**Job Market Handbook**

**Philosophy Program, CUNY GC**

**2011 version**

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Congratulations!

You’ve been accepted into one of the world’s top Ph.D. programs in philosophy. While a graduate student here at the CUNY GC, you will learn, teach, write, and present your research at conferences, in addition to living in the greatest city in the world.

But like all good things, your time at the Graduate Center will come to an end, and when that happens you will most likely want a job doing philosophy. This document is meant to guide your job search, starting with your very first year in the program and continuing through your acceptance of a tenure-track position at a school you’ll love. For obvious reasons, it should be kept confidential.

In addition to the information presented here, it will of course be wise to speak often and at length with other graduate students, faculty at the branch colleges, your advisors, and the Placement Director here at the Graduate Center. Not everyone will agree with everything in this document. Your case may be special in any of a variety of ways. Nevertheless, we believe that the suggestions provided here are at least very good guidelines to follow.

And now, into the fray…

**Timeline**

Let’s suppose you want to land a position that starts in the fall of year N. Here’s a brief overview of what you should aim to have accomplished by what dates.

**Now:**

* Register with the American Philosophical Association (APA)
* Sign up for the philosophy list-serves: philupdates and PHILOS-L
* Create an account at [www.philpapers.org](http://www.philpapers.org)

**Now-N-3:**

* Do some teaching. Be sure to get observed and to get a positive evaluation. You will need to get a letter of recommendation from someone who knows you as a teacher eventually. Be sure as well to get positive student evaluations. The easiest way to do this is to be beautiful and friendly and an easy grader. You may want to try both.
* Try sending revised versions of your best seminar papers, your QPs, and any other research you engage in to conferences and journals. Get your feet wet.
* Build (or get someone to help you build) a professional website. Put your papers on it.

**N-3:**

* Acquire two or three Areas of Specialization (AOS). These are areas of philosophy where you plan to do cutting-edge research in the coming years, at least one of which will be the area in which you write your dissertation. AOSs are very far from being natural kinds. They are partitioned by branch of philosophy (e.g., ethics, epistemology, metaphysics), by time period (e.g., 19th-century philosophy), by major author (e.g., Aristotle, Kant, Wittgenstein), and by geography (e.g., 20th-century French philosophy). As you consider which AOSs to acquire, you may want to look at recent copies of *Jobs for Philosophers* (*JFP*), so that you are sure to specialize in a field for which there are jobs. Right now, ethics seems to be pretty hot. Philosophy of religion is on the outs. But things change, so do your homework. In addition, it may be worth having one AOS in a narrower field, even though there may be fewer jobs. It’s all about supply and demand: narrower fields tend to have few openings, but there will also be fewer qualified applicants. In addition, if your AOS is listed as an AOC in a job ad, you’ll have a distinct advantage.
* Try to become the category editor for a relevant category at [www.philpapers.org](http://www.philpapers.org).
* Establish a rapport with someone you think would be a good dissertation advisor. Explore the possibility of working together with him or her.
* Establish a rapport with others whom you think would be good committee members.
* Start preparing your job talk, especially by presenting it at the CUNY branch colleges and at conferences.

**Spring N-2:**

* Defend your dissertation prospectus. Have a drink. Have another. Get to work.
* While writing your dissertation, there will come a time when you say to yourself, “Damn it, I don’t want to read another book. Why do people keep writing books about my topic?” Pause for a moment to consider the irony of complaint. Then ask yourself whether the book in question is such that you would be able to write a positive review of it. If it is, start getting in touch with reviews editors (not general editors) of relevant journals to ask whether they’d be interested in your submitting a review. Some won’t, but at least one will. They’ll probably even send you a free hardcover copy of the book. And of course you can put the review on your CV. Write a positive – if not glowing – review, then send it to the author saying something along the lines of, “Dear Professor X, Hi! I’m Y. I’m an admirer of your work and am writing a review of your book for Z. A draft of the review is attached. Would you mind taking a look at it and telling me whether you think I’ve missed anything? Thanks!” The author will be flattered that someone other than their mom read the book. This is great, because it will allow you to show the author some of your dissertation work, and a few months later you will ask the author to be an external member of your dissertation committee or at least to write you a letter of recommendation. However, don’t do this to the detriment of your actual dissertation research and article publishing schedule. If it’s something you can squeeze in, go for it; otherwise, keep it in mind for when you have more time.
* Send (suitably revised) chapters of your dissertation to journals. They will almost certainly be rejected the first time, but you’ll (usually) get feedback that is (occasionally) informed and (even) helpful for revision.
* Send (suitably revised) chapters of your dissertation to conferences, then present the research at them. Be sure to talk to as many people (i.e., “real” people, who are at least assistant professors at schools with philosophy departments) as you can. You never know when a connection will turn out to be helpful later on.
* Send other work not from your dissertation (such as revisions of your QPs) to journals and conferences too! If you are trying to establish an AOS, the easiest way is to have at least one publication in the area.
* Start preparing your job talk, especially by presenting it at the CUNY branch colleges and at conferences.

