

## SOP Samples

### Sample 1

Name:

Address:

Phone Number:

E-mail Address:

### Statement of Purpose

*“Yesterday scientists revealed that beer contains small traces of female hormones. To prove their theory, the scientists fed 100 men 12 pints of beer and observed that 100% of them gained weight, talked excessively without making sense, became emotional, and couldn't drive. No further testing is planned.”*

—Female Hormones in Beer, A Forwarded Internet Joke

Three years ago, as I received this *funny joke* and decided to forward it to everyone in my mailing list, it was beyond my expectation that I would jeopardize a ten-year friendship just because of that impertinent one-click on SEND. Her reply was an angry one, not only denouncing me as a chauvinist pig but also suggesting I take some gender courses to learn how to respect women. What was the problem? After long rumination, I surprisingly discovered I had been unwittingly wearing a pair of patriarchal glasses to look at everything around me, and it was this pair of *colored* glasses that made me take gender stereotypes for granted. This unpleasant experience, of which I am still extremely sorry, triggered my interest in gender as a topic in literary studies.

Intriguingly, stereotypes categorize and simplify gender; however, among a lot of these seemingly *strict* stereotypical gender frameworks, many identities are actually indefinable. It is this gray zone in gender that inspired the idea of my research project: “Gay Theatres and Cultural Practice: A Comparative Study of *Angels in America* and *Love Homosexual in Chinese*,” which not only won me a 1999-2000 National Science Council Research Grant but also concreted my conviction of studying gender in literature. Enlightened by Eve Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet*, this project illustrates that queer survival, in both American and Taiwanese drama, actually blends with degrees of concealment and openness—this political strategy transforms various stigmas to queers’ own benefits. Besides, with the different historical/cultural contexts, *Angels* reveals the impact of AIDS and the disease’s relation to the closet, while *Love* challenges the homophobic Confucianism whose culture of silence constitutes the invisibility of homosexuality in modern Taiwan. This precious research experience, with a hearty and consistent support from Professor Cecilia Liu, confirmed for me my feeling that doing research to explore the unknown is fulfilling and enjoyable. In addition to the pragmatic experience of research methodology, the project also whetted my sensitivity to and knowledge of the issues in gay criticism and queer theory, some of which I first applied to the revision of my final paper for the course of

Modern/Postmodern British Literature, which is presented as my writing sample, “‘Baby! Sissy! Girly!’: A Queer Reading on Edward’s Effeminacy in Caryl Churchill’s *Cloud Nine*.”

Unlike some gay liberation movements, which only advocate identity politics, queer politics also disrupt any fixed dichotomy; as a result, queer identities refuse to be fixed or assimilated but tend to transgress and oscillate among various frameworks. Queering is political because it appears with unconventional or abhorrent images to challenge or even shock the world which is full of hostility against them. How do queers, then, metamorphose others’ resistance to their own assistance? What is the interaction between queers and ethics? These are questions of great interest to me. To answer them while I work toward my MA degree, not only do I have to broaden my comprehension of queer theory, I also need to deepen my knowledge of gender relations in modern literature, other types of cultural texts as well as their cultural contexts.

I am convinced that my studies at Fu Jen have fully prepared me for my graduate studies in your program. In my undergraduate education, the topic of gender was often the main focus in many of my papers. In sophomore year, I attempted to compare and contrast the female infanticidal characters: Ying-Ying in Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club* and Medea in Greek mythology. In junior year, I applied some ideas in sociolinguistics and feminism to discuss the power of language in male-female conversations in Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*. Further, in senior year, from Bharati Mukherjee’s “The Lady from Lucknow,” I learned that a female body, with the diaspora background, can construct a complex power operation of race and gender, and uplift one’s social status. My academic experience makes me realize that gender issues, which are diverse and interdisciplinary, are indeed worth further research.

In addition to my focus on literary studies, I was an actor in several English stage performances and an editor-in-chief for the first English edition of the department magazine: *Elite*. Both kinds of extracurricular activities in the English department fostered my ability to manage my time well and to work efficiently and with a congenial spirit in a group. As a persuasive actor, I had to associate my past experience to the role I took, and this re-examination of my life offered me an opportunity to understand myself and have a more pellucid perspective on human nature. As a scrupulous editor, I learned not only how to choose the effective rhetoric to convey complex concepts but also how to make the writing more logical, creative and felicitous. All these experiences help me profoundly to express my perception and interpretation of works of literature.

