

SAMPLE US COVER LETTERS, NOT FOR CIRCULATION BEYOND NYCTC

October 4, 2012

[Address]

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

I am writing to apply for the position of Assistant Professor in the History of Medicine. I am a PhD candidate at Columbia University where I am currently completing my dissertation entitled “Beyond the asylum: Colonial psychiatry in French Indochina, 1890-1954” under the supervision of Ronald Bayer and Susan Pedersen. I will defend the dissertation in April 2013. My scholarship reflects the interdisciplinary training I have received at Columbia in the history and ethics of public health, the history of psychiatry, the history of the French empire, and Southeast Asian studies. I am greatly excited by the prospect of continuing to work in an interdisciplinary setting with students and faculty across the humanities and social sciences at the University of Chicago.

My dissertation reveals how psychiatry in French Indochina expanded the reach of the colonial state while working to redefine the relationship between the state and its subjects. Drawing on archival research conducted over two years in Vietnam and France - including hundreds of patient case files - I trace the movements of patients in and out of asylums and between prisons, poor houses, youth reformatories, hospitals and family homes. Together, these individual patient itineraries challenge our notion of the colonial asylum as a closed setting where patients rarely left, run by experts who enjoyed broad and unquestioned authority. Instead, they reveal how ideas about what it meant to be abnormal, as well as normal enough to return to social life, were debated between psychiatrists, colonial authorities and the public throughout the early decades of twentieth century. As I argue in an article recently revised and resubmitted to *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vietnamese families and communities actively participated in psychiatric decision-making in ways that forced French experts to engage with local understandings and practices around insanity.

By examining the dynamics of patient movements in and out of psychiatric institutions, my dissertation shifts our perspective from the asylum itself to its relationship with the world beyond its walls. Situating the history of psychiatry within the local dynamics of colonial rule, as opposed to expert discourse, the asylum emerges as less of a blunt instrument for the social control and medicalization of colonial society than as a valuable historical site for reframing narratives of colonial repression and resistance. While I focus on the 1920s and 1930s, a period of high political drama in Indochina, in many ways this is a different kind of story about how ordinary people used colonial institutions for their own ends, and interacted with experts in ways that helped specify the conditions under which the state could remove individuals from society, both for their own sake and the sake of others. My dissertation contributes to the history of psychiatry, colonial history of medicine and public health, and the social history of Vietnam under French colonial rule. It is the first book length study of the history of psychiatry in Vietnam.

This project integrates approaches from history and the social sciences that reflect my training as a member of both Columbia’s History department and the Center for the History and Ethics of Public Health at the Mailman School. My program has afforded me the opportunity to receive a broad training in the comparative history of European colonialism as well as the flexibility to draw on outside experts with specializations in the French empire and Southeast Asia. As a student of the Mailman School, I have also become fluent in diverse social science literatures and formed research collaborations in New York, Paris and Hanoi with colleagues whose public health research draws from a wide range of perspectives. For example, I worked with community health organizers and cultural anthropologists at the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology in Hanoi to design a museum exhibit as a public health education project on the history of HIV/AIDS in Vietnam.

These experiences have shaped my interest in using historical methods to explore the genealogy of contemporary policy debates around the aims and forms of public health action. My publications with Ronald Bayer – on the ethical issues framing global HIV testing recommendations and the dilemmas of international policymaking around harm reduction in Vietnam – represent the kinds of collaborative research that most excite me. Studying the dynamics of policy change in present day Vietnam has also pushed me to ask better questions in my research about the colonial origins of state attempts to reform the ‘abnormal’ and the uses of labor for therapy. My next project will examine the history of drug policy in Southeast Asia from the colonial period to the present, focusing on the collision of local approaches to drug users with international discourses around public health and human rights.

This same commitment to interdisciplinary and comparative research also drives my work in the classroom. In lecture and discussion, I ask students to draw connections between the historical literature and contemporary debates, and to consider how our understanding of the history of public health can be used as a tool for thinking about the future direction of policy. For example, current attempts to frame gun violence as an epidemic raise important historical questions about what exactly defines an epidemic? Under what conditions can the state intervene in the name of public health, even if that means interfering with the rights of individuals? I urge students to consider how these questions have been answered differently over time, offering the history of public health as a wider window onto the dynamics of social change and the globalization of medicine and science. I have designed and taught an undergraduate course entitled "The Invention of Tropical Disease" which explores the origins of the idea of the 'tropics' and 'tropical disease' as a legacy of European colonial quest and colonization. I am also prepared to teach seminars in the history of medicine in East and Southeast Asia and the history of psychiatry, as well as introductory courses in the social history of medicine and public health.

As a member of the University of Chicago’s History department, I would look forward to building research collaborations with faculty and graduate students across traditional disciplinary and regional boundaries. I am also interested in developing the undergraduate curriculum in the history of medicine from more transnational and cross-cultural perspectives, focusing in particular on the non-Western world.

