

# How to Turn Your Ph.D. Into a Job

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of The Professor Is In

# A Word of Self-Introduction

UH Ph.D.; tenure track (UO, UIUC); Anthro and E. Asian Studies

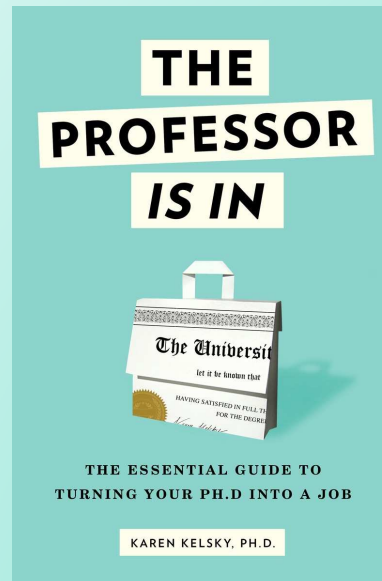
Got tenure; became Department Head for 5 year term

Left the academy in 2009

In 2011 I started **The Professor Is In** ([theprofessorisin.com](http://theprofessorisin.com))

My team and I work directly with clients from all over the world (over 6000 so far) on cover letters, CVs, teaching statements, postdoc applications, job talks, book proposals, grants, etc.; also interview preparation and negotiation help; I lead online webinars; I write a weekly advice column for Chronicle Vitae, I speak on campuses. I run a post-academic wing with a team of advisors, and I have written a book.

# ***The Professor Is In: The Essential Guide to Turning Your Ph.D. Into a Job***



Covers the competitive record, search committee psychology, job documents, interviews, campus visit, job talks, negotiating, as well as grant-writing, and the post-academic transition.

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# Core Requirement of Turning Your Ph.D. Into Job

Job-focused state of mind

Just say no to denial

Politely ignore advisors who peddle false hope and impose rigid expectations

Start job prep from day one: both ac and non-ac

# The Path of Your Application

The job is advertised in early Fall.

After the deadline, all viable applications considered (250-1000)

The search committee members will each choose their top 20-ish

They will meet to finalize the long short list mid-Fall

The long short list will be asked for writing samples, more info, perhaps a skype/conference interview in November-January

SC chooses a short-short list and presents to whole department:  
typically 3 invites, with 2 alternates

Whole department votes to approve

Short-short list candidates invited to campus in early Spring

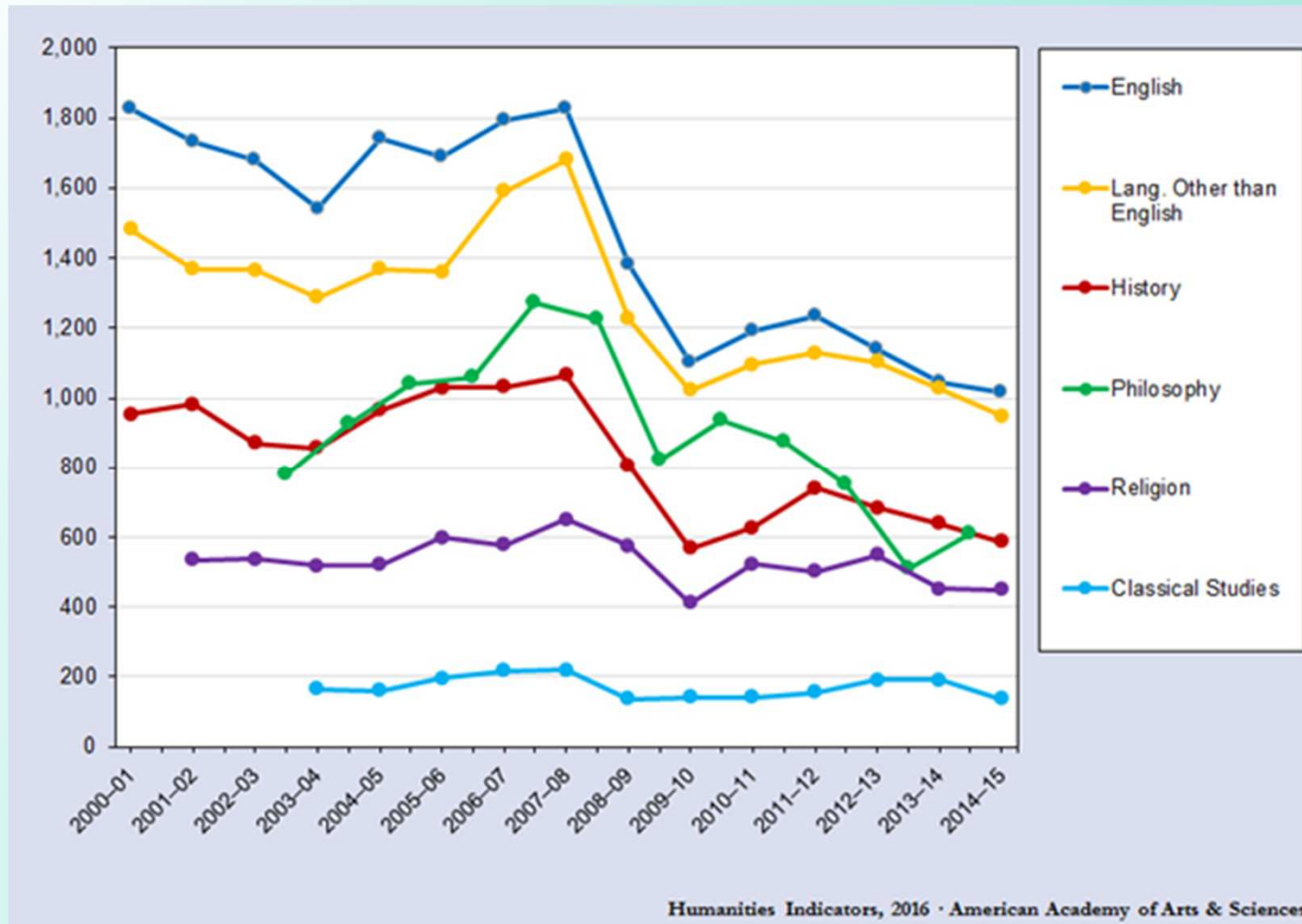
Search committee/department votes ranking AND  
acceptable/unacceptable

