

# Graduate Professionalization Course

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Office hours: Monday and Wednesday, 2:00-3:00

The course addresses professionalization across a number of fronts: it will prepare you to complete your doctorate with grace, aplomb, and skill; it will allow you to prepare yourself for the job you will have after the degree, whether this job is inside the academy, or, more likely, without; it will suggest to you the skills required to do all this in relative calm and steady effort, and with a minimum of panic or maladaptive work habits or counterproductive coping strategies.

The course is skill-based *and* culture-based. It is chock full of practical how-tos and opportunities to practice these skills. It also aims to *explicitly* describe what might seem to be hard-to-decode *implicit* rules by which the degree and the academy work, as well as the “real world” beyond.

We will learn how to write effectively, copiously, and professionally. We will learn to give conference papers, write abstracts, do peer reviews--and receive peer reviews. We will also learn how to master other oral presentation contexts. We will learn how to build and manage a dissertation committee with the aim of timely and stress-free dissertation writing and completion. We will learn how to locate, interview for, and succeed in such academic jobs as occasionally make themselves available. We will learn how to secure meaningful and interesting work in universities beyond the tenure-track or sessional streams. We will learn how to find meaningful and interesting work “post-academic” style, and how to translate all the hard-won academic skills for non-academic hiring managers.

## Attendance

Class meets weekly, for ten weeks, Monday mornings from 9:30 until noon, in the department library. Bring coffee. Bring your readings. Bring your writing. Bring your laptop / tablet / really big-screened phone. Bring pens and paper. I expect you to have the assigned readings completed, and to be ready to engage in discussion and activity, in writing, in class.

This course is a degree milestone. By registering, you undertake the professional responsibility of attending diligently and participating fully. This is not a drop-in. Please take this course as seriously as you take the other elements of your degree and your future career.

Time management, goal-setting, and the determination of priorities are major topics in this course. The time you spend making this course a priority is going to pay vast dividends in time you no longer fritter away in the future. Commit.

## Required Texts

Order these from Amazon or Chapters-Indigo or your favorite online retailer. You’ll be down about \$30 if you buy them new, but they’re worth every penny. We’ll be reading these two books cover to cover.

- Basalla, Susan and Maggie Debelius, *So What Are You Going to Do with That? Finding Careers Outside Academia*. Rev. Ed. Chicago: U Chicago P, 2007.
- Bolker, Joan. *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day*. New York: Holt Paperbacks, 1998.

These texts will be supplemented with further required readings drawn from the web, as well as photocopies of chapters from other books, as made available in the dedicated mailbox in the department mailroom.

If you’re really super keen, and are looking for supplementary materials to read, the department has begun to amass and make available to graduate students a growing library of professionalization texts on writing, job hunting, time management, and more. These books are available to borrow from the graduate office.

## Schedule

### **Careers Thinking (September 9)**

Guest: Jen Woodside, Career Services

To read: Basalla and Debelius, chapters 1 and 2.

To do: Myers-Briggs Type Inventory

Jen Woodside (Career Services) and I have been consulting over the summer: she's customized her careers for graduate students workshop for this group in particular, and she and I are going to get you to do some work right now today to advance your future career: what are your goals and aptitudes? how can you chart your course to happiness and solvency? if you're an ENTJ, can you ever learn to stop trying to run the whole world? The upshot of today's work is this: you have a lot of options. The main thing is to begin the process of planning the next stage of your life, through careful self-enquiry and a clear-eyed look at how the world of work actually functions.

### **Managing the PhD (September 16)**

Special Guests: XXX

To read: Bolker, chapters 1, 2, and 6; Graduate Studies Office, "A Guide to Graduate Research and Supervision at the University of Waterloo"

To do: write out all your program milestones, find all the forms you need to graduate

I know someone whose supervisor died in a scuba accident a month before her defense. Three of my own committee members left the U of A while I was writing my dissertation. My dad died the day I won my SSHRC! One of my friends got married, another divorced. One friend had her supervisor stand up in the middle of her PhD oral exam and quit the committee in a huff. All of us finished, and not too terribly behind. The PhD is an endurance event: milestones, paperwork, balancing teaching and research, trying to get chapters written and then trying to get your committee to read them. Over and above subject area knowledge, it requires surprising amounts of people skills and political savvy, and sometimes more than a little strategy. Even though a whole university worth of bureaucracy and many, many authority figures structure your degree, ultimately, you are the only one who can move the ball forward. Meet your milestones, get your papers signed, create your own motivation to write. We'll discuss how.

