

## INFORMAL JOB MARKET GUIDE (2018-2019)

The information below is heavily weighted toward R1/R2 job seekers. This guide should also be supplemented with a lot of advice from your committee members as well as online sources such as the [Chronicle of Higher Education](#), [Inside Higher Ed](#), advice columns such as [ProfHacker](#), and blogs such as [The Professor Is In](#). If you're searching for a position outside of academia or a teaching position, you may have to seek out additional mentors on and off campus as well as dig deeply into supplementary online sources. Whatever kind of job you're looking for, please keep in touch with the placement officer about your progress and update him/her if there are any developments throughout this entire process. There is also a copy of [So What Are You Going to Do With That?](#), a book about non-academic careers, in Justine's office. There is an informal 3-day rental policy to use the book so that we can all continue to have access to it.

Additional websites you may wish to consult:

- [The Versatile PhD](#)
- [UNC Alt Ac Project](#)
- [Columbia University's Center for Career Education](#)
- [Future of the Book on Alt Ac](#)
- [What Can you do with a PhD?](#)
- [Federal Government Job Listings](#)

### 1. JOB MARKET TIMELINE

**May:**

- Contact your committee chair now and schedule a date in early fall when he/she will be able to come in to observe your class. The committee chair should incorporate the teaching observation into the recommendation
- Contact your entire committee to let them know you will be going on the market. Let them know when they can expect materials and when recommendation letters should be uploaded. Ideally, you should give your committee at least one month to look at your materials. This means drafts of your materials should be due by September 15. Preferably, all recommendation letters should be uploaded by October 15 and October 30 at the latest

**Summer:**

- Work on your dissertation: get as much writing done as you can. You won't get very much done while on the job market. Start thinking about a possible writing sample
- Start drafting job materials (see section 2 below). At minimum, work on (a) two versions of the cover letter; (b) the CV; (c) the dissertation abstract; and (d) the statement of teaching philosophy. Read as many

samples as you can get your hands on. Consult the binder in Justine's office as well as the samples in the job market google drive

- Sign up for an [Interfolio](#) account; recommenders will use this site to upload recommendations
- an addendum from someone who was recently on the market: "the September deadline for materials is important, especially for folks intending to apply for any of the high profile postdocs. A number of postdocs start coming due in mid-to late September, and many by mid October. This is also the period during which, increasingly, we start seeing early deadlines for TT jobs at some smaller liberal arts colleges who want to beat the rush at MLA. It seems that smaller programs with limited resources are beginning to try to run the entire search process during the fall so they can make offers by December and avoid having to jockey with other schools for candidates in the early spring. Also some of the more prestigious postdocs have started erecting barriers to application of various sorts. For example, the Dartmouth Society of Fellows now requires you to contact a faculty member there to sponsor you before you even submit materials. Last year a postdoc at McGill required applicants to do the same. Even if these postdocs aren't due until mid to late October, you're still going to need to solicit a faculty member much earlier. And to do that you're going to need to have complete application materials to send to the faculty member. Anyone who's thinking about applying for research fellowships in England (Ox or Cam) should be on the ball even earlier. Some of those start coming due in August and their materials are a little different, I think. I've never thought it worth applying precisely because I find I don't have the stamina to devote every waking minute to the market."

### **September 1:**

- Draft of materials (cover letter, CV, abstract, and teaching philosophy) due to placement officer and to your committee
- If you haven't already, make sure to contact the placement office to set up a time to introduce yourself and let him/her know your plans

### **Mid-September:**

- The Job Information List becomes available. Most of the listings usually show up at the start, though more jobs will be added from week to week throughout the schoolyear, even well into spring. This means you should keep checking every week. Copy job descriptions into your computer, as they sometimes tend to disappear from the JIL. Instead of doing a search for specific terms, I recommend reading through all the listings in your field, any peripheral fields for which you may be qualified, and the generalist area. The JIL is now free to search on the [MLA website](#), even if you are not a MLA member
- Other sites to go to for job positions, especially if you are searching for community college jobs include:

- [HigherEd](#); the same site also has a section devoted to searching for [community college jobs](#)
  - [Chronicle of Higher Education](#)
  - [Academic360](#)
  - [Higher Education Recruitment Consortium](#) (has a “dual-career” search function for those with the two-body academic partner problem)
  - [H-Net](#)
  - [Community College Week](#)
  - [Academic Job Wiki](#)
- Create a spreadsheet to keep track of which jobs you are going to apply for, their requirements, and their deadlines on a spreadsheet