Offer made and negotiated.

# The Conditions of the US Market

- University system is in slow motion (but accelerating) freefall
- Massive disinvestment, both econ and political causes
- Economic: declining state and federal funding (most “state” universities get only 10% or less of their funding from the state)
- Political: No longer believe in a public good. Business/corporate logic: cost-cutting and downsizing

# Humanities Job Openings



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# Sciences Also

(from The Cheeky Scientist)

100,000—number of PhDs granted in a four year period

16,000—number of professorships opened in the same four year period

84,000—number of PhDs left over every four years

>60%—number of PhDs who will NOT have a paying job at graduation

>80%—number of Life Sciences PhDs who will NOT have a paying job at graduation

<1%—number PhDs will go on to be tenured professors. *Less than 1%!*

43%—PhD students will NOT get their PhD within 10 years of starting graduate school

\$42,000 (or ~\$19/hour)—annual starting salary (before taxes) of a postdoc in the U.S.

\$55,272 (or ~\$26/hour)—salary of a 7<sup>th</sup> year postdoc.

# Adjunctification

Adjuncts, instructors, part-timers are 76% of university instructors. (Learn more at [New Faculty Majority](#))

25% of adjuncts live below the US poverty line and qualify for public assistance

What does this mean for the job-seeker? “Vocation” and “calling” language is dangerous. Calculate ROI in all things.

# Impact on Departments?

“My dept has lost a net of 21 full time faculty since 2010. We might get to hire one next year.” (R1 Full Prof’s FB page, April 2016)

“We lost a net of 25 between 2000 and 2005, have never regained any of that, now half remaining faculty 65+ y.o.” (comment thread)

“We've gone from 18 in English to 10, and seven in ESL to 3. I couldn't even get authorization to replace somebody who died.” (comment thread)

# Search Committee Stress

Loss of colleagues means more service and teaching burden on remaining faculty.

Overheated job market means each job gets 200-1000 applications.

**Bottom Line: Search Committee members are stressed, exhausted, and distracted.**

# The Search Committee Wants to Reject You

- To get from a pool of ~500 to a long short list of ~25...
- “How fast can I cut this pile to 25 and go to bed?”
- Their bias is to REJECT.
- **Bottom Line: If you don't grab and hold them in the first minute or so, you're toast.**

# How To Not Get Rejected

## Crucial Combination–

- . Your Record
- . Your Application Materials
- . ~~~~~
- . Your Interview Skills

# Your Record

- Publish in major refereed journals
- Get grants—preferably national, not campus
- Be active in high prestige conferences
- Cultivate well-known recommender
- Teaching, but don't overdo it
- STEM record // Arts record

# The Qualities of Successful Candidates

- Intensive productivity, looking forward not back
- Professionalization
- Autonomy and self-respect
- Effective self-promotion/entrepreneurialism
- Affable collegiality

*Note: These qualities apply equally to ABD candidates*



# Ranks/Types of US Higher Education Institutions

Ivy League and “Public Ivies”

R1

R2

Public (state) comprehensive

Teaching college

Small liberal arts college (SLAC), elite

Small liberal arts college (SLAC), non-elite

Small liberal arts college (SLAC), religious/formerly religious affiliation

Community college

**Huge disparity in salary, res. support, teaching load**

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# Strategizing I of II

**Write your diss/research with an eye to the publications that it will become.** You need at least one refereed journal article, probably more.

