



UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA  
at CHAPEL HILL

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST AND ISLAMIC STUDIES

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Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to offer my enthusiastic recommendation for Niloofar Hooman, a highly talented and driven PhD candidate in Communication, New Media, and Cultural Studies at McMaster University for The Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Postdoctoral Fellowship in Iranian Studies. Throughout her time at McMaster University, Niloofar has demonstrated exceptional academic abilities, a strong commitment to research, and a dedication to social justice, all of which make her an outstanding candidate for any academic or research fellowship.

Niloofar's academic journey is impressive, with a PhD in Communication from the University of Tehran, an MA in Cultural Studies and the Media, and a BA in Social Communications, all from the University of Tehran. Her academic achievements reflect her deep understanding of communication theories and cultural studies, which she has further honed at McMaster University since January 2020. During her time at McMaster, she has not only excelled academically but also contributed significantly to the campus's academic community. As a PhD Candidate and a student of the Gender Studies and Social Justice Graduate Diploma program, she has shown a keen interest in exploring the intersections of media, gender, and culture. Her research work, particularly as a collaborator on the SSHRC-funded project "Transnational Feminist Dialogues: Intersecting Struggles in the Wake of the 'Woman, Life, Freedom' Uprising in Iran," highlights her commitment to understanding and addressing pressing social issues on a global scale.

Niloofar's academic rigor is also evident in her extensive list of publications, which showcase her deep engagement with critical issues in media, gender, and culture. Her recent chapter, co-authored with Dilyana Mincheva, titled "The Iranian #MeToo and the Double Bind of Iranian Feminism: Between Religion, the Global Gender Struggle, and Liberal Feminism," is part of the edited volume *#MeToo Movement in Iran: Reporting Sexual Violence and Harassment* (Bloomsbury, August 2023). This work reflects her nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding feminist movements in Iran. As the editor of the volume, I have had the distinct pleasure of collaborating closely with Niloofar and witnessing firsthand her exceptional academic prowess, dedication to feminist scholarship, and her ability to engage critically with complex issues. Her chapter offers an insightful analysis of the intersection between local feminist struggles and global feminist movements, examining the nuances of Iranian feminism within the context of the #MeToo movement. Her research demonstrates an acute awareness of the cultural, religious, and political dimensions affecting feminist activism in Iran.

Niloofar has also made significant contributions to the study of LGBTQ activism, as demonstrated in her chapter, "Social Media as a Tool for LGBTQ Activism and Community Building: A Qualitative Analysis of Iranian LGBTQ Counterpublics on Instagram," published in *Digital LGBTQ Activism*

(Routledge, 2022). Her scholarly output includes influential works on the representation of women in Iranian cinema, such as her chapters in *Iran Society through the Movie* (Tehran: Institute of Culture, Arts and Communications, 2018), where she critically examines the evolving roles of women in Iranian society and cinema. Her work on hashtag feminism, co-authored with Hossein Kermani, titled “Hashtag Feminism in a Blocked Context: The Mechanisms of Unfolding and Disrupting #rape on Persian Twitter,” published in *New Media & Society* (2022), is another testament to her cutting-edge research in digital activism. Additionally, Niloofar contributed to “The MeToo Movement in Iran: Reporting Sexual Violence and Harassment,” published in *Feminist Formations*. This piece has been well-received within the academic community and highlights Niloofar’s commitment to advancing our understanding of gender and social justice issues. Her scholarly contributions extend to analyses of cinematic representations, as seen in her article on women in Farhadi’s films in *The International Journal of the Image* (2020), as well as her studies on social networks and their role in empowering Iranian women. Her article “Breaking Boundaries, Baring Bodies: Subversive Art in the Works of Iranian Feminist Artists on Instagram,” currently under review for the *Journal of Gender Studies*, continues her exploration of feminist media activism. Her journal articles further establish her as a leading voice in the field.