From the homepage of English Department at Michigan State University, I realize your graduate program, which is strong in gender studies and literary theory, is exactly what I require to bring out my potential and add to my expertise. I especially look forward to working with Professor Judith Roof, whose specialties are queer theory and American literature. In addition, Professor Arthur Athanason’s expertise in comparative modern drama, and Professor Katherine Fishburn and Professor Ellen Pollak’s mastership in feminist theory would all be very helpful in blazing my future academic path.

With more than 84.2% of college students here in Taiwan wearing glasses because of myopia,

it is indeed detrimental for them to wear one more pair of patriarchal/homophobic glasses. Upon receiving my Ph.D., I intend to help them take off the biased glasses to see a more objective view of gender by means of literature. To achieve this goal, MSU is my best choice. I wish to become a member of your graduate program to share my thoughts in works of literature and to contribute what I learn to my future academic career.

Thank you for your consideration.

## **Sample 2**                      **Comparative Literature**

As an English literature major in undergraduate and graduate school, I have been working as a teaching assistant at Fu Jen Catholic University, an English teacher at Chinese Culture University extension, a free-lance translator, an interpreter for American Educational Fair in Taiwan, and a customer service engineer at Premier Image Technology. After these attempts of exploring my real interest and my possible future career, I decided to follow up my pursuit in literature, and with the aim of becoming a professor in literature for my life-long career. Therefore, I need to extend my previous knowledge to a cross-cultural context, mainly modern American and Chinese literature in the twentieth century, focus my future research on the issue of identity and gender studies, and delve into the genres of novel, poetry and visual arts by women writers. With abundant top-notch faculty, an excellent reputation, and unmatched research facilities in my field, your graduate program is exactly what I need to help me become a qualified scholar and teacher in the future. It would be a great honor if I can study in the Comparative Literature graduate program in Fall of 2006.

I graduated from the English department at Fu Jen Catholic University, having chosen English literature as my major. While my overall undergraduate GPA was 3.79, my GPA for my major was 3.90 and for my final two years amounted to 4. In my undergraduate years, I developed all the concrete knowledge and analytical skills necessary for an English major, including a substantial amount of histories of English and American literature, literary theories, western civilization, speech and debate, linguistics, art history, Business English and Translation. The courses I took in English literature during my junior and senior years included works ranging from the Romantic period to modern and postmodern literature. For American Literature, I was especially interested in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century's literature. Among my favorite literary theory courses were deconstruction, psychoanalytical Criticism, Feminism and Marxism and postcolonial criticism. Combining a close reading of literary works and literary theories, these courses enabled me to appreciate literature more deeply and to interpret literature from various angles. During summer, I went to Europe and Brighton, England, for short term language study. The experience of living in different cultures and making friends with people from other countries gave me new perspectives and understandings of the world.

In graduate school, my primary research was on gender, cultural studies, issues of identity, social and

cultural representations of women, and on female writers such as Emily Dickinson, Elizabeth Bishop, Sylvia Plath, Doris Lessing and Margaret Atwood. My minor was Chinese-to-English (English-to-Chinese) translation. The accumulative GPA is 3.91 for my two-year master degree. My thesis *Body and Identity in Sylvia Plath's Work* was an accumulation of cultural and gender studies which probed the issues of social and cultural representation and formation of female identity in the American fifties. The thesis includes Sylvia Plath's novel, short stories, and poetry to analyze how Plath translated the social formation of female identity. I became more concerned with cultural, social aspects while dealing with literary text.

