



CONNECTED ACADEMICS

Preparing Doctoral Students of Language and Literature for a Variety of Careers

New York City Proseminar 2015–16

Welcome to the MLA proseminar on careers, an initiative of the MLA's Connected Academics Project, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The 2015–16 cohort is diverse in background and experience, coming from eleven different institutions and seventeen different departments. As a whole its members were chosen for their energy, thoughtfulness, and ability to articulate the stakes of larger conversations about careers for humanists and graduate education in the humanities. As the first proseminar cohort, you will be pioneering the project, and the collective thinking and contributions of the group will be instrumental in shaping its future.

Connected Academics seeks to expand understanding of the career options available to language and literature doctoral recipients. We know from data on career outcomes that humanities PhDs find fulfilling employment in a variety of sectors, but traditionally few departments have tracked their graduates who left the academic profession. Current PhD students therefore have little idea of where those before them have gone or the interests and career paths they themselves might explore, and departments are often ill-equipped to help them. Through Connected Academics, the MLA and its partner institutions will develop models demonstrating possibilities for doctoral students to bring their humanistic training to a broader range of occupations than doctoral programs have, up to now, characteristically acknowledged and honored.

The purpose of this proseminar is twofold. It will, first of all, help you in your job search. Sessions will address such issues as evaluating and researching prospective career paths, seeking out transitional work experience, identifying and articulating your transferable skills, growing and maintaining a professional network, and establishing a professional Web presence. You will also visit places that employ PhDs, such as the New York Public Library, the ACLS, the Frick Collection, and Ithaca S+R, and conduct informational interviews with other PhDs in connected careers. We certainly hope that you will find those sessions, visits, and interviews informative and helpful to you personally.

The benefits of the proseminar, however, will not stop with you. Both individually and as a group, you will have opportunities to contribute to the larger Connected Academics project through the energy and ideas you bring to the proseminar, by writing about your experiences for the project Web site, representing the program at national and regional conferences, and organizing local events for other PhDs. You will be ambassadors for the program, taking ideas and information back to others. We will also ask you to think through larger ideas, in the vein of an MLA committee or working group. Connected Academics addresses some very broad questions on behalf of the profession, and we ask your help in answering them. For example: What are the purposes of doctoral education and are those purposes changing? How might doctoral programs better serve all their students? How might tools that are available for BAs or graduate students in other fields be adapted to serve humanities PhDs?

Answering these questions is a tall order, but we believe that we have chosen a cohort that is up to the challenge. We look forward to working with you this year to further your own goal and the goals of the MLA and Connected Academics.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY: We would be delighted if you would share your experiences in the proseminar with others through social media. However, we ask that you refrain from live tweeting during the sessions and that you do not make information from the private *MLA Commons* group available to the public.

EXPECTATIONS:

- Attendance at all six proseminar sessions
- Three site visits to NYC-area nonprofit cultural institutions, educational institutions, or for-profit organizations
- Three informational interviews. Informational interviews are a great way to grow your network.
- Reflective short writing exercises throughout the year. Most of these will be posted to the private *MLA Commons* group. Some fellows will be invited to turn theirs into blog posts for the public-facing site.
- A collaborative capstone project. Capstone projects are intended to simultaneously help proseminar fellows broaden their skill sets and spread the information of the proseminar.

NOTE: Please bring a laptop or tablet to all meetings.

Before the September meeting

- Please make sure that you have submitted to Stacy Hartman your ranked list of the top five choices for site visits by 1 September.
- Please read the introduction to Katharine Brooks's *You Majored in What?* and Anne Marie Harvey's "Saying When: A Recent PhD's Perspective on Alternative Careers."
- Please watch Kelly Anne Brown's [interview](#) on transitioning into university administration.
- Please complete the job-ad analysis exercise for "Program Director, New Jersey Humanities Council."
- Optional: David Laurence's blog [The Trend](#) has a number of recent pieces about the results of the survey of 2,214 English and foreign language PhDs. You may find them of interest.
- Optional: Read through the [career advice](#) pieces available through the Connected Academics site.

SEPTEMBER 2015

SESSION 1

Date: Friday, 25 September, 4:00–7:00 p.m.

Location: MLA offices

Workshop Topic: exploring careers inside and outside the academy

- Introductions and overview of seminar
- Greeting by Rosemary Feal, MLA executive director
- Introduction to graduate career outcomes data by David Laurence, MLA director of research
- Introduction to *MLA Commons* by Nicky Agate, project manager for digital initiatives, MLA
- Introduction to a structured approach to career exploration by Stacy
- Reading and analyzing job ads (small-group work)
- Introduction to site-visit guidelines

Before the October meeting

- Identify two to three people for possible informational interviews (at your institution or elsewhere).
- Self-assessment: Please visit the career center on your campus; if you do not have access to a career center, please speak to Stacy so we can provide you with an alternative.
- Please write a brief reflection on your experience of self-assessment. What felt useful? What didn't? If you took more than one self-assessment exercise, consider the pros and cons of each. (Please don't spend more than thirty minutes on this.)

