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 Ithaka 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
Ithaka S+R
St. Ann’s School
Connecticut Humanities Council
APPENDIX B: PUBLICLY AVAILABLE RESOURCES AND BLOG POSTS