Letters of support will follow from Ronald Bayer, Susan Pedersen and Emmanuelle Saada of Columbia University, and Eric Jennings of the University of Toronto. Please let me know if I can provide any further information. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Claire Edington

September 20, 2013

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Dear Members of the Search Committee:

I am writing to apply for the position of Assistant Professor of Modern International History at University of British Columbia. I am a Ph.D. candidate in International and Global History at Columbia University. I will defend my dissertation, "Nation-Empire: Youth Mobilization in Japan's Colonized Peripheries 1895-1950," in May 2014 under the guidance of Professors Charles Armstrong and Carol Gluck. I hope to bring to the position a commitment to interdisciplinary, transnational research and a dedication to teaching and mentoring undergraduate and graduate students.

My dissertation is a comparative study of youth mobilization by the Japanese imperial government through the "*seinendan*" (youth associations) in Japan, Taiwan, and Korea. It examines three intersecting global waves: first is the rise of youth, second is the transition from the modern empire to the nation-state as a system of rule, and third is total war mobilization. In order to understand how these forces affected people on the ground, I contrast and compare villages in northern Japan, Taiwan, and Korea. Between the summers of 2010 and 2012, I travelled extensively between these villages and other cities, reading government records, publications by local intellectuals, newspaper articles, youth's own writings, and personal records and memoirs written in Japanese, Korean, and Chinese languages. I also tracked down a number of individuals who participated in the local *seinendan* groups to conduct extensive oral interviews.

I argue that youth, as a generational identity, was an integral part of national imaginations – youthfulness was a weapon in the competitive social Darwinian world. The *seinendan* institution provoked such identity to create a "nation-empire." I used the term the "nation-empire" to explain a characteristic of the Japanese empire that often puzzles historians of other empires— the strong urge to homogenize and unify its populations. From an analytical angle of generational (youth) and geographical (rural-peripheral) identities, my dissertation investigates the desires and grudges held by the rural youth that arose in their local contexts. The rural youth capitalized on the growing global youth culture and also on the government officials' dependence on them to subvert the social hierarchies to their own interests. Even in colonial cases, deploying the language of Japanese ultra-nationalism allowed youth to assert their moral authority over the urban, the educated, and the old. In previous studies of total mobilization, emphasis falls heavily on how the state disciplines its populations and persuades them to comply. My work seeks to open up the black box that occupies the large and complex space between the state and individuals, and shows how people come to embrace a certain ideology in localized social dynamics.

I am excited to learn that the appointment will involve teaching classes in the International Relations program. My academic training both in history and political science uniquely prepared me as an interdisciplinary scholar and teacher. Upon coming to the United States, I studied international security policy at the School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University. I started my Ph.D. career in the political science department of George Washington University, where I studied

Comparative Politics and taught International Relations. Columbia's International and Global History trained me in teaching topics mainly on the twentieth-century world at the undergraduate level. My interest has always been the intersection between the military and society. I chose to study the Japanese empire because I believe that it would contribute to a larger discussion on the relationship among the masses, ideologies, and the modern state. Having been hoping to bridge history and social sciences in teaching and research, I am not only well equipped to teach both War and Society and International History in the Twentieth Century, but also able to contribute to the program by designing new classes in collaboration with scholars in other departments. For graduate students, I am ready to offer seminars on comparative modern empires and colonialisms, war mobilization, the history of children and youth, and methods and perspectives of international history, as well as more East Asia-focused classes. Because I myself experienced many challenges in conducting a multi-lingual transnational project during my research in twelve locations between 2010 and 2012, I can also offer practical advice to students tackling transnational dissertation research.

I have presented parts of my dissertation at conferences in North America and Asia, and received a number of international, national, and university-level awards during my graduate career. I am currently writing my seventh chapter out of nine. I am also developing two journal articles deriving from the research: one on the encounters and mutual perceptions among Japanese, Taiwanese, and Korean *seinendan* youth expressed in their essays and diaries; and the other one on fascist internationalism as illuminated by exchanges between the *seinendan* and the Hitler Youth. Once I have revised my dissertation into a publishable manuscript, I hope to continue exploring transnational movements of ideas and people in Asia and the world. One such project will examine the role of ultra-rightwing organizations of the Japanese empire, or imperial gangsters, in bridging Asian nations with radical Pan-Asian ideals and functioning as voluntary government bodies across Asian societies. Another project is to examine the interaction between Western liberal-arts education and Confucian education and the transformation of the meaning of the "educated" and the "professional" across Asia and Asian migrants in other regions.

I will attend the annual meeting of the American Historical Association in Washington, DC in January and would be pleased to meet with members of your search committee there or at another convenient time and place. Please find enclosed a copy of my curriculum vitae, dissertation abstract, writing samples, and teaching evaluations. Recommendation letters from Professor Charles Armstrong, Professor Carol Gluck, and Professor Susan Pedersen will be sent separately via the Interfolio dossier service.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Sayaka Chatani