**Summer N-1:**

* Finish a draft of your dissertation and prepare to defend it.
* Ask your advisors for letters of recommendation, providing them both your full CV and a “brag sheet” that lists in bullet form the items from the CV you think that particular letter writer may want to mention in the letter. Don’t make demands, but do make suggestions. You should aim to have at least three letters, including a letter devoted to your teaching. More would be good, as long as they’re (very) positive. Bear in mind that negative letters do get written. Whatever you do, don’t get one of those. The Placement Director will look at all of your letters and advise as to which to send and which not to send, as well as the order in which they should be included in your dossier.

**August N-1:**

* Craft your job documents by the end of the month. You don’t want to be working on these while applying – that’s stressful enough on its own! You’ll need a surprisingly large collection, listed below. In addition, examples of each of these documents are included in the appendices to this handbook:
	+ Cover Letter Template. A cover letter should be short and sweet – at most one page unless you have strong indications that a long letter is required. Put it on electronic letterhead, and be sure to include inside addresses and a scan of your signature.
	+ Curriculum Vitae (CV). A CV lists all of your many accomplishments as succinctly as possible.
	+ Biographical Sketch. This is a one-paragraph description of you and your research, written in the third person.
	+ Dissertation Abstract, short. You will want a one-paragraph abstract of your dissertation, which will typically be included in your CV.
	+ Dissertation Abstract, long. You will also need a longer abstract of your dissertation, approximately two double-spaced pages.
	+ Statement of Research. A research statement of your most prominent research so far, as well as laying out your plans for future projects. At most two pages single-spaced.
	+ Statement of Pedagogy / Statement of Teaching Philosophy. A pedagogy statement describes your strengths and experiences as an instructor, which should be vast given that you’re at CUNY. At most two pages single-spaced.
	+ Statement of Faith. If you plan to apply to religious institutions, you will want a statement of faith. Not all religious institutions require such a statement, but many do. One or two pages single-spaced.
	+ Teaching Portfolio. A teaching portfolio is not the same thing as a teaching statement. The portfolio lays out as succinctly as possible which courses you have already taught, includes all (and only!) your positive student and faculty evaluations, and describes any curriculum development efforts (such as a writing fellowship) in which you’ve been involved.
	+ Sample Syllabi. A sample syllabus is not a syllabus. It’s basically a one-paragraph course description followed by a reading list of at most two pages, sequenced into about 13 weeks with thematic headings. You will want sample syllabi for every course in the union of your AOSs and AOCs, and perhaps for more. Some schools will want syllabi included in the initial application; others may ask for syllabi prior to the first-round interview; still others will want (even if they don’t say so!) syllabi during the first-round interview.
	+ Transcripts. Get scans of both undergraduate and graduate transcripts, which you may be required to submit with your applications.
	+ List of References. This is a comprehensive list of all your letter-writers, including mailing addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers.
	+ Writing Samples. Yes, sample**s**. You should aim to have two or three AOSs, so you will want at least one writing sample for each (between 15 and 25 pages, double spaced). Most schools require at least one writing sample with the initial application. Some (the more prestigious ones) want several. In a recent year, the University of Chicago allowed (read: required) applicants to submit as many as six. Your writing samples can be publications, money chapters from your dissertation, or even other research that you think is of the highest quality. Revise them. Revise them again. Edit the revisions. Proofread the edits. You want your writing sample to be so tight you could bounce a quarter off its ass.
* Amass a small fortune. You should expect to spend between $400 and $2000 on applications, depending on how many you send and how many you need to send via express or priority mail. You should also expect to spend a few hundred on getting to and finding a hotel at the APA.