#### **Mid-September to end-of-October:**

- 15 September: please send your committee everything you have written for the dissertation to date and the latest drafts of your job materials
- Discuss with your committee chair about which writing sample to use/excerpt from the dissertation. Work on excerpting and polishing writing sample
- Polish job materials based on feedback from placement officer and committee

#### **October-November:**

- Apply for jobs: do not try to second-guess job descriptions or to figure out what search committees want based on the advertisement; many times, the descriptions are a compromise between and/or a composite of different goals of different members of the search committee. You should address the description in your letter, but ideally, don't feel compelled to present yourself as something you're not
- The earliest post-doctoral fellowship applications usually are due Oct. 1<sup>th</sup>. Most job applications have a November deadline, though applications are starting to be due as early as mid-October. The latest (in the fall semester) is usually December 1. It's best not to wait till the last possible minute to submit your application, especially if committee members are looking at applications on a rolling basis. You don't want yours to be the one coming in when they're all tired of reading
- Many MLA interviews now offer you the option of skyping in, rather than meeting in person. That said, if you can manage it financially, I suggest trying to have in-person interviews wherever possible as it's easier to control the interpersonal dynamics. If you decide to attend MLA, try to book a hotel room and flight sometime in November as hotel rooms fill quickly and flights get more expensive. Note that MLA hotels are usually decently priced and they are also going to be very near any hotel your interview will be held at

#### **Mid-November through December:**

- Start prepping for interviews; address requests (for second writing samples, syllabi, etc.) as they come in. Again, since many schools are turning to Skype for interviews, your interview may occur much earlier than the MLA
- Make sure to let the placement officer/ DGS know that you'd like a mock interview before November 1 so s/he will have enough time to schedule one for you. Also consider practicing with friends/colleagues as many times as you can
- For interview prep, prepare answers to any or all of the [questions listed here](#) and make sure it sounds impromptu, rather than rehearsed
- Make sure that you always take (or prepare) a dual approach to every question: big picture statement with a pithy and illuminating detail to go with it

### **Early January MLA:**

- Be aware of the MLA suite problem: you need to find out from the school how they want you to find out their room numbers. Do exactly as they tell you: if they want you to call up 10 minutes before your interview time, do so, no matter how awkward it feels. Conscientious chairs will e-mail and/or call you; you can also find out from the Job Information Center at MLA itself, if the chair has provided them the information. Be aware that some schools also conduct interviews at a general, public area; the MLA provides a section of the hotel for this—but you'll be conducting the interview in plain sight of everybody else
- You may—or may not—want to bring sample syllabi to your interviews. Some schools will ask you to. Or, if they don't ask for sample syllabi, you might consider handing them to the interviewers at the end of the interview
- After MLA, schedules are harder to determine: flybacks and campus visits can occur anywhere from immediately after MLA to March/April. It all depends on the search committee's schedules. You should feel free to ask them at the interview if they have a timeline

### **Post-MLA campus visits:**

- You will need to prepare a job talk (40 minutes, usually—but ask them specifically), and sometimes you'll be asked to give a teaching demonstration. Sometimes they'll want you to give a talk without reading from a paper—again, it depends on the school. Also prepare questions to ask them - you will be asked if you have any questions but it's also an opportunity for you to demonstrate your genuine interest in the position
- Do your research on the department/ institution: find out what kind of courses they offer, what kind of students, the research interests of the faculty. At the very least, you want to be able to say, "yes, I see that you have a close reading/ critical writing requirement for your major. I've taught a very similar course, in which I did x and y."
- During campus visits, expect to also (1) meet various administrators: you'll ask them about the university; they'll ask you about your research; (2) have

dinners/lunches with faculty and graduate students; (3) be shown the campus/town/etc

- Campus visits are exhausting - try to pace yourself and don't get hung up over every detail. Just be yourself: at this point, they're trying to impress you as much as vice versa

### **Spring Job Search**

- If you haven't landed a job, don't despair: first of all, the job market should be seen as an impersonal and arbitrary force that's as inexplicable as an absent deity, so rejection frequently doesn't reflect on you. Second, and more importantly, a number of listings appear in spring. Fewer, to be sure, and most usually these are adjunct and/or visiting positions; but it's worth looking out for these and applying to them.