In her extensive scholarly journey, Niloofar has actively contributed to the academic discourse surrounding feminism, social media, and activism through a multitude of conference presentations. For instance, at the Canadian Communication Association (CCA) Annual Conference 2024 in Montreal, Canada, she presented “Breaking Boundaries, Baring Bodies: Subversive Art in the Works of Iranian Feminist Artists on Instagram,” exploring how Iranian feminist artists utilize Instagram as a platform to challenge societal norms and push the boundaries of art and activism in an authoritarian context. Niloofar’s commitment to advancing feminist scholarship is exemplified through her participation in a roundtable at the International Studies Association (ISA) conference in San Francisco. Here, she joined a discussion titled “Feminist, Queer, and Femme Worldmaking of Protest, Care, and Solidarity,” where she shared insights into how feminist and queer activism transcends traditional boundaries, fostering global solidarity and care networks, especially in restrictive political environments. Her exploration of digital visibility and its complexities continues with her presentation “Unveiling Queer Visibility: The Complexities of Automediality on Instagram in an Authoritarian Context,” delivered at the Unfinished Revolutions conference 2024 at the University of Toronto. This paper delves into the challenges and risks faced by queer individuals in Iran who navigate social media spaces, shedding light on how they balance self-expression with the need for safety and anonymity. Niloofar’s work not only addresses the intersection of digital media and activism but also contributes to critical discussions on gender, sexuality, and the politics of representation, making her a prominent voice in the fields of communication and feminist studies.

Niloofar’s teaching experience at McMaster University underscores her dedication to education and student engagement. As a Sessional Instructor for the course “Social Activism and the Media” in Fall 2024, she created an interactive learning environment that encourages critical thinking and active participation. Her innovative approach to teaching has been well-received by students, who appreciate her ability to connect theoretical concepts with real-world applications. Niloofar’s upcoming guest lecture in my graduate seminar on “Transnational Feminisms of the Middle East and South Asia” exemplifies her expertise in the field of transnational feminism. Her lecture focuses on the shift in feminist activism in Iran, particularly through the lens of embodied resistance as expressed by Iranian women artists on Instagram. This engagement offers students a profound understanding of contemporary feminist practices and their impact within the Iranian context. In addition to her role as an instructor, Niloofar served as a Super Teaching Assistant (2023-2024),

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where she provided support for the courses “Foundation in Communication Theory and Methods” and “Introduction to Communication.” Her responsibilities included coordinating guest speakers, supporting and mentoring other teaching assistants, reviewing course materials, and ensuring that students received timely feedback on their assignments. Niloofar’s ability to manage these tasks efficiently while fostering a collaborative environment among her peers shows her leadership and organizational skills. Prior to her time at McMaster, Niloofar was an accomplished instructor at the University of Applied Science and Technology (2013-2017) and a Teaching Assistant at the University of Tehran (2015-2017). Her teaching repertoire includes a variety of subjects such as Media Literacy, Mass Communication Theory, Cultural Industries, and Sociology of Cinema. Her international teaching experience has enriched her pedagogical approach, allowing her to bring diverse perspectives into the classroom.

In addition to her academic publications, Niloofar has engaged in public scholarship, contributing articles to platforms like *The Conversation*, where her piece “The Protests in Iran Are Part of a Long History of Women’s Resistance” (2022) has reached a broad audience, highlighting her commitment to social justice and activism.

Beyond her teaching and research, Niloofar has also taken on leadership roles within the university. As the Coordinator for the Social Media and Activism Research Group (SMARG) at Pulse Lab, she has demonstrated her ability to lead and collaborate on complex research projects. Her involvement in the “Community Research Data-Toolkits” project at the Sherman Center for Digital Scholarship showcases her dedication to supporting social justice through research. Niloofar’s contributions to academia have been recognized through numerous scholarships and awards, including the prestigious Graduate Scholarship at McMaster University and the International Award for Scholarly Excellence. Her work has consistently been of the highest quality, earning her accolades and respect from her peers and mentors alike.

Niloofar is a scholar of remarkable ability, commitment, and potential. Her academic achievements, research contributions, and dedication to social justice make her an ideal candidate for any position she seeks to pursue. I have no doubt that she will continue to make significant contributions to the field of Communication and Cultural Studies and beyond. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information or if you would like to discuss Niloofar’s qualifications in more detail.

Sincerely,



Claudia Yaghoobi  
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