OCTOBER 2015

SESSION 2

Date: Tuesday, 20 October, 2:00–5:00 p.m.

Location: New York Public Library

Panel: PhDs on staff at NYPL (2:00–3:30 p.m.)

- **Mark Boonshoft**, historian for Early American Manuscripts Projects, Manuscripts and Archives, Stephen A. Schwarzman Building (PhD in early American history)
- **Carolyn Broomhead**, research community manager, Office of the Mellon Director, Research Libraries (PhD in English and American studies)
- **Elizabeth Denlinger**, curator of Pforzheimer Collection, Stephen A. Schwarzman Building (PhD in English and MLIS)
- **Bogdan Horbal**, head of technical processing, science, industry, and business library (PhD in Slavic and MLS)
- **Sean Redmond**, senior developer/front end lead, digital experience (PhD in classical studies)
- **Doug Reside**, digital curator, Billy Rose Theatre Division, Library for the Performing Arts (PhD in English)

Networking Coffee Break (3:30–4:00 p.m.)

Workshop Topic: networking online and off (4:00–5:00 p.m.)

- Debrief and discussion of experience with self-assessment tools
- Networking 101 and *LinkedIn* presentation and discussion

Before the November meeting

- Blog post (600–800 words): Post to *MLA Commons* private group.
- Start a *LinkedIn* profile if you don't already have one; if you have one, consider what you might do to improve it.
- Analyze two to three *LinkedIn* profiles of people in fields you're interested in. What are people doing that you think is useful? What do you think you might do differently?

NOVEMBER 2015

SESSION 3

Date: Wednesday, 11 November, 1:00–4:00 p.m.

Location: Futures Initiative, City University of New York (CUNY)

Panel: PhDs in staff positions at CUNY and elsewhere (1:00–2:30 p.m.)

- **Jade Davis**, associate director of Digital Learning Projects, LaGuardia Community College (PhD in communication studies)
- **Helen Koh**, director of institutional giving at the CUNY Graduate Center (PhD in East Asian studies)
- **Peter Taback**, chief communications officer, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health (PhD in English)
- **Elizabeth Rosen Mayer**, senior adviser to the chancellor for communications, CUNY Central (PhD in English)
- **Matt Gold**, associate professor of English and digital humanities / executive officer, MA program in liberal studies at the CUNY Graduate Center (PhD in English)
- **Luke Waltzer**, director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at the CUNY Graduate Center (PhD in history)

Networking Coffee Break (2:30–3:00 p.m.)

Workshop Topic: creating a professional Web presence (3:00–4:00 p.m.)

- *Twitter*
- Blogging on the *MLA Commons*

Before the January meeting

- Midyear evaluation: Please send to Stacy by 15 January.
- Continue building your *LinkedIn* profiles.

JANUARY 2016

MLA Convention in Austin, 6–9 January

Selected participants attend the MLA convention: blog / tweet / report back.

SESSION 4

Date: Wednesday, 27 January, 4:00–7:00 p.m.

Location: Andrew W. Mellon Foundation offices

Panel: Mellon Foundation leadership and program staff (4:00–6:00 p.m., with twenty-minute networking coffee break)

- **Mariët Westermann**, vice president, higher education and scholarship in the humanities
- **Eugene Tobin**, senior program officer, higher education and scholarship in the humanities
- **Cristle Collins Judd**, senior program officer, higher education and scholarship in the humanities
- **Don Waters**, senior program officer, scholarly communications
- **Armando Bengochea**, program officer, diversity and the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship
- **Saleem Badat**, program director, international higher education and strategic projects

Workshop Topic: transferable skills and résumés; capstone projects (6:00–7:00 p.m.)

- Transferable skills and how to write a combination résumé
- Brainstorming capstone projects

Before the March meeting

- Decide on capstone project and break into working groups.

MARCH 2016

SESSION 5

Date: Thursday, 3 March, 8:45–11:45 a.m.

Location: Bard High School Early College, Manhattan

Panel: PhDs teaching at high schools and community colleges (8:45–10:30 a.m., with networking coffee break and classroom visits)

- **Michael Lerner**, principal (PhD in history)
- **William H. Hinrichs**, associate dean of Studies (PhD in Spanish and Portuguese)
- **Zach Holbrook**, literature faculty (PhD in English)
- **Daniel Freund**, social studies faculty (PhD in history)
- **Anna Dolan**, theater faculty (MFA in directing)
- **Sandra Sellers Hanson**, retired chair of English at LaGuardia Community College (PhD in English)

Workshop Topic: capstone projects and workshops on job-application materials (10:30–11:45 a.m.)