## **2. JOB APPLICATION MATERIALS**

- Job/cover letter: no more than 2 pages; details on the form of the letter are below
- Dissertation synopsis: no more than 2 pages. Should include an overview of the project and chapter descriptions. Some advertisements won't ask for this, but my strong recommendation is to send it anyway
- Curriculum vitae: if you don't have something published already, make sure you have at least something under submission at a top-tier journal
- Writing Sample: usually no more than 25 pages
- 3 letters of recommendation: make sure that at least one of them can address your teaching, if not all of them. Consider getting one or two additional "teaching letter(s)" from people not on your committee and who can focus solely on your teaching
- If you are ABD, there are one or two letters from administrators that you may need to have on file in order to apply to certain postdocs.
  - a letter from The Graduate School, The Registrar, or The Department Head that says you will be expected to be awarded your degree by a certain date. The Department Head is probably the most accessible of these folks.
  - a letter from the DGS saying you expect to defend and complete requirements by a certain date (I think the end of June is fine for this one). This letter is helpful because it can be a bit more of a realistic goal than the defend-by-April-whatever necessary for the May degree conferral in relation to the reco letters you've got (and their assessment of where you are in the process).

### **Format for your research letter:**

- This is the most important document of the application packet, since it is the first thing that search committees will look at (and sometimes the only thing). The best way to figure out how to write a good job letter is to look at many, many samples. Get hold of as many as you can
- The most important rule is to write for a generalist audience. This means NO JARGON. If you're a modernist, a medievalist should be able to

understand what you're working on and your dissertation's argument. And vice versa

- I do not recommend going beyond two pages; 3-page letters are usually only written by senior scholars who have lengthy CVs. That said, if you choose to go to three pages, I strongly recommend using headings
  - Use a clear and easily readable font: remember, the search committee has to wade through hundreds of these
  - Tailor the job letter to the school: you will need two versions at least, a letter for research-intensive institutions; and a letter for teaching-intensive institutions. Do not mix the two up. Don't imagine that "liberal arts" colleges are always teaching-intensive; the more prestigious ones care just as much about research. If you are applying to community colleges, teaching should be the main focus and research should be mentioned as a vehicle for furthering your teaching
  - Try and incorporate important information from your CV into your letter, on the chance that the CV is overlooked: this especially includes publications or important fellowships/awards
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- Paragraph #1: should state, at bare minimum, the position you're applying for; who you are and where you're receiving your PhD; if you have not defended, your expected or scheduled date of defense; fields of interest/specialization in research and teaching; and if you have any publications, highlight them in the first paragraph OR you might wish to list publications in paragraphs 2-3, especially if they're from your dissertation
  - Paragraphs #2 to #3: This should be a 1-2 paragraph version of your dissertation synopsis. Remember, you need to clearly articulate your argument, your intervention in the field, the authors you are working on—and you need to do it in a clear and non-jargony way. Search committee members read through these things quickly: they're not going to stop to try and figure out what you actually mean, if you're being obscure about it. It might also be useful to give a concrete example that will paradigmatically illustrate the argument. Agasin, you may also wish to list any parts of your dissertation that have been published here
  - Paragraph #3/4: You can segue straightaway to the teaching paragraph here (see below). Alternatively, you may wish to set out the "second project" paragraph. Realistically speaking, who expects graduate students to have a second project when they've barely finished their dissertation? A paragraph like this can sometimes seem preposterous. The other perspective is that many graduate students are putting them in. You may be asked about second projects at interviews/campus visits too, and you don't want to be caught with nothing to say. However, if you do insert a second-project paragraph, you'd better be able to talk about it with some intelligence if there are follow-up questions (and there probably will be). So don't invent a topic that you know absolutely nothing about; it's best to invent around your own areas of expertise

- Paragraph #4/5: The teaching paragraph is the second most important paragraph in the letter. It should convey: your teaching experience and courses you've already taught; courses you would be excited/qualified to offer at School X; some sense of your pedagogical approach and beliefs; and it should give one or two very specific examples so that your teaching approach is memorable. This is probably the paragraph that can be tailored the most to whatever posting you're applying to: for a generalist position, for instance, you want to be able to demonstrate breadth, rather than offering to teach a course based entirely on the minutiae of your dissertation etc
- Concluding paragraph: State that you'll be at MLA and are available for interviews there or in another format at their convenience. State what you're sending along with the letter (CV, writing sample, abstract, etc.). State how and where you can be reached. Thank them for their consideration, and sign off

