

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Month XX, 202X

Name of Search Chair

Department Name

University Name

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

Dear Members of the Search Committee:

I write to apply for the position of Assistant Professor of **[Name of the Title Here]** as advertised on **[Advertisement Location]**. I am a PhD candidate in the Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures at Michigan State University and will defend my dissertation in May 2022. I work from a disciplinary throughline between technical communication, health and medical rhetorics, and digital rhetorics, with focuses in health communication, Indigenous studies, and settler colonial studies. My research interfaces the confluences of neoliberal medical policy related to HIV/AIDS, white supremacist and ableist public health practices, and cisheteronormative biomedical models. Using Indigenous methodologies, I leverage my findings to disrupt abuses within medicine and public health through my research projects and community engagement as a health organizer.

In my dissertation, *“OK Sexual Health Twitter”: Toward a Community Framework of Sexual Health Literacy*, I created a qualitative study (informed by Indigenous and decolonial methodologies) of how queer and trans people of color generate and share knowledge about their sexual health on Twitter with regards to HIV/AIDS. After creating a self-populating Twitter archive and conducting a two-round coding schema on about 15,000 tweets (as of June 2020), I focused on a data subset comprising 300 discrete users and relevant media (i.e., news articles, public health advertisements, other emergent artifacts) and created three case studies focusing on: the rollout of HIV prevention advertisements within queer-centered media; the patent breaking of Truvada, a once-daily medication for preventing HIV; and the use of social media to take to task bad actors and misinformed healthcare providers. My results revealed three rhetorical strategies such communities use: 1) continuing community-born public health practices created during the HIV/AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 90s by deploying descriptive hashtags to challenge stigma; 2) creating emergent whisper networks for sharing information about dealing with healthcare providers, navigating insurance networks, and communicating the symptoms of taking the medication; and 3) recognizing and countering the complex systems of late capitalist biomedicalization that prioritize profit over life. Although scholars in technical, health, and risk communication, as well as and literacy studies, have examined health literacies on different platforms (i.e., public fora and medical websites), few have approached this work with a non-deficit focus on social media settings with attention to queer and trans BIPOC, who typically have their knowledges discounted by providers and public health officials because of racism. As a corrective, I developed an HIV/AIDS health literacy framework that allows for outreach in non-clinical settings through what I term relational design, or a participatory communication design process that incorporates community voices via an attunement to social media such as Twitter. My immediate research trajectory follows up on my dissertation project.

Currently, I am finalizing a manuscript for the journal *Rhetoric of Health and Medicine* that traces current issues of medical racism in North America along the formation of current biomedical and public health models. This manuscript has been accepted to the RHM Symposium 2021 conference. I am also finalizing manuscripts for the journals *Health Communication* and *Technical Communication Quarterly* that outline how health communication specialists and technical communicators can advocate for queer and trans patients of color across a variety of settings.

COLLEGE OF
ARTS & LETTERS

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I have presented the latter article at the recent Conference on Community Writing. I also am drafting a proposal for a book that expands on my case studies (tentatively titled *Blood Cells and Drag Queens: Storying Virulent Sexual Health*) to be submitted January to New York University Press' "Queer / Trans / Digital" series. With this monograph, I do the double work of informing queer and trans BIPOC on how social media can be a health literacy tool while nudging public health officials toward respectful approaches for honoring community health practices. Finally, I am finalizing a manuscript for *Communication Design Quarterly* that advances a theoretical rupture of communication technologies via Black/Native studies, settler colonial studies, and decolonial theory. With my long-term agenda, I plan to follow up with the remainder of my dataset, which has grown to be about 30,000 tweets (and counting), and I am planning manuscripts that examine the rhetorical shortcomings of public health officials who use social media for outreach, offering appropriate solutions for respectful community engagement. This focus on community-centered, practical solutions to wicked problems underpins my overall academic trajectory, including my editorial work.

Currently, I am finalizing a co-edited special issue of *Literacy in Composition Studies* with Collin Craig (St. John's University) and Zarah Moeggenberg (Metropolitan State University) on queer and trans literacies that comprises articles focused on Black queer literacies of embodied practice, the legacies of Third World Women of Color feminism in writing curricula, and the bisexual-specific literacy practices of coming out later in life. More recently, McKinley Green (George Mason University), Fernando Sánchez (University of St. Thomas), and I are organizing a special issue for the *Rhetoric of Health and Medicine* (due Spring 2023) that foment further social justice interventions within the healthcare needs of queer and trans people of color. In addition to this work, my service and my teaching demonstrate the manner by which I center community in my praxis as a community organizer, activist, and educator.

In my first-year writing and professional writing classes, for example, a key assignment has students research the culture of commonplace technology objects, connecting the mundane to larger histories in a research-intensive project that mirrors a broader focus on critical inquiry and social justice within my learning outcomes. In one notable example, a student connected the history of cooking tortillas with ovens (as opposed to open fires) and foodway systems in México and South Texas to colonial narratives as a means of understanding his family's history in both countries. I also have co-taught a graduate seminar on Chicana rhetorics, in which students connected current conversations within Chicano/Latino Studies, Black and Native studies, settler colonial studies, rhetorical theory, and literary studies to Chicana identity and cultural production. For their finals, students honed their analyses to craft community-engagement proposals that worked to untangle the oftentimes extractive nature of service learning within academia through projects geared toward communities of color, which mirrors my own work beyond the classroom.

In Lansing, MI, I co-founded Queering Medicine (QM), a grassroots queer health coalition, focusing on improving queer health in the area. With QM, I have written multiple grants, conducted focus groups, and hosted provider meet and greets through the Salus Center, Lansing's first and only queer resource center. For the last year, I have worked with a team in QM to produce an ongoing series of myth-busting reports focused on the COVID-19 crisis with more than 5,000 readers across Michigan and the Midwest through QM's social media, using my journalistic training, copyediting skills, and professional writing savvy to do this work. More recently, as part of a grant-writing team in QM, we secured \$10K from a local foundation to continue our queer-focused, COVID 19-related outreach in the year. In the last year, we have also finalized a nearly 30-page recommendation document for making intake processes more equitable for queer/trans identities, distributing it to 60 local healthcare providers and garnering coverage from local news media. As the outreach coordinator for the MSU Writing Center, I also managed multiple volunteers at community events over two years as part of an oral history project, creating a born-digital archive that showcases the everyday stories of Lansing residents. As part of the Writing Center's Grant Writing Committee, I also cowrote grant applications for community-engaged projects and assisted various Lansing community members in their applications. I am also the former professional development chair of Writing, Rhetoric and Praxis (WRAP), our graduate student organization, during which I mentored multiple early-year graduate students to plan out their exam processes, choose committee members, and develop dissertation projects (i.e., topics and methodologies).

Enclosed you will find **[all of the things you asked for in the ad]**. Please contact me with requests for additional materials. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Wilfredo Antonio Flores