### **Grantsmanship and Other Professional Writing (September 23)**

Special Guests: XXX

To read: SSHRC Web Site, description and instructions for Doctoral Fellowship Awards; Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, description and instructions for Ontario Graduate Scholarships, Basalla and Debelius ch 4

To do: find another funding source you can apply to

You know what I hate? Applying for grants. Only six pages to describe my entire research? And what do they mean "methodology," dammit, I'm a literary scholar?! Everyone knows it's a total crapshoot, and I'm just wasting my time on this. The government should fund all research. Jerks. Except, when I took two tries in grad school, I won a doctoral fellowship that funded me for two years. And I got some travel funding, and tuition waivers, too. Then as a prof, I've won one internal grant. Then I got two "miss congeniality" also-ran awards at one SSHRC program before winning a Standard Research Grant for nearly \$60,000. I am never going to prepare my own bibliographies again. Guess what? The rest of your life, inside the academy or out, is going to feature long-form bureaucratic writing like grant apps: budgets, rationales, descriptions, structured data like CVs, prescribed formatting, etc. Get good at this. It matters.

### **How to Read a Book: Learning Skills (September 30)**

To read: Paul Edwards, "How to Read a Book"

To do: contact your exam committee; bring something to take notes from; find old exams; talk to past exam-takers

Enjoy studying for your Area Exams. You are never going to ever have this much time and scope again for "learning" as your number one task. Ever. Are you wondering how you can somehow accomplish the reading on the list with the six months you are allotted? Many students develop huge anxiety around THE EXAMS: we'll work on how to get through this with style and verve, to make the process both useful, and enjoyable. True story: I did my PhD exams in 2000, and I'm still using notes from my readings in my teaching and research. Because it feels like nearly the last time I was able to read a whole academic book all the way through, just to hear what it had to say.

### **Networking (ALSO ON September 30)**

Special guest: XXX

To read: me, Melonie Fullick, LSE Impact blog Twitter guide--will be posted, Basalla and Debelius ch 3  
To do: identify members of your academic and extended public.

If a dissertation lands on a library shelf, and no one ever picks it up, did any research get done? If a degree is conferred on a bright young scholar and no one tweets it, will she ever get a job? Here's a truth: you have to do good work and be smart to succeed in life. But those things are not enough. People have to know about your good work, and know who you are, too. The work can only speak for itself if it lands in someone's hands, and that person has somehow become disposed to consider it with his or her full attention amid myriad of other demands. Networking, in person and online, are increasingly important to all kinds of careers. Let's think about how and why, and then let's do it.

### **How to Write a Dissertation (October 7)**

Special guest: XXX

To read: Lamott, "Shitty First Drafts," "Perfectionism," "Letter"; Bolker, chapter 3 and 4; Davis, Parker, and Straub, chapter 10

To do: read some dissertations; find some model proposals

Invariably, graduate students tell me, when they start the program, that they fully intend to finish in year 4. And yet hardly any of them do. Why? You've probably never been asked to write something so long, with such high stakes, of such originality, with so little direction, and so few meaningful deadlines or milestones. After you hand your proposal in in December of your 3rd year ... you are apparently all on your own. You know, with your neuroses and your demons and your insecurities and your toilet that really needs scrubbing and your procrastination and your full-run of Breaking Bad / Gilmore Girls / Jersey Shore that ain't gonna watch itself. Then your panic and your shame and your despair. Let's just not go through that this time, okay?

### **Academic Identity (October 21)**

Special guests: XXX

To read: stuff from Chronicle? I'll get back to you on that ...

