

Job Market Advice

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Notes:

- If anything here contradicts your advisor, ignore me. Likewise, these are strategies that I found useful during my job search. Your situation may be completely different, so use what is valuable and ignore everything else.
- I am a Latin Americanist literary scholar, and I was principally interested in positions at research institutions. This means that, while much of the below advice may be useful to job applicants from any field, there are some pieces of advice that are quite discipline specific. So, if I say, “attend LASA”, translate that to your field (“attend X prestigious conference”). Likewise, if you are keen on a teaching position, the below document may not offer the most pertinent information to your job search.
- I did a “soft” job market year in 2017-2018 and a full job market year in 2018-2019, so this advice is based on my experience in those two job market cycles.

The summer before the job market:

- Prioritize completing your materials. Your future self will thank you.
 - **CV**
 - **Cover letter***
 - **Research statement**
 - **Teaching statement**
 - **Writing sample** (preferably a chapter from your dissertation)
 - Sample syllabi (one undergrad, one grad)
 - Diversity statement
 - Job talk (drawn from a different dissertation chapter)**

- Still make progress on the dissertation. (Note that the writing sample and job talk *are* progress on the dissertation!)
- Read [The Professor is In](#). Consider [buying her book](#).
- Have a system. I used Dropbox, and I had a folder for each position. Relatedly, begin a spreadsheet with positions, deadlines, required documents, contact information, etc.
- *You will need two versions of the cover letter if you apply to both research and teaching institutions, but focus on getting one solid version done before the job market starts.
- **Having a finished chapter for the job talk is crucial. I had a month to prepare for my first campus visit, but I know colleagues who had 10 days to prepare. You do not want to have to write a job talk *and* do all the necessary research and prep for the campus visit in 10 days. Do yourself a favor and have two solid chapters (writing sample + job talk) completed and polished for the job market (NB: this is undoubtedly necessary to be able to finish the dissertation in the spring anyway).

My summer schedule looked like this:

Monday:	Dissertation
Tuesday:	Dissertation
Wednesday:	Job materials
Thursday (half day):	Whatever I felt inspired to work on (diss, job materials, article)
Friday:	Article
Saturday:	Nothing (human time)
Sunday (half day):	Job materials

Note 1: I work well in blocks, but if your brain functions better by jumping from task to task, do what works for you. Just try to make progress.

Note 2: In some cases, working on the dissertation is also working on job market materials, particularly if you are finalizing your first two chapters.

Note 3: I typically worked summers during grad school (teaching, translating, directing studies abroad, etc.), but I took the summer before the job market off to polish materials and advance on the dissertation. If your grad student salary is like mine, this will likely be difficult. However, I made it a priority to save up for that summer, and it was worth it. I told myself that, although I might be strapped for money in the short term, getting a job because I had solid materials would be worth it. If you can't do this, don't fret, just carve out time for your dissertation and materials as you can.

Job sites that I used:

[Inside Higher Ed](#)
[Chronicle Vitae](#)
[LASA](#)

[Academic Jobs Online](#) (lots of
 postdoc ads here)
[MLA Job Information List](#)

Get on email listservs of pertinent organizations. I heard about many jobs from the Latina/o Studies Association and the LASA Section mailing lists.

General advice to prepare for a solid job market year:

(some advice is specific to job market, but some items you can think about as early as coursework):

1. #1: If you want a research position, **publish something peer-reviewed. Now.** Get it out early, because your article may be rejected (my first submission was rejected!), and then you have to revise and resubmit elsewhere. And the editorial process takes forever, so you will wait a long time to hear whether your piece is accepted, rejected, or R&R. In my experience, editorial decisions take 3 months to a year. Then there are revisions (based on reviewers' feedback), then final proofs.
 - a. On this note, don't be intimidated about publishing. It seems like such a daunting, mysterious task, but it's just another form of sharing your work with other scholars. My best advice for a successful publishing experience (which is crucial to a successful job market experience) is:
 - Research potential journals and decide the best fit for your piece based on topic, theoretical approach, language. A good way to do this is to read a few articles from various journals to get a feel for the style/content they are looking for. Also, ask your advisor for advice on where to publish. Finally, I found it helpful to look at the CVs of professors that "fit my profile" (in my case, Latin Americanists interested in literary theory/philosophy, contemporary narrative, etc.), and I checked out the venues they had published in for an idea of where to submit to.
 - Check [MLA Directory of Periodicals](#) to see how long publication decisions take and how selective the journal is.
 - If you get rejected, don't fret! You will get awesome reviewer feedback on how to tighten up the article, and then you can turn around and submit the improved manuscript to another journal. My first submission was rejected, but I used the reviewers' comments to improve the piece, and it was later accepted. Keep your chin up and just submit!
2. Go to LASA (or the key conference in your field) the year before the job market. Attend talks of interesting people. Ask pertinent questions when possible. Invite someone smart out to coffee. Invite people to your talk (give a solid talk!).
3. No later than early August, forewarn your letter writers (3 research, 1 teaching) that you need letters and give them the date of your first anticipated deadline. No later than two weeks before the deadline, send a polished draft of the CV and cover letter (and sample syllabi to teaching writer).
 - a. I made all of my materials available to my letter writers in a shared folder. Some of them read everything and gave amazing unsolicited feedback.
 - b. Ask the letter writers if they need anything else and how they prefer to be reminded about deadlines.
4. Schedule a Brown Bag in your Department. Give your job talk. Take it seriously.
5. I did a "soft" job market year (applied for 4 "dream" jobs and 2 postdocs), which was great for getting materials prepared in advance. Highly recommend.

