The Academic Job Market in the Humanities and Social Sciences
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WHEN TO GO ON THE JOB MARKET
• ABD, nearly done, your advisor will tell you (should be able to vouch for you)
• being on the job market is very time consuming (finish your dissertation)
• there is little to lose in going out early on the current highly selective job market
  • even if you don’t get a response, the practice will be positive
  • experience of writing letters will help sharpen the focus of your dissertation/
    help you with your dissertation “elevator talk”

APPLYING
• send what they ask for

WHAT THE SEARCH COMMITTEE IS THINKING
• how is this person developing as a scholar?
• what is their work like in the field?
• what is their status as a scholar?
• what are they like as a teacher?
• will this person make a good colleague?

Cover Letter
• the aim is to customize a letter for each job as efficiently as possible--not to write a new
  letter each time!
• write directly, and to the point
• letter has to be sophisticated AND clear
• produce a letter that speaks to the genre
• should not be a narrative of your CV
• if you aren’t done with your dissertation, make it clear where the path is/how you are
  going to finish
• you might
  • explain what your dissertation means
  • explain the significance of your work in the field (the field does this, and I’m
    doing this)
  • how you can do the job
  • for R1 = how the research you are doing is going to matter
  • for lib arts = highlight and prioritize teaching
  • write about future research (a personal and unique project)
  • how you’ll get from the dissertation to the book
• it's appropriate to have different versions of the letter for different purposes--i.e., R1,
  Liberal Arts, different depts/disciplines, if you are applying to more than one
• it’s appropriate to develop paragraphs that you can lift in and out for different purposes
• avoid a 3rd page; be economical with your space
• remember the people that are reading your app may not be specialists in your field; get a
  friend outside of your field to read it
CV
• top of CV – where you are in your project/when you expect to finish
• avoid listing your teaching experience right after your project
• put references @ end

Writing Sample
• standard = 25 pages
• options:
  • work that you are most proud of
  • sample that is most representative of your work
  • something that has been published, will be published or has been through the process of peer review
  • a chunk of your dissertation (you can provide a précis – “this is what I did 15 pages before this, how I got here…” then you provide your sample; might even spur on questions for the interview – they might say, “tell me more about this writing sample.”)

Teaching Philosophy
• explain how you enjoy teaching
• explain your respect for the students
• show examples of collaboration
• express your openness to teaching
• convey that you are easy to work with, including students AND colleagues

Syllabi
• include syllabi relevant to the job you are applying for
• make it look like you can teach exactly what they are asking for
• if you can’t change the syllabus (not exactly right for the job) – attach a note – “this syllabus was designed for X class with Y students.”
• looking at total fabric of the class, use of current works & engagement with the field

Teaching Evaluations
• you might want to create your own teaching evaluations with specific questions related to what you’d like a committee to know about you.

Recommendations
• you might ask one of your recommenders to only write about your teaching (or research)

Dissertation Abstract
• one thing you can send that might not be requested
• keep it to 2 pages (1 is great, 2 is acceptable)
PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW

• you can ask, who/how many people you will be speaking to
• usually 2/3 faculty members, grad student may also be in attendance
• usually 20-30 minutes
• double check the time and location
• mind your etiquette – look interviewers in the eye, shake hands firmly, remember names, you should be professional but not overly formal
• 1st question often asked is “tell me something about your dissertation”
  • 1-2 min talk “elevator talk” pitch
  • you might want to write out a script and memorize it
• often asked “what are your strengths and weaknesses as a teacher”
• Tips:
  • know the department
  • what are their students like?
  • how do you complement the departments strengths?
  • talk about your strengths as a researcher/teacher
  • how could you teach a course in your area? (specific texts? themes you’d emphasize? what kind of assignments?)
  • practice speaking both broadly and specifically
  • ASK a question when they say “do you have a question?”
    • be strategic – make it about research, or teaching
    • ex. if there is a particular center related to the dept, ask about projects at that center.
  • know what your qualifications are as a researcher
  • know what your qualifications are as an ug teacher/grad teacher
  • be able to talk about plans for future research

Peculiarities of phone interviews:

• you can have notes if you are on the phone
• have the materials that the interviewers might have in front of you
• be aware of what time it is - caller might be in a different time zone
• use a landline if you can
• have pen & paper, glass of water
• be brief on the phone – you don’t have the body signals to watch if you are going on too long (you might make a brief point and then say, “I can go in if you’d like…)

Peculiarities of Skype interviews:

• check out what is behind you if you are on Skype
• turn off other programs on your computer
• mind the lighting
• tell other people in the house that you are interviewing
• test audio/video ahead of time
• practice looking into the camera
• PRACTICE interview on Skype with a friend
• dress professionally
• add extra enthusiasm for Skype
Peculiarities of conference interviews:

- bring copies of your syllabi so you have materials to reference
- in your brief case: copies of resume, syllabi, CV, dissertation, abstract so that if your interviewers don’t have the materials you can give them out
- might be in a room with numerous tables/simultaneous interviews, practice interviewing in a busy/loud setting

CAMPUS INTERVIEW

- you will most likely give a research talk, a teaching demonstration, and have interviews with the search committee, various faculty, the chair of the dept. and the dean
- be as flexible and organized as possible (the easier it is to work with you during the interviews, the better colleague you will seem to be)
- know when you are travelling/how you are going to get there/where you are going once you get there
- find out what you are going to do at the campus interview
  - what will you be wanting me to do?
  - who can I expect my audience to be? (faculty, ug, grads?)
  - how long should my talk(s) be?
- teaching demonstration/job talk
  - you should get the specifics of what the committee wants
  - avoid reading at the job talk; might use bullets/brief notes – you can read a specific paragraph, but in general, best to memorize
  - don’t just give a conference paper
  - try to go to job talks on campus to get a feel for them
- it is ok when you are on a long interview weekend to say “I’m running out of steam”
- be careful of the final dinner
  - careful not to let your guard down (you are still on!)
  - be very careful about drinking
  - be aware that the folks you are talking with may be letting their guards down and/or drinking freely. i.e., you will have to be a pro, even though you will really want to let loose
- remember – you are interviewing them, too.
- when it is over, right before you say you goodbye, it is ok to ask for some kind of timeline
- sometimes there is no on campus interview for visiting professor searchers
LANDED THE JOB
• if its your first job, right now with this market, you can’t really negotiate
• you don’t have to say yes right away
• find out if you can get “credit” for years of teaching
• sometimes there are things you can ask for – library books, library funds, access to journals, etc.
• you might be able to get some help with moving expenses
• sometimes you can get time towards tenure, esp if a book is coming out
  • you can stop a tenure clock only for maternity, otherwise it is 5 years
• if you are applying to a school that has a strong religious background, be ready to answer questions about what your beliefs are
• you only bring up a partner that needs a job if you ACTUALLY get the job
  • talking about your partner is unprofessional, asking for job, etc. on interviews
• try not to drive the hiring dept. crazy with questions because they will remember it.
• 2nd job – you can negotiate – you can make one counter offer

GENERAL NOTES:
• don’t apply for a job you don’t want
• always be honest and transparent
• @ interviews: you are always ON but you are always YOU
• try not to be too grateful - present yourself as someone they SHOULD have interviewed
• send one thank you note to the search committee chair