Most people are smart enough to get a PhD. But the degree and the profession are a *culture* as much as a big-brain competition: there are 'right' and 'wrong' ways of doing and ways of knowing, mostly transmitted implicitly or by acculturation, that can make the difference between success and failure, between fit and alienation. It will probably not surprise you to discover that some aspirants fit themselves more or less easily, with more or less effort, with more or less emotional difficulty to the role of Graduate Student or Junior Professor. We will aim to uncover and name the 'hidden' or implicit rules that structure the academy, and consider the challenges of meeting / thwarting / changing / subverting these norms, as well as how our own racial, gender, national, family-status, and class identities complicate or ease our academic work.

### **Pedagogy / Writing Pedagogy (October 27)**

Special guests: XXX

To read: find a Twitter hashtag for writing instructors; read stuff

To do: bring your syllabi, or someone else's; bring some lesson plans; create a course!

It may seem natural to you by this point, but it is a profoundly unusual thing to spend so much of your work life standing at the front of a classroom teaching stuff to people. You have to master the content! Design syllabi! Do public speaking! Answer questions! Write lectures! Grade! Manage deadlines / personalities / people! It can be very easy to let the excitement of teaching overwhelm your whole work life--but you shouldn't do this. It can be very easy to try to improve your teaching by spending more time on it--this is also dangerous. We will consider how to teach smarter, not harder, to secure better outcomes for both our students and our dissertations/books. And we will consider the "transferable skills" conferred by our teaching experiences in the academy, and how these can lead into other jobs.

### **Conferencing (November 4)**

To read: Paul Edwards, "How to Give an Academic Talk"

To do: write an abstract, dress for success, give the first page of a paper!

Pro tip: do not write the paper on the airplane! Conferences are an integral part of academic careers, and of grad school. Conferencing effectively involves many skills, most of which no one is going to teach you, except maybe the University of Tryandtryagain. But no one ever seems to graduate from there. We will consider: how to write an

effective proposal, how to craft a compelling oral presentation, how to read like a movie star, how to use PowerPoint to save the world, and how to leverage the networking opportunities of travel, using the limited budget you have at your disposal. How many grad conferences should you go to? How many should you organize? Is the MLA worth it? Is midnight really the deadline for proposal or can it be tomorrow? Stay tuned ...

### **Jobs in the academy (November 11)**

Special guests: XXXX

To read: excerpts from terrifying books, and from Salon, and from Katina Rogers

To do: find jobs listings in your fields, and in the alt-academy

Have you heard? The academy is falling apart! Tenure track jobs are disappearing in the mass adjunctification of higher education! The whole thing is run on the ground-up dreams and aspirations of PhD candidates who take 11 years to finish their degrees while running up mortgage-level debt as their reproductive chances diminish and their number of cats increases. It's bad, frankly. But not impossible, not in all ways, and not for everyone. When post-industrial capitalism closes a door, it opens a window. We will discuss the (very competitive, highly professionalized) tenure track job market in English, concentrating on Canada and the US. We will discuss job hunt and interview strategies and pragmatics. We will also enumerate and consider the various kinds of alt-academic jobs, of which many more are available: these are alternative academic jobs--that is, inside the university system, but off the tenure- or teaching track. These include work in administration, in communications, in libraries, in computing centres and research institution, in alumni relations, and in fundraising, particularly.

### **Writing an Article (November 18)**

To read: de Silva, from how to write a lot, Bolker on writing articles

To do: investigate submission requirements from target journal, rewrite one intro paragraph

How is an article different from a dissertation chapter, or, God help me, a coursework paper? Reviewers can tell the difference right away, but it seems that junior authors cannot. I can and will happily let you in on the secret. And also show you how to go from idea to submission in about three months. Of course, submission of a proto-article for consideration by a journal involves inviting the dread Double-Blind Peer Review: everyone has some scary stories about that. We will investigate strategies for dealing effectively with peer reviews without turning to elaborate hexes or to alcohol, by looking at some of my first-attempt submissions, the peer reviews that resulted, and the subsequent chain of events leading to eventual (hooray!) publication.