

Guide for Academic Job Seekers UB English (September 2024)

What is this document?

This manual is for all UB English graduates and graduate alumni seeking positions on the academic job market (professorships, fellowships, lectureships.) It does not address employment beyond the professoriate. The department encourages everyone pursuing non-professorial or “alt-ac” positions to inform the placement coordinator and set up a meeting with the UB Career Design Center (<https://www.buffalo.edu/career.html>), which is currently building resources for humanities graduates.

The Market

The market for jobs in English literature has never been more competitive. Fortunately, UB boasts a strong placement record. Our doctoral alumni teach at many institutions of higher learning, including large research universities and elite liberal arts colleges. This manual will assist your job search by distilling years of departmental experience hiring, being hired, and working in placement.

Should I apply for jobs this year?

Seek your committee’s advice. They should be able to assess your prospects candidly. Keep in mind that going on the market entails a serious commitment of time spent drafting application materials, preparing for interviews, and making on-campus visits. During this period, you will likely be teaching, and must continue working to complete your dissertation.

Beware the idea of a “practice year,” in which you apply to only a few jobs. This is usually a waste of time you could spend writing your dissertation or an article for publication. It’s not much harder to apply for thirty jobs than to apply for three, so if you intend to go on the market, commit to a full search.

Where should I apply?

As broadly as you can. In terms of academic field, do not define yourself too narrowly. If you are unsure whether you are qualified for a job, apply and let the hiring committee make that determination. Consider not only positions in your historical period but also interdisciplinary jobs in fields like Women’s Studies, American Studies, Trans-Atlantic Studies, diasporic studies, and the Digital Humanities.

Do not restrict yourself geographically. If you want a job, apply across the country and internationally if you are able to live and work abroad. What you need at this stage is a first job; once you have a job, it is usually easier to get another job.

In recent years, many tenure-track lines have been replaced by temporary positions (e.g., visiting assistant professorships, postdoctoral fellowships) and permanent contract lines (e.g., clinical assistant professorships). Nomenclature aside, these positions can carry vastly disparate teaching, service, and research expectations. Try to learn as much as you can from the job listing and consult with the placement director.

What is the placement job of director?

The director will review your application materials and advise you at all phases of the process, from drafting materials to negotiating offers. The director will maintain the Job Search list serve and share job openings throughout the year. The director will act as an adviser and sounding board, working in collaboration with your dissertation committee. You should feel free to contact the placement director with any questions you have either during your time at UB or after you have graduated.

Job Search Calendar

English literature hiring once followed a strict and predictable schedule. This is no longer the case. Job openings can appear at any point in the year. Nonetheless, the following calendar will help you prepare for most job applications.

May

- Attend the spring job market meeting. Enroll on the Job Search list serve.
- Discuss your plans to go on the market with your dissertation advisers. If you proceed, ask them (and other recommenders) for letters of recommendation, due September 1.
- Sign up for Interfolio (www.interfolio.com), an online dossier delivery service that lets you manage and submit your job materials and recommendation letters to hiring committees. Familiarize yourself with the web application.
- Look over jobs from last year's MLA Job Information List (JIL) to get a sense of the kinds of positions for which you will apply. You can find the JIL here: <https://www.mla.org/Resources/Career/Job-List>

June and July

- Work on your cover letter, dissertation abstract, CV, teaching statement, and sample syllabi.
- Begin revising a writing sample (20-25 pages). Discuss your writing sample with your dissertation director.

August

- Send drafts of your application, dissertation abstract, CV, teaching statement, and any other materials to your committee by the beginning of the month.
- Begin scanning the MLA JIL for job postings. Those seeking international positions should consult www.educalox.com. Those seeking writing positions should consult the Association of Writers and Writing Program (AWP) job list https://www.awpwriter.org/user/force_login (membership required).

September 1

- Submit all materials (except the writing sample) to the Placement Director. The director will return comments. Most candidates undertake multiple rounds of revision in consultation with the director.

September and October

- Most tenure-track jobs will post on the JIL. Make sure to consult the JIL at least once a week throughout the year.

- Research the positions you are applying for. Find out whose position is being replaced, who else is in the department, what courses are taught and by whom, whether there is a PhD or MA program. Determine how your expertise might contribute to the department.
- Send the Placement Director and your committee a list of places you have applied.
- Continue to refine your writing sample. Select another piece of your work that you could revise into a 35-45 minute job talk.

November 1

- This is usually the earliest deadline for advertised positions. Post-doc applications may be due earlier.

Thanksgiving

- Invitations for screening (first-round) interviews may go out during this time but could come at any point.

December

- Mock interviews with UB English faculty.

January – August

- Campus interviews can take place any time in this period.
- New job opportunities will surface. Watch the JIL in April and May when departments often post one-year visiting assistant professorship positions to replace departing tenure-line faculty.

