November 12th, 2021

Florida Atlantic University

**Department of English**

777 Glades Road

Boca Raton, FL, 33431

Dear Search Committee,

I am writing to express my interest in the Assistant Professor of Science Fiction Studies position. I have a PhD in Communication and Culture, and I am a scholar of comic studies, critical race studies, postcolonial feminist studies, and critical Muslim studies. My research focuses on the representation of marginalized groups in comics with particular interest in Muslim representation. I believe both my research and non-academic experience in technology make me suitable candidate for the Center for the Future Mind and the I-SENSE lab.

**Background**

My Ph.D. dissertation, *The Iconic Muslim Superhero: Muslim Female Audience Perspectives of Marvel’s Muslim Superheroines*, is an interdisciplinary feminist study that theorizes the Muslim superhero, while also analyzing an earlier study I conducted on young adult Muslim perspectives of the Muslim superhero. The findings revealed that while the Muslim superhero has at times challenged Islamophobia, at other times, it has consolidated Orientalist depictions of Muslim men and contributed to the erasure of “Other” Muslims from the superhero legion. Some of the critical debates I explore in my dissertation are emerging scholarship on cultural racism, the representation of Black, South Asian, and LGBTQ Muslims, Islamophobia, white saviorism, and Islamic fashion. I am currently in talks with the University Press of Mississippi about producing a monograph based on my dissertation.

**Research**

My research on marginalized representation is suited to Florida Atlantic University’s English Department because of its focus on textual analysis and critical thinking, as evidenced by my publications on Arab and South Asian Muslim female representation. My article, “The ‘Worlding’ of the Muslim Superheroine: An Analysis of *Ms. Marvel’s* Kamala Khan” (2019) in the *Popular Culture Studies Journal* discusses the inter-connecting ways in which race and gender representation can contribute to media discourses on Muslim women. Another article, “Veiling the Superhero: A Comparative Analysis of Dust and Qahera” (2020) in *Feminist Encounters: A Journal of Critical Studies in Culture and Politics* analyzes two Muslim superheroines (one Afghan, the other Egyptian) by focusing on the comic medium’s ability to convey both dominant and resistant narratives about Muslim women. Thus, I am confident in my ability to teach students communication and analytical thinking. Furthermore, I received several competitive research grants during my PhD to support my dissertation’s focus on first and second-generation immigrant perspectives on Muslim superheroes from the RBC Immigrant, Diversity, and Inclusion Project Award at Ryerson University, the Edward S. Rogers Fellowship, and the Ontario Graduate Scholarship.

For my next three-year project, I seek to expand my research on Muslim superheroes into the Muslim speculative fiction genre by analyzing both prose and graphic fiction, such as *Alif the Unseen*, *Mirage,* and *City of Brass*. This project will explore the rise in this genre in the post-9/11 era as a counter-narrative to earlier Orientalist works, thus focusing on cultural racism and Islamophobia. I will also examine transmedial adaptations of these works such as *Dune* and the *Ms. Marvel* series. To support this research, I will seek external grants so that I can hire research assistants and collaborate with existing faculty in the university on topics relating to marginalized representation in popular culture. I plan to publish an academic monograph on this project’s findings.

The skills I honed through non-academic work experience are transferrable to this position, especially those I acquired through my work in the field of design and technology. In addition to my experience in new media marketing and web development, I also worked for Research in Motion, where I developed interfaces for the BlackBerry and secured an interaction design patent, in addition to serving on their game development team. This experience, along with my scholarship, makes me an ideal candidate for F.A.U.’s Center for the Future Mind and its I-SENSE lab.

**Teaching**

I was previously a teaching assistant for the “Women and Islam” class at Ryerson University and a guest lecturer at Sheridan Institute on “indie” comics and the University of California Irvine. I believe in creating an inclusive environment in a classroom by featuring texts and research materials that explore culturally-diverse representations while incorporating my knowledge on critical race studies and feminist media studies. If given the opportunity, I would like to teach a course on Muslim representation in graphic fiction. I am also eager to teach a course on comics writing, drawing upon my expertise in the field. Furthermore, I would welcome the opportunity to teach courses such as Science Fiction and Postcolonial Literature.

**Service**

My service in the field includes sitting on the Executive Board for the Comic Studies Society as a member at large. I have also previously served as the secretary-treasurer for their Graduate Student Caucus. I also sat on the Intersections|Cross-sections Conference organizing board at Ryerson University, where I served on the editorial committee and helped to peer review conference abstracts. Over the years, I have organized and presented on several panels at different conferences, such as the “Marginalized Representation and the American Superhero” panel at the Comic Studies Society conference. I also organized and presented on the “Critical Diasporic South Asian Feminisms in Canada” roundtable at the Canadian Sociological Association at the Congress of the Humanities conference, as well as the Canadian Comic Studies Publishing roundtable, which I moderated at the Canadian Society for the Study of Comics at the Congress of the Humanities in June 2021.

I am confident that my PhD in Communication and Culture, combined with my concentration on Media and Culture, together with my critical research and publications on Muslim superheroes and Muslim audiences make me well-suited for the position. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Safiyya Hosein