at most. Organize the statement into sections, e.g, goals, strategies, values. Say what skills you seek to develop in students; why your classes can contribute to the overall education of undergraduates; what techniques you use in class or assignments; what teaching teaches you. Again, be concise. Include evidence of teaching effectiveness with the teaching statement, e.g. teaching evaluations and syllabi.