Job market materials (documents) advice:

6. As early as possible, make your CV tight. Get the formatting clean and keep track of your activities. You do not want to have to recall all of the conferences you've attended and the service you've done for the past 4-7 years the August that your job market year begins. Also:
 - a. Meet with your advisor (right now!) and ask what the "holes" are in your CV. Fill those holes if you can. Don't fret if you can't. No one's profile is perfect (whatever that means).
 - b. Go tell all other PhD students to start making their CVs tight now!
7. Personalize some aspect of the cover letter. I chose two areas to really personalize, one having to do with pedagogy and another with why I felt the department would be a good fit.
8. Have a very tight, very clear dissertation paragraph. I was told that this was the most important paragraph in the cover letter, because, if it is interesting and convincing, they will want to read more. (Note: This may not be pertinent for teaching positions). Goal: be succinct and clear about your topic and contributions.
9. Format documents in such a way that it is very easy to read and parse each:
 - c. You might cut some trivial stuff from your CV to make it easier for people to glean the important stuff.
 - d. Use italics for really important headings: (e.g., *Future Work* in research statement). I didn't do this, but I have seen documents that do, and the italicized parts stand out.
 - e. Do not, under any circumstances, use weird fonts or a tiny letter size. Do NOT go below the equivalent of 11-point Times New Roman. Ever.
 - f. Use reasonable margins. I tried to stick with 1-inch margins, but I fudged as low as .85 occasionally.
10. Ask people to read over your **final** drafts. Especially the cover letter. But don't ask them to do so until it's really truly your **final** version. (Lesson: Don't waste your proofreading capital and their time on having someone revise an early draft).
11. Read your final drafts out loud, slowly. This will help you catch typos. This is painful, but it is worth it.
12. Do one final read-through on a hard copy, with a pen, far away from your computer. This will help you catch typos.
13. No matter what you do, there will be typos. Harrumph.

Skype / Phone / Campus Interviews

14. Congratulations! 😊
15. Be yourself! And be human.
16. Reread the ad to be able to position yourself as a good fit **for the job**.
17. Have questions prepared to ask your interviewers.
18. Be able to talk about interests outside of your dissertation. They want to know that you are not a one-trick pony. Be able to describe one article and one “broader project” (maybe even frame it like a 2nd book project) that have nothing to do with the diss.
19. Research: the department (people, courses offered, activities, etc.), centers and programs, the university, the local community. You don’t have to memorize everything about all of these things, but you’ll want to be able to pull something from your memory when they ask what you think about the centers in the college.
20. If, during a Skype interview or campus visit, you are asked if you will complete your dissertation as anticipated, **say yes**. Show confidence in getting your stuff done. They are asking because they want to know if you are truly available to begin the job in July, so say yes! (Then get it done ;))
21. Be able to describe dissertation research **succinctly** in Spanish and English (or whatever your respective languages are).
22. Take notes! They will help when you write thank you emails and will be useful to reference when you get invited for that campus visit.

Job talk:

23. Practice the job talk multiple times. Include pauses, small jokes, smiles. Look up.
- g. If the department includes languages other than Spanish, give the job talk in English. You can clarify with the Chair, but the truth is, you are performing for the whole department, not just the Hisp folks. (Be prepared to answer questions in the Q&A in both English and Spanish, though).
24. If you do a PowerPoint, make sure:
- it's typo-free.
 - all of the slides are necessary.
 - there isn't a ton of text for people to read.
 - it doesn't distract from you. On this note, I put blank slides between content slides if a lot of time goes by between slides. That way people won't be distractedly rereading the quote on the screen instead of listening to my brilliant exegesis ;)
25. Don't go over time during the job talk.