My minor was Chinese-to-English translation, thus I worked on translation history, methods, theories, techniques and language structure comparisons. In addition, I also translated literary works for practice, for instance, short stories and prose written by famous Chinese authors such as Qin Han, Jian Zhen, Zhang Ai-Ling. (For more details, please refer to the "Translation" section on my website, designed for applications: <http://home.kimo.com.tw/21032105>) Meanwhile, I began to write Chinese poems and essays. *Leaving*, one of my essays, was accepted by *United Literature* in Taiwan and published on its website. My one-year French class in graduate school helped me solve most of the basic third language problems encountered during the translation process. In addition to living in the States for a year when I was young, I lived in Los Angeles from October 2004 to June 2005 to further experience its culture diversity, taking TESOL certificate classes and French in the UCLA extension. Most of my TESOL classmates are high school teachers, and thus I had a chance to discuss cultural differences and different approaches to students from different countries.

During my undergraduate years, I participated in YWCA foreign affairs training and became a member of the Toastmasters. These experiences helped me understand more about global organizations, foreign affairs, and how to express my own ideas properly in different occasions and contexts. I worked as an interpreter for the Organization of American College Education Fair in 1999, and a receptionist at Fu Jen Catholic University's Fourth International Conference on Literature and Religion. I love to be an interpreter because it provides me chances to help people and to have more interaction with others.

In my graduate life, I was a research assistant, and later a teaching assistant in American literature class. From 1998, I started to work part time as an English teacher and a translator, translating materials ranging from English teaching materials, short film clips, film theory (history of contemporary criminal movies), and a cartoon *The Dog of Flanders*. I also worked as a General English Proficiency Text exam supervisor during my graduate years, becoming familiar with time and class management and strengthening my ability to solve sudden problems.

After graduation, I worked full-time at Premier Image Technology as a customer service engineer, and my major job was to write technical documents, such as user's manuals and service manuals for digital cameras and projectors. Because my manager was Japanese, I was his English-language interpreter during many conferences. It was a very interesting and challenging experience to receive information, digest it, condense and interpret it right away. In the process, you find yourself not only as a medium of human communication, but also as a helper and learner to gain new knowledge.

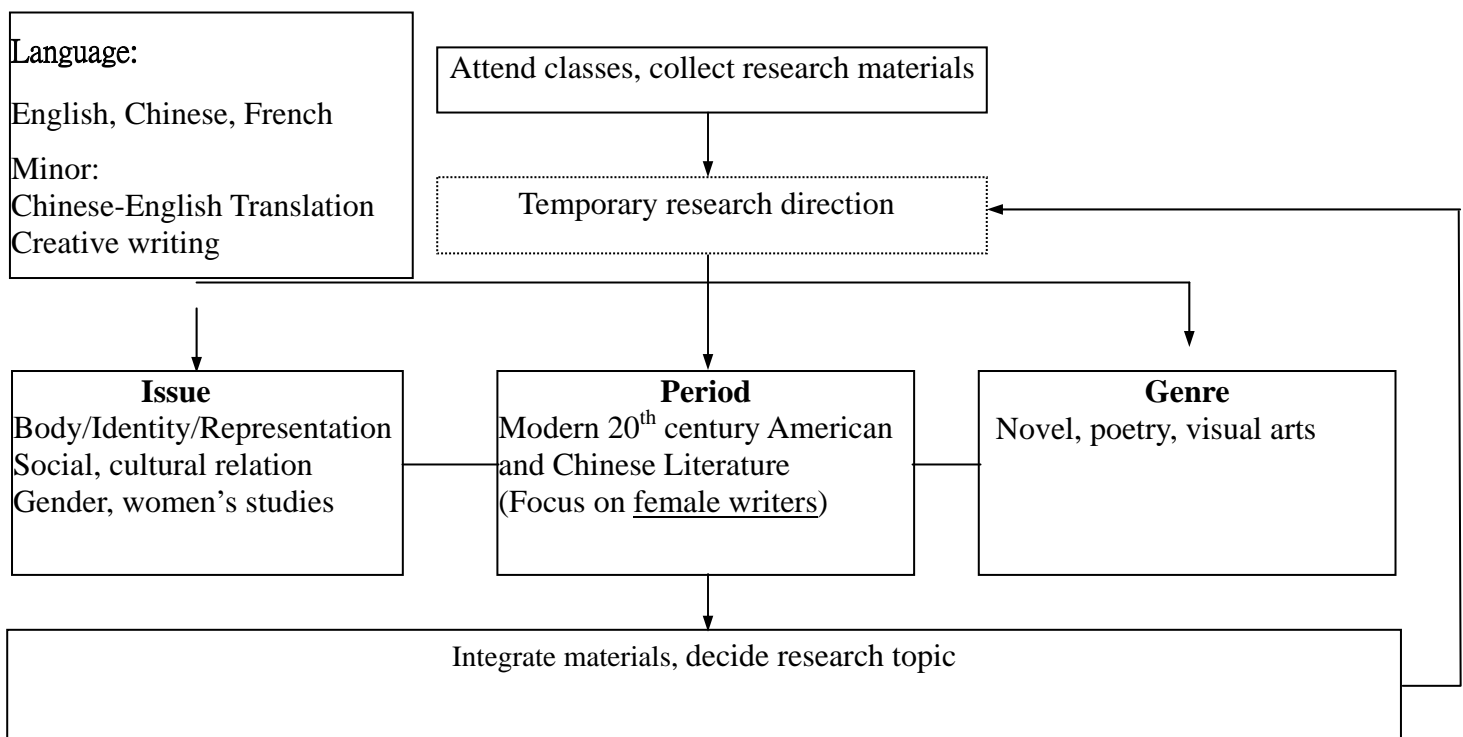
In addition, I worked part time in Chinese Culture University's adult division as an English teacher. From my previous teaching experience and the experience of working in adult education, I further progressed in course design, and the use of computer assisted materials, and most important of all, I developed the ability to teach and communicate with students of all ages.

