



College of Arts & Humanities

Department of English
Marist College
3399 North Road
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

September 28, 2022

Dear Search Committee:

I am writing to apply for the position of Assistant Professor of English, Professional Writing in the Department of English at Marist College. Currently, I am an Assistant Professor of English with a focus on Professional Writing at Jacksonville State University (JSU). I received my Ph.D. in English with a focus on Writing and Rhetoric from Northeastern University (NU) in 2021. My research traces digital practices that subvert harmful narratives such as racism and heteronormativity embedded in data, programming, and media. I use mixed methods that merge computational and qualitative analysis.

My current manuscript, *Writing Critical Fandoms*, (proposal under review at Univ of Illinois Press), asserts the cultural significance of fans' critical fanfiction genre and uptake practices in creating and transforming online communities. I contend critical fans engage the theoretical and political commitments of popular culture texts and reimagine how the world may be structured by merging qualitative and computational research methods. My research builds off traditions of critical fan studies and Black feminists, such as Rebecca Wanzo, bell hooks, and Ebony Elizabeth Thomas. I analyze data trends across 100,000 fanfictions using data visualizations, word vectors, and natural language processing to identify communication practices that challenge racist and heteronormative ideologies. I also interview critical fans, whose voices are integral to this project. The interview analysis reflects the specific actions fans take as they write: how they incorporate political theory into their writing, describe and understand genre conventions, and resist harmful ideologies. For instance, one fan critiques the white supremacy in the *Game of Thrones* show and fandom, then mentions her love for the *Black Panther* fandom as she can be "unapologetically Black." Ultimately, this manuscript advocates that critical fans are always-already theorizing about politics in their communication, envisioning more diverse and equitable popular culture and communities.

My teaching is invested in critical digital pedagogy (CDP), especially digital writing and technologies across disciplines. I received the 2019 Kairos Teaching Award, a national award in the field of digital rhetoric for my commitment to CDP, and consistently receive higher-than-average marks for student evaluations. At Jacksonville State, I led the design of a new interdisciplinary Game Studies minor, which brings together English, Computer Science, Art & Design, and other disciplines. I have extensive experience teaching technical and professional writing, such as Technical Writing, Writing for Social Media, Writing for Podcasts, Speech, and Introduction to Game Studies. In my Technical Writing course, students learn about the process of designing documentation, from early prototype documents, then user experience (UX) research, and finally implementing document design principles based on UX findings. This longer project provides students with insight on how to conduct a larger research project, from beginning to end; they also leave my class with portfolio materials and technical writing skills they can apply in most industries. In their evaluations, students praise the course, such as "Dr. Messina has this course down to a science. The schedule layout, assignments, quizzes etc. set the student up for success in every way" and "Best instructor at JSU." In my Writing for the Web course, students learn about website ethics, information systems, accessibility, and search engine optimization and then apply this knowledge through practice by partnering with campus programs to help redesign their websites. Students implement UX research to propose website changes, create wireframe, receive feedback, and finally construct website mock-ups on Canva. In future iterations of the course, I hope to collaborate with community partners so students can benefit their communities. In all my courses, I center diversity by discussing anti-racism, LGBTQ+ issues, and accessibility. Students often call my course a safe, inclusive space

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and often feel comfortable approaching me to share their struggles, ask for accommodations, or navigate resources for support. My pedagogical practices integrate anti-carceral and feminism in activities, reading, and assessment. My goal is to encourage students to recognize and advocate for their own agency as well as teach them to be critical of the world around them by applying this critical lens to every facet of their lives — from the media they consume, to the technologies they use, to their future professions.

My research continues my commitments to inclusivity. I published a webtext for *Computers and Composition Online* special issue on game studies, I examine feminist coding practices, disruption and documentation, through a visual narrative video game. The webtext defines feminist coding practices and asks readers to play with the back-end of the article's code to access information. Recently, I proposed a National Science Foundation grant with colleagues in Emergency Management and Computer Science to create a serious game on natural disaster preparedness. I have also published an article in *The Journal of Writing Analytics*, which conducts computational text analysis to trace the power critical fans have in persuading communities using "critical uptakes." Finally, I co-edited a special issue on "Black Digital Humanities" in *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, which spotlights emerging Black DH scholar's work as the Black DH field continues to grow and its implications for Black communications and humanities research.

My service and administrative experiences have also drawn upon my expertise in digital communication and pedagogy. At JSU, I helped design the new digital writing lab, which includes gaming computers and a podcast recording booth; the goal of the DWL is to provide a space for students to get feedback on their digital and multimodal projects, understanding design choices as rhetorical. I created five extensive modules and documentation for DWL consultants addressing best practices for digital writing across genres and formats. At Northeastern University's Digital Integration Teaching Initiative (DITI), I partnered with the Dean of the College of Social Sciences and Humanities to integrate digital technologies and methods across the curriculum. I was on the initial DITI team in 2018 and assisted in building the program from the ground up, including creating an extensive [GitHub repository](#). Finally, I am the acting Communication Officer in the Writing and Rhetoric of Code special interest group through the Conference on College Composition and Communication; my main goal is to help build the field of the writing and rhetoric of code to be a feminist and anti-racist space by centering community-making, mentorship, and documentation best practices.

Marist College is one of my dream places to work; I was delighted when I saw this position advertised on the Writing Program listserv. I almost attended Marist for my undergraduate degree because of the small student-to-faculty ratio and the beautiful campus; I chose a school a bit closer to home. I would love to work at Marist for the same reasons, along with the hope of working for a liberal arts school, living closer to my family, and continuing my career as a Professional Writing faculty member. At Marist, I hope to apply for internal and external grants to build a Digital Lab, similar to the DITI program I helped lead at Northeastern. I believe digital literacies across the curriculum are crucial for all students to learn as professionals are now often expected to be well-versed in multiple skills. At the lab, I will train student workers to partner with faculty to lead workshops and activities in their classes on theory, digital methods, and digital tools.

My emphasis on digital humanities, interdisciplinarity, critical digital pedagogy, and data/coding rhetoric fits well within the curricular and scholarly profile of the department. Please find all requested materials enclosed. You may find more information on my website at <https://caramartamessina.com/>.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CM', is positioned above the typed name.

Cara Marta Messina
Assistant Professor of English
Jacksonville State University