

Cover letter
Gender Studies, EHU

Dear Members of the Admission Committee,

I am part of a generation whose life was inevitably mediatized. The dense network of evolving online environments supplied information linked with hetero-patriarchal discourse. I was taught to limit my lifestyle to conform to the male gaze and rely on the gender performance allotted for women. It was higher education that made me understand the complexities of social structures, gender roles and their impact. In July 2022, I graduated from the Department of Social Sciences at European Humanities University with high distinction, where my major in Media and Communication equipped me with solid knowledge about society, its structural components, and functional practices.

During my feminist becoming, I actively engaged with various events organized by Dotyk and other Belarusian NGOs, deepening my involvement in the activist community. As a result, I lectured at the “Side by Side” queer film festival in Saint Petersburg, discussing the intersection of critical media studies, gender and sexuality.

At that time, I started my personal journey in therapy and was surprised to discover the persistence of patriarchal notions in therapeutic sessions. As my life was already informed by the works of Judith Butler, Kimberle Crenshaw, Audre Lord, Naomi Wolf and others, I could not accept this non-critical approach and felt a strong need for feminist psychological practices. As a result of feeling the urgency of the current gap in widely accepted therapy methods, I started obtaining education in this sphere in order to make a change. Since becoming a certified therapist and coach in 2023, I have worked with women on their socialization experiences, organizing free online individual / group sessions and retreats over the past year. These efforts have deepened my understanding of the intersection of gender, work, immigration, and other crises, requiring me to deconstruct heterosexist ideas and gain invaluable experience in addressing these issues.

Gender identity, self-relationship, and social roles that I explore in my work are directly related to the goals of EHU’s Gender Studies program. I believe this academic program will improve my knowledge in the field and equip me with the tools to foster a freer society, beginning with the unlearning of internalized ideological structures. As a therapeutic coach, I, in turn, am committed to sharing my expertise in creating safe spaces for women to explore and rethink their socialization experiences, which I can contribute to the various social projects continually emerging at European Humanities University.

If I am accepted to EHU, I will put my efforts into gaining essential skills for my research and practical career. I am specifically interested in the core gender and feminism theory courses, whereas «Sociology of Gender and Sexuality» and «Feminism: politics, theory, practice» are probably going to become an inspiration for my dissertation, which I want to dedicate to exploring feminist decolonial praxis. My experience of living in Africa and South-Asia and reading Gloria Anzaldúa and Maria Lugones gave me a perspective on how deeply the colonial past is entwined with patriarchal order and capitalism. I believe that in order to make greater steps towards a liberated society, we have to mind the unique experiences women have when intersected with different types of inequalities and colonial contexts, which is also true for our Belarusian women. In my work and in my research, I’m strongly devoted to bringing these topics to the fore.

Studying gender is a fascinating and thought-provoking path, which offers powerful tools for revealing different forms of oppression and inequality in our society. During my undergraduate study, I received vital skills and experience in media and gender studies, and I am committed to continuing my education in EHU’s master’s program, as it offers the most unique curriculum in our region.

Thank you for your consideration!

Kindest regards,

Dziyana Trafimava