As my long-term career plan is to become a professor in literature with knowledge of western and Chinese literature, I believe that the comparative PhD program can provide me with a multiple cultural, literary, artistic, and language environment for my research. Based on my previous studies in literary theory regarding identity, representation, and history of Chinese, British and American literature, my future research will concentrate on **cross cultural** literature:

- 1) Modern (20<sup>th</sup> century) American and Chinese literature with works by female authors
- 2) Culture and gender studies
- 3) Genres of novel, poetry and visual arts
- 4) Further language acquisition: French
- 5) Translation of literary work (Chinese – English)

For more details of my personal information, previous research papers, creative writing works, paintings, and translation works, please refer to my webpage: <http://home.kimo.com.tw/21032105>. It will be a real joy for me to study in a PhD program in comparative literature within a state-of-the-art environment. I'm confident that your program can open a door for me to broaden my scope in literature and art, and achieve the highest goals that I have set for myself in life.

### Chart of my future study plan



### Sample 3 Computer Graphic

I am planning to study for my master's degree in [Computer Graphic](#) at your school in Fall, 2006. I would like to take this opportunity to share my motivation of studying in this field with you.

My interest in Computer Graphic can be traced back to my freshman year in university when I encountered the first computer in my life. It was a computer using Macintosh operation system and I was so fascinated by its capabilities that even it was just a tool for word processing, I spent a lot of extracurricular time attempting to learn more about it. Of course I did not know very much about what a computer can do at that time. Later on, I used the techniques I acquired by self-studying to publish one issue of our department magazines and also one issue of the school magazines of my brother-in-law's school. After graduation, I took the program of MCSE (Microsoft Certified System Engineer) and learn more about what a computer can do, including lots of important fundamental knowledge of computer operation system and computer networking.

When working as a flight attendant, I fell in love with the magic of photography and make use of my camera to capture the great scenery and faces of different countries around the world. With the accumulation of my photos, I came up with the idea of sharing them with my dear family, friends and colleagues through computer and web. Therefore, aside from being a member of a photographer club, I also participated in a government-sponsored program for studying computer graphic software, including PhotoShop, Illustrator and InDesign, etc.

Although currently not working in related filed of Computer Graphic, I applied the techniques I learned to the preparation of not only personal photos but also the presentation materials in my current job. It turned out to be a great plus to these presentation materials. Along the way, my interests of computer, photography and publication kept growing in my heart and eventually led to my decision to acquire a master's degree in this field.