- Get into groups to work on capstone projects.
- Work in pairs to peer-review *LinkedIn* profiles, résumés, and cover letters.

Before the April meeting

- Work on capstone projects.

APRIL 2016

SESSION 6

Date: Saturday, 2 April, 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Location: The American Council for Learned Societies

Panel: PhDs on ACLS staff and public fellows in government, nonprofit, and university administration work (10:00–11:30 a.m.)

- **Steven Wheatley**, vice president (PhD in history)
- **John Paul Christy**, director of public programs (PhD in classical studies)
- **Rachel Wimpee**, ACLS public fellow and program officer, Rockefeller Archive Center (PhD in French)
- **Emily Kane**, ACLS public fellow and director of study abroad at Longwood University (PhD in English)
- **Laurel Voloder**, ACLS public fellow and program analyst in the US State Department's Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs (PhD in literature)

Networking Coffee Break (11:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m.)

Workshop Topic: capstone project presentations (12:00–1:00 p.m.)

Program evaluation due to Stacy Hartman by 15 May. Please be in contact with Stacy regarding the completion of your capstone project.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF SITE VISIT LOCATIONS

The following institutions opened their doors to small groups of proseminar fellows throughout the 2015–16 academic year. Fellows were able to tour their facilities and meet with their staff.

The Teagle Foundation
Association of American Publishers
Whiting Foundation
Frick Collection
New York University Center for the Humanities
New York University Press
New York State Council for the Humanities
Heyman Center for the Humanities at Columbia University
Ithaca S+R
St. Ann's School
Connecticut Humanities Council

APPENDIX B: PUBLICLY AVAILABLE RESOURCES AND BLOG POSTS

Augustine, Kesi. "The Shift: Networking as an Introverted Academic." *Connected Academics*. 29 Feb. 2016. <https://connect.commons.mla.org/networking-as-an-introverted-academic/>.

Bressler, Malkah. "Unexpectedly Useful: A New Look at the PhD; or, How I've Learned to Appreciate My Degree." *Connected Academics*. 30 Mar. 2016. <https://connect.commons.mla.org/unexpectedly-useful-a-new-look-at-the-phd-or-how-ive-learned-to-appreciate-my-degree/>.

Burton, Catherine. "Grad School: An Ode Instead of an Elegy?" *Connected Academics*. 1 Mar. 2016. <https://connect.commons.mla.org/grad-school-an-ode-instead-of-an-elegy/>.

Coleman, Tara. "Forging New Paths off the Alt-Ac Track." *Connected Academics*. 8 Mar. 2016. <https://connect.commons.mla.org/forging-new-paths-off-the-alt-ac-track/>.

Finston, Manoah. "Going 'Big-Ac': Developing New Language for a New Career Path." *Connected Academics*. 12 Feb. 2016. <https://connect.commons.mla.org/going-big-ac-developing-new-language-for-a-new-career-path/>.

———. "The Unique Case of the PhD on the Industry Job Market." *Connected Academics*. 29 Mar. 2016. <https://connect.commons.mla.org/the-unique-case-of-the-phd-on-the-industry-job-market/>.

Hartman, Stacy. "Reflections on Connected Academics Proseminar Applications." *Connected Academics*. 23 July 2015. <https://connect.commons.mla.org/the-personal-is-philosophical-reflections-on-reading-245-connected-academics-proseminar-applications/>.

———. "Transferable Skills and Résumé Tips for Language and Literature PhDs." *Connected Academics*. 4 Apr. 2016. <https://connect.commons.mla.org/resource-transferable-skills-and-how-to-talk-about-them/>.

Jacobs, Sarah Ruth. "Financing the Life of the Mind." *Connected Academics*. 4 Jan. 2016. <https://connect.commons.mla.org/financing-the-life-of-the-mind/>.

Mann, Molly. "Instead of 'Networking,' the Art of Asking." *Connected Academics*. 8 Dec. 2015. <https://connect.commons.mla.org/information-exchange-thinking-of-networking-as-learning/>.

Seger, Maria. "Information Exchange: Thinking of Networking as Learning." *Connected Academics*. 21 Dec. 2015. <https://connect.commons.mla.org/information-exchange-thinking-of-networking-as-learning/>.

Seltzer, Beth. "The Strength of the Alt/Ac Candidate on the Academic Market." *Connected Academics*. 1 Mar. 2016. <https://connect.commons.mla.org/the-strength-of-the-altac-candidate-on-the-academic-market/>.

VanWagoner, Benjamin. "Functional Networks and Expectations: Networking in and out of Academia." *Connected Academics*. 11 Feb. 2016. <https://connect.commons.mla.org/networking-in-and-out-of-academia/>.