**September-December N-1:**

* Apply for every appropriate job you can find. Even if the AOS doesn’t quite match your profile, it’s worth submitting an application. After all, you don’t know whether all members of the search committee are committed to the AOS. Think of each application as a lottery ticket: the more you buy, the better your chances.
* Defend your dissertation, but don’t deposit it until the spring semester.
* Participate in at least one mock interview. Before the interview, practice your “spiel.” A lot. As in: obsessively. The spiel should explain what the problem is that your dissertation addresses, then segue quickly into a discussion of how your dissertation addresses it. It’ll be the first thing you say after “Hello” during your interviews. It may well be the most important thing you say in your whole career.

**October N-1:**

* The main *JFP* is published in the member’s services section of <http://www.apaonline.org/>. Jobs will also be advertised at <http://higheredjobs.com/> and <http://chronicle.com/>. Another useful website is <http://phylo.info/jobs>, which has a wiki for job listings and their status. Keep careful track of the jobs you want to apply to using a spreadsheet. Further editions of the *JFP* are published periodically, and in addition, many jobs are advertised on a day-by-day schedule in the online supplement to the *JFP*. Be sure to check for these frequently.

**December N-1:**

* Attend the APA Eastern Division conference for interviews. You should be contacted for interviews by departments in early December, though late November and late (even very late) December are genuine possibilities. In addition, some schools have ceased doing first-round interviews; instead they simply ask for more documents (especially writing samples). Don’t worry if that happens; in fact, it’s probably better than interviewing.
* It’s appropriate to ask who will be conducting your interviews (usually a committee of three people). Once you know who they are, create departmental profile in which you note what you might say to each member of the department, and especially what you might say to the members of the search committee. Include images of the relevant people, so that when you meet them for the first time, you already know who they are. This will allow you to address them by name more easily.
* Try not to despair. Get out of your apartment as often as you can. Talk to people. Talk about not-philosophy. Drink, but not too much. Sleep plenty. Go easy on yourself, if you can manage it.
* Print out copies of all of your job documents, especially your CV and sample syllabi. You’ll want to have these readily available at the APA.
* Go to the APA. Be sure to arrive a bit early, since weather is often awful and delays may occur. Don’t bother going to talks unless someone from a relevant school is at the talk. Take it easy. Be sure to stop into the placement office and drop your CV in the bin. A few schools actually set up interviews on-site. Who knows, you might land an unexpected interview!

**January N:**

* Send brief thank-you notes to everyone who interviewed you. Unless asked to say something substantive, don’t.
* Try not to be too antsy while waiting to see whether you’ll be invited for a job talk. Keep in mind that typically 12-15 candidates receive first-round interviews, and only 3 get job talks. Assuming even odds, you therefore have 20-25% odds of getting a talk at each institution. That said, a number of schools have ceased doing job talks at all and simply go directly from first-round interviews to job offers.
* Make sure your job talk is totally prepared. It should be something you can deliver in about 45 minutes. Don’t read from a script if you can help it. Do a mock job talk at one of the branch colleges. Figure out what questions you’re most likely to get during the Q&A and what to say in response to them.

**January-March N:**

* Do your job talks and other campus visits. Blow them out of the water. Pray, if you believe in that sort of thing. Sacrifice animals or virgins, if you believe in that sort of thing.
* Write short thank-you notes to everyone you met on your campus visits. Again, don’t go into too much detail unless you have an indication that it wouldn’t be viewed in a negative light.

**Spring-Summer N:**

* If necessary, continue applying to positions as they are advertised. Most will be fixed-term – either post-docs or visiting assistant professorships – but they’ll tide you over until you can find more suitable, permanent employment.
* Deposit your dissertation.

**Sample Dossiers of Recent Graduates:**

Below are dossiers of recent graduates from the Philosophy Program who managed to find positions of some sort in a tough market. Feel free to use them as models, though as with the rest of this handbook, please keep them confidential.

* **Mike Nair-Collins** (Assistant Professorship, Florida State University College of Medicine, Department of Medical Humanities and Social Sciences)
* **Peter Langland-Hassan** (Postdoctoral Fellowship, Washington University in St. Louis, followed by Assistant Professorship, University of Cincinatti)
* **Mark Alfano** (Postdoctoral Fellowship, Notre Dame Institute for Advanced Study)