In the information era, art should keep staying in everyone's life to ease the daily stress from work, to soften the harshness of life reality and even to comfort the wounds of broken hearts. To me, Computer Graphic is just the right media of integrating art and daily life together by using modern technologies to create different forms of art for people to appreciate. I believed that my advanced learning of Computer Graphic will start a brand new page for me to enjoy and integrate art in my life. With the upgrade of my knowledge and skills, I tend to come back to my country and share my newly gained knowledge with more people in my country about its magic.

I believe that graduate education in the United States would fully equip me with the latest knowledge and skills for a career in the Computer Graphic industry. Earning a graduate degree from your prestigious institution would even fully prepare me to thrive in this highly competitive field. I am very much looking forward to having the opportunity to study at your school.

## Sample 4      Marketing

### Study Plan

Mary Chen

Cosmetics and fashion are the passion of women all over the world and I fall victim to such passion as well. Ever since my youth, I have always enjoyed reading fashion magazines. However, I have never understood why it was so captivating until I first encountered the field of **marketing** in college. After I took classes and gained some marketing knowledge, I came to the realization that fashion magazines captivated me because all the texts and pictures associate to my perception of beauty. Everything played towards my perception and emotions and thus created an image I desire to have. The marketing strategies of the fashion brands were working wonderfully on me. Ever since that realization dawned on me, I have always wanted to learn more about marketing and how it can be applied to my future. After I started working, I realized marketing is not limited to fashion industry. It has a strategic role and is crucial to a company's survival. Therefore, I decided to pursue an advanced education in marketing and hope to pursue a career in this field.

Over the last two years, I have been working for a large Taiwanese manufacturing firm, **ChiMei Optoelectronics, which is the world's fourth TFT-LCD panel supplier**. I am deeply involved in the company's **public relation and brand promotion**. ChiMei has a unique corporate culture where the founder of the company believes strongly in social responsibilities and quality of life for the society. The ChiMei museum is the best example of the ChiMei spirit because of its collection of cultural arts and historical artifacts, which all aims at preserving the local culture and history. One of my responsibilities is to introduce the museum and act as a guide to our corporate clients during their visit. Equipped with a thorough understanding of the museum collections and the company history, I convey ChiMei's image to our clients.

**Business to business promotion is an important marketing activity at ChiMei**. The company constantly holds product demonstration events for major clients such as 3M and Corning. At ChiMei, I frequently act as the coordinator between our internal departments and representatives from our clients to ensure success in our joint promotional events. I have gained valuable organization, communication, and leadership skills from such experiences due to the complexity of these activities involved. The tasks as a coordinator responsible of event timeline, event flow, and event resources have built my organization skills greatly. Also, as a coordinator in charge of communications between multiple parties, I was able to strengthen my communication skills. Furthermore, I led a team of more than forty assistants in streamlining office processes through experience sharing during our weekly meetings. I encouraged brainstorming sessions where the team came up with cost reduction plans for offices and planned events as well as efficiency increasing plans to make some internal department run more smoothly. I also listen to the team's needs and serve as their spokesperson. My leadership efforts were rewarded with an early promotion as well as increased benefits for my team. I believe my organization, communication, and leadership skills will be beneficial both to my academic performance and my future career.

During my employment, I gained a good understanding of the high-tech industry in Taiwan. Traditionally, Taiwanese high-tech companies specialize in assembling OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) parts and typically adopt a low cost strategy. Although Taiwanese products are of good quality, most companies have a low profit margin and are constantly engaged in a price war. Furthermore, many of these companies are looking to move their production plants to other Southeast Asian countries to further lower costs. In order for the high-tech industry to survive in the long run, it is my belief that the old business model will rapidly change. The high-tech companies in Taiwan

will start developing their own brand name and focusing on manufacturing end products instead of manufacturing product parts. As the high-tech industry transitions, I believe that product marketing within the high-tech industry will play an increasingly important role. My ultimate goal is to apply the marketing expertise I gain during my academic studies to Taiwan's transitioning high-tech industry.

I believe that the **XXX** School can provide me with the opportunity to learn the skills I will need to make my career goals possible. I also believe that my work experience and my understanding of Taiwan's high-tech industry will bring a different perspective to the class and contribute to the diversity of your university.