

## The trials and tribulations of the job market

Advice and sympathies

Halloween, 2003

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If you're fortunate,  
at least three steps

1. application
2. interview
3. visit and job talk

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## Acting as your own agent

**Applying for jobs can be all-consuming.**

It is easy to spend all your time describing your dissertation  
in application materials

This is a serious threat to the dissertation's existence.

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## The application

**The goal** To get yourself an interview.

- Make your contact information easy to find in the file.
- Strive to impart a sense for how great it is to have you around all the time.
- Indicate not only what you are doing now, but also what you would (could) do if hired.

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## Typical pieces to an application

1. cover letter
2. representative written work
3. research statement
4. teaching statement
5. student evaluations
6. course syllabus
7. letters of reference

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## General advice

Draft these things *before* the pressure is on.

If you're in your third year, draft them now, so that you don't have to sit down to a a blank computer screen when deadlines are looming.

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## The cover letter

The cover letter is a guide to the application.

- not more than two pages
- a chance to highlight important publications and experiences that appear on other documents
- a place to stress that you have whatever special properties the job announcement mentions
- the place to say where your letters of reference are coming from

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## Representative written work

Search committees are unlikely to have time to read these things.

Thus, don't presuppose knowledge of the materials at any time during the application process.

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## Include the dissertation?

It depends on how far along the work is.

**Suggestion** Include a brief summary, with about a page devoted to each chapter (whether written or still in the planning stages).

This document should suggest to search committees that it's all over but the writing.

It will help guide you as you write.

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## The research statement

**The danger** You'll end up simply listing your experiences.

**The solution** List your experiences. Then step back. Extract a unifying theme. Then use that theme to structure the piece.

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## Teaching materials

- Probably you have taught your own course. This is a tremendous advantage. Make sure that the experience is advertised prominently in your application.
- A syllabus from your course is great evidence that you know how to organize a semester's worth of material.

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## Letters of reference

Ask for these well in advance of the deadline.

Send a gentle reminder about 10 days before the deadline.

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## Top Ten Interview Questions

Thanks to Peggy Speas; I heard the starred questions in the wild.

1. ★ Tell us about your dissertation.
2. ★ What are some of your other interests?
3. ★ What courses can you teach?
4. ★ How would you teach a course in [subject  $x$ ]?
5. ★ What do you see as the major trends in your field for the next 10 years?

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## Top Ten Interview Questions

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6. ★ What do you hope to be doing in 10 years?
7. How would you compare [your sub area and theory] with [theory  $x$ , superceded by yours but fondly practiced by members of interviewing faculty]?
8. What does your theory have to say about facts  $x$ ,  $y$  and  $z$  in Navajo/Icelandic/French?
9. ★ Do you have any questions for us?
10. ★ What sorts of interdisciplinary courses could you teach/projects would you be interested in?

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## Additional questions that I got

1. If you had to make a list of greatest hits in semantics, what would top the list?
2. Can you teach historical linguistics?
3. Do you have experience with grants and grant proposals?

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## Be honest

Don't be afraid to say "No". An occasional "no" can help validate your other 'yes's.

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## Job talk and visit

Getting this far is an honor and an achievement.

The visit is not a probe to find out whether you are any good.  
They already know you are good: that's why they invited you.

The visit is a way of finding out whether you could work well  
with the others in the department.

## Care of Chris Barker

To get a job, you have to:

1. deserve one; *and*
2. get lucky.