

Admission Essay Sample by Custom Essay Meister

Continuing Our People's Legacy with a PhD In Comparative Literature

By: Name of Applicant

As a teen, I was known as the bookworm of the family. My shelves were lined with books and I always had my nose buried in a book. As a result, most people in my family and extended family give me books for my birthdays and Christmases. I read each and every one of them. However, of these books, one stood out—*One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. This was a birthday gift from my grandmother. She picked it because of its colorful cover, and because it was written by a Latino, she said. It was high time I read something written by one of “our people” not just of white men and women, she joked. I don't think my grandmother intended it to influence me in any way, but this colorful novel turned out to change my life.

Prior to this, I read primarily western classic literature and was immersed in western culture. I barely paid attention to my family's culture and listened to their lavish stories mostly out of duty. In fact, my 6-year old cousin probably speaks better Spanish than I do. Reading *One Hundred Years of Solitude* changed my perspective. I became more aware of the history of colonization Latin countries shared, including Colombia where my parents are from. But what truly captured my attention is how Garcia Marquez incorporated magic in depicting his country's colonial history, which I later learned was called magic realism. My love for literature led me to study Literature in college. I wrote book reports and literary essays analyzing works by Garcia Marquez and dozens of

other postcolonial writers whenever I can. I read this type of literature whenever I had nothing to do in between classes in college. I came to know postcolonial literature better this way and fell in love with Jorge Luis Borges, Isabel Allende, Salman Rushdie, Chinua Achebe, and many others I read usually in between classes in college. In particular, what drew me into these works of literature were their use of magic in depicting harsh histories.

My interest in postcolonial literature was carried over to my Master's studies where I wrote my dissertation on Garcia Marquez's and Salman Rushdie's approach to the crisis of identity faced by colonized nations long after their colonizers have left. My master's dissertation delved into the crisis of identity as depicted in postcolonial literature, as well as in the two novelists' countries (Colombia and India respectively) where national identity is complicated by the wide range of ethnic groups comprising each nation and by the intervention (and subsequent erasure of native cultures and imposition of foreign culture) of their colonizers. My dissertation is fundamentally informed by Edward Said's postcolonial theory, supplemented by New Historicism, which takes into account the influence of historical contexts in literature. Both of these literary theories operate with the belief that literature is intertwined in its historical and social context.

Even before I started writing this admission essay, I have known for a while that I want my graduate work to explore this approach to literature further. Now, more than ever, there is a rise in literature and media produced by people of color. There are so many interesting works by people who grew up in their native country, where the postcolonial is strong. Likewise, there is a plethora of literature and media by people

who grew up in a different country, like myself, who struggle with their “split” minority identity and American identity. I want to explore the relationship between contemporary works by immigrants and first-generation Americans and older postcolonial literature.

With my new interest in these contemporary works, I was driven toward a new topic of study—how do contemporary literature and media tackle crises of identity, and how do their approaches compare with their older contemporaries? This is the fundamental question I want to explore in my doctoral studies as I believe that this will have a valuable contribution in literary studies. Considering the wide array of media nowadays, an analysis focusing solely on written literature would be insufficient, which is why I believe that Comparative Literature is the next step for me.

A serious conversation with my thesis advisor affirmed the relevance of my new topic of study in today’s academic world. She is the one who suggested that I apply to your doctorate degree program, citing your department’s work on Comparative Literature. I am genuinely interested in expanding my work from Literature to more contemporary media, such as film, media, music, and the visual arts. I believe these forms of media are ultimately tied together by historical and social realities. In order to gain full understanding and appreciation of these works, it is crucial to look at them in the context in which they were created and are read, instead of in a vacuum. It is my firm belief that our approach to literature should always evolve along with these realities that surround and influence arts and literature.

My reason for applying to your department’s doctorate program is not only to provide myself a platform to explore this topic of interest, but to also enrich my own teaching practice. With a doctorate degree in Comparative Literature, I hope to establish

a Comparative Literature class in the college where I teach. Through this class, students will be introduced to literature from various cultures and explore their similarities and differences through established literary theories, as well as their transformations across time and space. Such a class should serve to balance the more accepted formalism, which, in my opinion, cannot fully capture the depth and complexity of postcolonial literature and contemporary works. I believe that Literature departments would benefit from a Comparative Literature class that takes into account contemporary works and realities, even if they do not fall under the category of classic literature. With a doctorate degree from your esteemed institution, I hope to encourage a more open and evolving approach to literature and the arts. Through this, my goal is to enrich the future generation's understanding and appreciation of Literature by equipping them with the skills and theories that accommodate the world's ever-evolving meanings.

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