Campus Visit:

26. Everything that applies for the Skype interview applies here.
27. If you are invited for a campus visit, remember that they already think you would be a good scholar. Now you are trying to convince them you will be a **good colleague**. So be personable and as relaxed as possible (I know. This is an awful request. But you can do it!).
28. Have questions prepared to ask faculty and graduate students. You will also meet with the dean, so you should have some administrator-level questions prepared, too. I cannot stress how much it helps to have a bunch of questions on hand to make exchanges more comfortable. In every moment of silence, the person I was with would look at me and say, "Any other questions?"
29. Take notes! Take notes before you go (there is no shame in opening your notebook to reference a question or remind yourself of the courses they offer). Take notes in the middle of the day (to remember who you met with, what you talked about, etc.). Take notes during meetings (especially with the Chair and the Dean).

What to bring to campus:

30. In addition to the sample syllabi you have already prepared, bring some course proposals that you can hand out when they ask about teaching. These are not as detailed as sample syllabi and should be 1 page (short course description and hypothetical readings).
31. Wear (or bring) comfy shoes (you will do a campus tour). I wore heels in the building but changed to flats for the tour. Nobody minded.
32. Dress professionally (obviously). Wear a watch (borrow one from someone if you don't have one). Bring a respectable briefcase (borrow one from someone if you don't have one).
33. Have a notebook and pen. Have breath mints.
34. Do not bring out your phone (ever). Do not chew gum.
35. Eat. Seriously. Eat whenever you can during the campus visit. These things are exhausting, and you need energy. Bring a power bar to eat during your prep time in case you talk throughout lunch.
36. But don't order spaghetti. Or a sandwich with alfalfa sprouts. Order food that is not messy and will not get stuck in your front teeth.
37. Feel free to order alcohol at dinner if everyone else is. Don't start drinking it until you get food in your belly. Don't drink too much.
38. Send individual "thank you" emails to each interviewer (post-phone/Skype). Send individual "thank you" emails to each person you had a real interaction with (campus). Don't forget the awesome staff! I took notes at the end of each day (or right after the Skype interviews) in order to personalize the emails.
 - a. Note: these were NOT long emails. In fact, they were quite short. But after thanking them for their time and for the chance to speak/meet, I added "I look forward to hearing more about X if invited for a campus visit" or "Thanks for mentioning the great hiking trails around Fort Collins." Etc.

Random Advice:

39. Google yourself
40. Fix your Facebook/Twitter/Instagram privacy. Have a respectable profile picture.
41. Think about making a [website](#) (Ling example: [Sara Zahler](#)). If you do, **keep it updated.**
42. USE A CALENDAR. I was a person that did not use a calendar before the job market year. That had to change. So. Many. Deadlines.
43. Take care of yourself. Sleep. Go for walks. Get drinks with friends. Be a human. You need balance to stay sane and healthy. Also, this will make acting like a real person easier during all those campus visits you are invited on 😊
44. Important balance: Confidence + Humility
 - b. On this point: do not say “I just” or “I only” when describing your achievements. “I only have one article.” → “I have one article forthcoming in *Revista canadiense*.” Own your accomplishments and frame yourself as someone doing interesting work (but not grossly over confident).
45. Prepare a succinct description of your research. I was told to have a 30-second and a 2-minute description of my research that is accessible to smart people in general (not just specialists). This is useful at conferences, campus visits, etc.
46. Have an “undo send” button on your email account in case you forget to attach something or make another mistake.
47. As someone dishing out advice right now, a good piece of advice is to **ignore any advice that seems ridiculous, stressful, contradictory** to something your advisor told you, etc. People love to give advice, and you can’t listen to everyone.
48. Use Interfolio. This will minimize the times you have to contact committee members.
 - c. Request (kindly, graciously, with lots of gratitude) a TT letter and a postdoc letter from each letter writer if possible. Those are really different genres.
49. Remember: You are not your CV. You are not the outcome of your job search. You are an awesome scholar and person who is not defined by this madness. Remember that. Do not let the job market get you down if it doesn’t go well. And if it does go well, take pride in that.

Things I didn't do that I wish I had done:

50. Had my advisor and another committee member observe my teaching. Similarly, asked my advisor if I could teach one session of one of his upper-level undergrad classes. This would have given them fodder to mention that I am a competent teacher.

51. Chatted with my committee about best practices for keeping documents organized and establishing a system for reminders about letters of recommendation. I felt super annoying about sending "gentle reminder" emails.

52. I did not do a mock interview with the Department. Should have done that.

Questions I was asked during my interviews (for your brainstorming pleasure):

- If you could invite a dream keynote speaker to campus for a conference, who would it be?
- If you taught a service-learning course involving the local community, what would that look like?
- What was the most gratifying experience that stemmed from teaching?
- What is your dream course at the graduate level?
- Why did you apply to our Department/University?
- What courses from our website would you be interested in teaching?
- How did you come to your research topic for the dissertation?
- What projects are you thinking about or working on that diverge from the dissertation?
- What is your greatest strength/weakness in teaching?
- Now that you have spent two days on our campus getting to know our department, why would you be excited to come here?
- How will you advise undergraduate students? What does graduate mentorship look like to you?