#### **Format for your teaching job letter:**

- Most places that are advertised through the MLA think of themselves as "research oriented" even if they have a 4/4 load. That said, I would definitely bulk up the teaching paragraph and include a briefer research paragraph for those institutions. I would make the links between research and teaching crystal clear. Some advise flipping the paragraphs for those positions that are teaching post-docs or community colleges.
- Paragraph #1: should state, at bare minimum, the position you're applying for; who you are and where you're receiving your PhD; if you have not defended, your expected or scheduled date of defense; what kinds of courses you've been teaching/ positions occupied (as in lead GPTI, TA, etc.)
- Paragraphs #2 to #3: Teaching paragraphs should convey: your teaching experience and courses you've already taught; courses you would be excited/qualified to offer at School X; some sense of your pedagogical approach and beliefs. This is probably the paragraph that can be tailored the most to whatever posting you're applying to: for a generalist position, for instance, you want to be able to demonstrate breadth, rather than offering to teach a course based entirely on the minutiae of your dissertation etc
- Paragraph 3 or 4: other kinds of pedagogical experience (tutoring, seminars, mentoring) that make your teaching focus apparent
- Paragraph 4 or 5: a brief discussion of your research and how it informs your teaching; plans for publication or actual publications
- Concluding paragraph: State that you are available for interviews at their convenience. State what you're sending along with the letter all the materials they requested. State how and where you can be reached. Thank them for their consideration, and sign off

#### **Additional documents you should prepare:**

- Statement of Teaching Philosophy: be concrete, with specific examples of what you do in the classroom, rather than abstract. This document should

tell a story about what kind of approach you take and how it has worked in specific instances

- Second writing sample: not always asked for, but some schools want to see more
- Sample syllabi for courses at various levels: (i) a introductory survey course in your field; (ii) a special topics senior course in your field; (iii) a graduate course (depending on where you're applying to); (iv) more general Brit lit/American lit surveys. These will, of course, vary depending on the schools you're applying to. You may want to prepare composition courses, for instance
- A teaching portfolio: which should include statement of teaching philosophy; sample syllabi; student evaluations; sample assignments; sample course handouts; etc

### 3. POSTDOCS

- Postdoctoral applications require a slightly different application package. You're usually asked to include the following: Research proposal (lengths vary and will be specified in the application guidelines); Curriculum vitae; Proposed courses (syllabi and description); Writing sample; Letters of recommendation
- The research proposal should be very much like a grant proposal: it should be a combination of your dissertation synopsis—in which you outline your project—but it should also outline clearly the work that you plan to do during your postdoctoral year. For sample proposals, I recommend looking at the [National Endowment of Humanities website](#), which has a number of these and can be useful models
- If possible, try and get your recommenders to tailor letters for postdocs, as opposed to letters for job positions: at the very least, the letter could state, "I am recommending X for Y postdoc" (as opposed to "I am recommending X for a position at Y University")
- Postdocs change from year to year and the best way to keep abreast of what positions are available for the forthcoming academic year is to look at the [humanities postdoc wiki website](#), which is constantly updated by collective wisdom, so keep checking it
- Other postdocs:
  - [Berkeley's list of Postdoctoral Fellowships in the Humanities](#)
  - [ACLS New Faculty Fellows](#)
  - [Columbia University Society of Fellows](#)
  - [Princeton University Society of Fellows in the Liberal Arts](#)
  - [University of Michigan Society of Fellows](#)
  - [Penn Humanities Forum](#)
  - [University of Chicago Society of Fellows](#)
  - [Wesleyan Andrew Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship](#)
  - [American Association of University Women](#)
  - [Stanford Humanities Fellowship](#)
  - [Washington University, Mellon Postdoc in Interdisciplinary Inquiry](#)

- [Cornell Society for the Humanities](#)
- [Dartmouth Leslie Center for the Humanities Mellon Fellowship](#)
- [University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowships](#)
- [ACLS Public Postdoctoral Fellow \(non-profits\)](#)

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