February 1, 2019

Dear Madam or Sir:

I am writing to apply for the position of Interim Director at the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies. I have the necessary qualities, above all experience and a passion for interdisciplinary research and debate. I also have an understanding of how the Institute works, and a vision for making it the hub of intellectual life on campus, helping to set the agenda for discussions and exchanges of ideas and information worldwide.

I have been engaged in research that is profoundly interdisciplinary throughout my academic career, and have a good appreciation both of its benefits and of its difficulties. Interdisciplinarity is hard, but it is also necessary. It cannot be conjured up by administrative fiat, but requires persistence and perseverance, as well as the willingness to fail. My own work involves incursions into Literature, Film, History, Anthropology, Archaeology, Sociology, and Political Science by way of an interrogation and (I hope) production of Social and Political Theory. As a Latin Americanist, I have the advantage that Area Studies is by nature always interdisciplinary and comparative; I also can see the ways in which Area Studies falls short of its ambitious aims.

I have taken part in or contributed to numerous interdisciplinary projects and organizations. At the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, I was inspired by the Center for Twentieth-Century Studies, run by Kathy Woodward (now Director of the Simpson Center for the Humanities at the University of Washington). At Duke University, I was active not only in the Centre for Latin American Studies but also in the Franklin Humanities Institute. At the University of Aberdeen, I organized a working group on “Culture and Power in the Global System”; at the University of Manchester, I founded and directed an interdisciplinary Centre for Latin American Cultural Studies. I have learned from all these experiences, and believe that they offer models we could use, as well as some mis-steps to avoid.

Here at UBC, I have been active at the Liu Institute, Green College, and with Arts One and many other interdisciplinary ventures. I have been a Faculty Associate at the Peter Wall Institute since 2005, and have been involved with the Institute in a variety of capacities: as Early Career Scholar, as coordinator of a Theme Development Workshop and (with Max Cameron) of a very successful Exploratory Workshop on the Latin American “left turns,” as a speaker (twice) to the lunchtime Associates’ Lecture Series, as a respondent to the presentation of Gastón Gordillo’s Rubble, and as attendee and participant in innumerable seminars, discussions, and talks.

In the Acknowledgements to Posthegemony, my book on Political Theory and Latin America, I thank the Institute for providing me with an “intellectual oasis.” It has so often felt like my home on campus, a place where interdisciplinary research is valued, and where serious discussion and interrogation of that research is encouraged from all quarters. As...
Interim Director, I hope to help the Institute expand on this great foundation. Too often this oasis has been hidden from the rest of campus, providing a retreat and fertile intellectual sustenance but only for the fortunate few. Yet it could become a hub that would draw travellers from all directions, a vital place of transit for projects on multiple trajectories. Like great oases of the past, it could become a place of learning and exchange that is open to all.

Further, the Institute can be a place for rethinking and re-establishing the role of the university in society as a whole. I have been very involved in discussions around the philosophy and politics of open education, and the impact on (and possibilities for) higher education brought by technological and social change. With the university facing unprecedented challenges in terms of financial models and political imperatives, it is time to reinvent the institution while providing a principled and public defence of the role of learning and intellectual creativity. This should be part of our fund-raising and liaison with public bodies. The Peter Wall Institute is the ideal base from which to reclaim innovation and champion academic freedom as well as social responsibility.

These thoughts have informed my interventions into the recent debates about the future of the Wall Institute, above all my article in the Tyee: “Latest Uproar at UBC May Present an Opportunity: Why the tussle over Peter Wall Institute is a teaching moment for every university” (November 27, 2018. https://thetyee.ca/Opinion/2018/11/27/Wall-Institute-Uproar/). As I put it there:

With the spotlight on the Wall Institute, now is the time to acknowledge the importance of interdisciplinary research dedicated to critique and innovation rather than utility or financial profit. If the university can come together for an open and thoughtful discussion of the very nature of “advanced study,” it would be a move in the right direction. What’s at stake is the nature of the institution itself, and the university’s distance from the logics of state or market. This means that the university needs to be accountable to the Wall Institute, as much as the Institute needs to be accountable to the university.

It is in this spirit that I would hope to help facilitate discussions as interim director of the Institute.

I would be delighted to discuss these ideas with the search committee. I am grateful for everything the Peter Wall Institute has done and continues to do, and excited by the possibilities open to it in coming years. I look forward to helping to build on and further enhance the Institute’s reputation as the key hub for innovation and interdisciplinary thought on campus, a leader and model for the university’s engagement with the world.

Yours

Jon Beasley-Murray
Associate Professor, Hispanic Studies
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Curriculum Vitae for Faculty Members

Date: 7 January 2019

1. SURNAME: Beasley-Murray
   FIRST NAME: Jon
   MIDDLE NAME(S):

4. PRESENT RANK: Associate Professor
   SINCE: July 2011

5. POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

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<tr>
<th>University or Institution</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tr>
<td>Duke University</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>October 2003</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>English, Modern Studies</td>
<td>December 1993</td>
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<td>King’s College, Cambridge</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>June 1992</td>
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6. EMPLOYMENT RECORD

(a) Prior to coming to UBC

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<tr>
<th>University, Company or Organization</th>
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<td>University of Manchester</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
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<td>University of Aberdeen</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>1999-2000</td>
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(b) At UBC

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<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
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9. SCHOLARLY AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

(b) Research or equivalent grants (indicate under COMP whether grants were obtained competitively (C) or non-competitively (NC))

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<th>Granting Agency</th>
<th>Subject</th>
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<th>Year</th>
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<td>UBC/Arts</td>
<td>Projections</td>
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<td>Jon Beasley-Murray</td>
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<td>UBC/Arts</td>
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<td>2015-2016</td>
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(c) Visiting Fellowships

Visiting Fellow, University of Newcastle, May 2012

(d) Keynote presentations


(e) Invited Presentations
10. “Literary Machinations.” School of Modern Languages. Queens University, Belfast, 28 April, 2016.

(f) Other Presentations (Conferences)
16. MLA Congress. Seattle, January 2012.

(h) Conference Participation (Organizer, etc.)


12. AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS

(b) Awards for Scholarship (indicate name of award, awarding organizations, date)

Honorable Mention, Kathleen Kovacs Singer Prize (awarded by the MLA for an outstanding book published in the field of Latin American and Spanish literatures and cultures), for Posthegemony. Modern Language Association, 2012.

1. BOOKS

(a) Authored

Honorable Mention, Kathleen Kovacs Singer Prize (awarded by the MLA for an outstanding book published in the field of Latin American and Spanish literatures and cultures).

Reviews:


(b) Edited


(c) Translated


Reviews:


(d) Chapters


2. REFEREED PUBLICATIONS

(a) Journals


(c) Other (Reviews and Review Essays etc.)


52b. Translated as “‘A chave para a mudança social não é a ideologia, mas os corpos, os afetos e os hábitos.’” Instituto Humanitas Unisonos (8 June 2015).