**Remember that the best dissertation is a finished dissertation.**

**Strategize publications.** Publications that date from before you accept your tenure-track job usually do not count toward tenure

If you are in a book field, **have a book plan.** Book mss. Cannot be more than half published in article form.

# Strategizing II of II

**Be the sole instructor of at least one course but not more than about three** (if you can help it). After about three, the benefit of additional teaching experience diminishes.

**In the year before you go on the job market, organize a panel for your national conference** that is made up of up-and-coming assistant professors. Ask a well-known scholar to serve as discussant.

**Cultivate a letter writer who is not from your Ph.D.-granting institution.** Having all your recommendation letters come from your own committee or department is the sign of a relatively immature candidate.

**Apply for all grants** you can, especially national ones; in sciences have a 5-year grant plan.

# Social Media Presence?

- Candidates are googled
- Have a website/Vitae profile/Academia.edu page with research summary, papers, publications, syllabi, etc.
- Use only professional looking photos
- Set your Facebook setting for privacy
- Twitter is a very active and engaged space for academics

# Avoid the Temptation of the Cheap

Don't accept invitations without careful critical evaluation!

Many careers lost because of too-quickly accepted invitations

- Edited collections
- Graduate student conferences
- Crappy third tier presses

Chapter: “Don't Get Your Career at Costco”

# Your 5-Year Plan for Tenure

On the job market you are being evaluated for tenurability.

Your temptation is to look backward at what you've done

You need to look forward to what you'll achieve in 5-year probationary period.

# THE 5-YEAR PLAN

XXXXX's Plan 2003-'07

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
'03				Beginning AAA proposal				Beginning AAS proposal	22 Conf T. Grant		1 Wen- Gren 1 JPNF 3 SSRC 23 AAA	31 JPN: Genders 1st
'04	1 NSF	23 Conf T. Grant	4-7 AAS 8 Diss. T. Grant	1 AAA proposal	15 Bester 17 Prelim. 31 Prelim	1 SHA 14 Prelim 29 JPN: Genders 2nd	9 Prelim 12-8/10 Res in J. (15-29?)	6 AAS proposal 10 Oral 22 Move 31 Book Ch Final	Conf T. Grant		15 AAUW 17-21 AAA SFO	Beginning IPRH Fellowship 10 SSRC (Sexuality)
'05		1 Guggenheim	31-4/3 AAS Chicago Conf. T. grant	Beginning -Diss. Comp. Fellowship -AAA proposal				Beginning AAS proposal	JPN: Genders Publication		30-12/4 AAA DC	
'06				Beginning AAA proposal 6-9 AAS SFO				Beginning AAS proposal				
'07			22-25 AAS Boston	Beginning AAA proposal		Diss. Defense!		Beginning AAS proposal				

# Managing Your Image: From Peon to Peer

- You've spent 5-10 years as a graduate student, which means---subordinate status marked by deferential behavior
- Suddenly, on the job market, you must comport yourself like a peer, authority, expert in your field, and professional scholar.



# Making the Transition

- Appropriate dress (leave behind the backpack)
- Steady, level eye contact and firm handshake
- Professorial, adult speech patterns
- Prepared, concise answers to all major questions re teaching and research
- Strong but brief statement of your contribution to your field(s)

# The Ethos of Effective Job Market Documents

- Concise: 2 page CL, 1 page TS, 2-4 page RS (CV has no page limit normally)
- Confident and focused exclusively on achievements, not gaps
- **Fact-based, not emotion-based**
- Focused on finished work, not on process getting there
- Your work does not “speak for itself,” it needs laborious translation.

# The Skepticism Principle

Academics—whether in Classics or Chemistry – are skeptical.

Academics expect, and respond to, reliable evidence and careful argumentation

The same principle applies in job docs and interviews

# The Most Common Pitfalls for Job Seekers

1. The self-discovery trap
1. Hyper-emotionalism
2. Telling, not showing
3. Excessive humility and pandering

# The Self-Discovery Trap

## Obsession with your own process:

Example: “I have always been fascinated by xxx, and that led me to pursue an inquiry into yyy for my dissertation. First I approached it from the angle of zzzz, but then I realized that a methodology that emphasized rrr would yield more insight. That recognition inspired me to suggest that pppp.... “

Vs. “My dissertation focused on yyy, using the rrr method. I argue pppp.”

**Point: Nobody cares about your process. They want to know what you researched, concluded, and published, when. And what next.**

# Hyper-Emotionalism

- I am **fascinated** by the question of xxx.
- I **firmly believe** in the value of yy theory.
- I **yearn** to teach students these skills.
- I **love** being in the classroom.
- I am **passionate** about teaching.
- I **desire** to bring my findings to a wider...

**Bottom Line: Facts, not emotions.**

# Hyper-Emotionalism II

Adjectives and adverbs are often cheap efforts to artificially pump up the emotional punch of your letter.

“My work is an **important** and **innovative** exploration of a **badly under-studied** topic in the field, and it utilizes **unique** methodologies that have yielded **remarkable new** insights that will have **wide** impact.”

Vs.

“My work is the first to examine the topic of xxx using the methods of yy and zz. An examination of xxx in this manner has yielded the insight that in contrast to previous studies, xxx may be understood as qq.”

# Telling, Not Showing

“I am a passionate and committed teacher who always finds innovative ways to engage student interests.”

Vs.

“In the Introductory class I teach fundamentals of ethnographic research, and then assign mini-ethnographies that allow students to research a group in the community of their choice. At the end they present their research in a class ‘conference.’ Students in the course nominated me for the X teaching award twice.”



# Excessive Humility/Pandering

- **I believe** that my training in xxx makes me a **qualified candidate** for this position...
- **I was fortunate enough** to have the opportunity to....
- **I trained under Prof. XXX** and **inspired by** him I have **attempted** to explore...
- **I would strive/seek/aim/try/endeavor/attempt** to become a teacher and scholar **worthy of your** illustrious department...
- It would be **an honor and a privilege** to teach at....

**Bottom Line: Make them want you. It is not unlike dating...**

# Interview Intervention Questions

1. Tell us about your dissertation, and its contribution to the field.
2. Tell us about your five year publishing/grant plan
3. How would you teach our Intro / Methods course?
4. Briefly describe two courses you would develop for us.
5. (How would you mentor graduate students?)
6. How do you deal with diversity in work/teaching?
7. How do you see your work fitting into the work we do here at the department?
8. Do you have any questions for us?

# The Keys to Academic Interviewing

## 1. Concise

In a conference interview of 30 minutes...how much time do you really have to talk?

## 2. Properly Conceptualized and Organized

All answers must target the information THEY need for the position.  
Cast your work to FIT the job, with no digressions, or extraneous detail.

## 3. Well-Rehearsed

Bullet point roadmaps to all major questions and practice exhaustively ahead of time until second nature.

# How Long to Try?

No hard and fast rule...

Financial calculation re: income, debt, dependents, etc.

3 years is common, if you can afford it (**not inc. postdoc years... but beware the permadoc**)

After that—move on.

# In Conclusion: Don't Be Yourself

As a junior academic, you are likely: insecure, verbose, defensive, paranoid, beset by feelings of inadequacy, pretentious, self-involved, communicatively challenged, and fixated on minutiae.

This isn't your fault—you've been socialized this way.

Consequently, here's how you are likely to come across in your job search: rambling, obscure, petrified, subservient, cringing, disorganized, braggy, over-emotional, self-absorbed, defensive, and fixated on minutiae.

**Jettison “yourself” (Don't worry--your personality will still shine through)**

# Discipline Your Writing and Speech to Create a Professional Persona

**An autonomous professional who commands:**

- a tightly organized research program,
- a calm confidence in a research contribution to a field or discipline,
- a clear and specific trajectory of publications,
- innovative but concise, non-emotional ideas about teaching at all levels of the curriculum,
- a non-defensive openness to the exchange of ideas,
- A grasp of the real (as opposed to fantasy) needs of actual hiring departments.

And...

# Remember: It's YOUR Career

Academia fosters dependency on the approval of others.

You can reclaim autonomy, whether you stay in the academy or not.

It is OK to do something else.

# Work With The Professor Is In

- 1) Individual editing of your job documents (schedule with me at [gettenure@gmail.com](mailto:gettenure@gmail.com))
- 2) Interview/Campus Visit/Job Talk Interventions by Skype  
[http://www.vcita.com/v/3fbc7c63/online\\_scheduling?o=c2lkZWJhcl93aWRnZXQ%3D&s=http%3A%2F%2Fstirwriters.com%2F%3Fcat%3D11#/schedule](http://www.vcita.com/v/3fbc7c63/online_scheduling?o=c2lkZWJhcl93aWRnZXQ%3D&s=http%3A%2F%2Fstirwriters.com%2F%3Fcat%3D11#/schedule)
- 3) Negotiating Help
- 4) Grant apps, postdoc apps, book proposals...
- 5) Post-academic/Out-academic transition



Thank you. And, best of luck in your job search....

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