Thinking Like a Market

Departments want to hire groundbreaking scholars and innovative teachers. But you must remember that a job, in its most basic sense, is something that someone wants done. Hiring committees seek applicants who can fill needs, be they curricular or research.

Field

It is imperative that you know your field. Since most jobs define fields historically, know your period: medieval, American pre-1865, Shakespeare, Restoration and Eighteenth Century, Victorian, etc. Entry-level assistant professorships tend to be defined somewhat conservatively. There will be more jobs available to a Renaissance specialist with an interest in queer theory than to a queer theorist, plain and simple. Poetics students will find more jobs in modern American literature than American poetry (criticism and practice) alone.

Familiarize yourself with contiguous fields. A department may expect their Victorianist to teach a course on modern British literature or American literature of the nineteenth century or even a Shakespeare seminar.

Dissertation

Your dissertation is an important piece of intellectual labor. It's also, in its crudest sense, a job-getting document. So finish it. Or finish as much of it as humanly possible before you go on the market. You should have written at least half of the dissertation by September, enough that you could plausibly defend the whole thing by May. Don't hesitate to write a shorter dissertation if it allows an earlier completion date: a finished four-chapter dissertation is better

than an incomplete five-chapter one. The hiring committee must have no doubt that you will deposit your dissertation and have degree in hand prior to starting your new job.

Publications

Publish. It is vital to send our work when it is ready, keeping in mind it can take six or more months for journals to accept or reject an article. Send out revised seminar papers (on the advice of the professor leading the seminar) and one or two revised chapters of your dissertation. Do not publish more than two chapters of your dissertation—you want to reserve most of this material for your future book manuscript.

The best publication venues will be the most important peer-reviewed journals in your field. Refereed critical anthologies also provide a helpful publication outlet but are usually not granted as much weight as journal articles. You may consider writing a book review, especially, if a monograph appears with direct bearing on your dissertation topic. Note that book reviews count substantially less than articles.

Conferences

It is good to attend conferences in your academic field but be judicious. Conference papers count very little in hiring committee tabulations. Aim to share your work at the most important conferences in your field, but do not spend too much time writing presentations, especially if it distracts you from your dissertation. The key is to show participation: three conferences is as good as ten.

Teaching

UB graduates carry an advantage here. Many job-seekers come from programs with limited teaching opportunities and often bomb at interviews (e.g. “My freshman writing students will interrogate contending notions of Hegelian spirit,” etc.) Get your teaching observed by members of your committee to help them write letters. If you receive the opportunity to teach a literature course, try to make it a historical survey and not a disguised version of your dissertation topic.

Application Materials

Almost all jobs will require you to submit a letter of application, dissertation abstract, and CV. Many will also require a teaching statement, writing sample, and/or diversity statement. The following sections address each of these documents. Make sure to consult the sample materials on UB English website, which were written by graduate-job-seekers who became professors.

For all documents, use 12-point Times New Roman (or an equally-non-distracting font like Cambria), and one-inch margins at top, bottom, left and right. Do not use a smaller font (which makes your material less accessible) or fuss with margins to jam in more material (such adjustments are painfully obvious to committee members reading dozens of applications a day).

Letter of Application

Formatting: Two single-spaced pages; Departmental letterhead for page 1 and normal blank paper for page 2.

Your letter must clearly and forcefully convey the originality and appeal of your dissertation, and your versatility and potential as a scholar, all in under two pages. The job letter may be the most important part of your application, especially in the early stages.

The first paragraph will state your interest in the position and explain who you are. Feel free to adapt and individualize this boilerplate prose:

I am writing to apply for the position of Assistant Professor of [field] advertised in the MLA Job Information List. I am a doctoral candidate in the English Department at the State University of New York, University at Buffalo, where I specialize in [your field]. I am currently completing my dissertation under the direction of [dissertation chair], [reader], and [reader], and will receive my Ph.D. in May [year].

The bulk of the job letter will address the three components of your candidacy: one to three paragraphs on your dissertation and non-dissertation research, one to two paragraphs on teaching, and a brief paragraph on service. The order and length of these sections will depend upon the job. You should foreground your research accomplishments when applying to a large university, but emphasize teaching when applying to most liberal arts colleges and smaller public schools.

Your research paragraph(s) should lay out the central argument of your dissertation and its significance to your field. If you have any publications, name their venues and describe the critical work those articles perform. Give readers a sense of how you are establishing a coherent research agenda. Provide a firm completion date for your dissertation, scheduling the defense for no later than May. This sentence must be in the active voice (“I will defend my dissertation on May 1st”) and not passive voice (“My dissertation will be completed next semester.”)

Your teaching paragraph(s) should describe courses you have taught or will teach. It’s useful to differentiate between writing courses, lower-division genre courses and historical surveys, and upper-level topics courses. As you describe your teaching experience and the courses you hope to teach, resist the temptation to make every course sound like a highly focused and specialized seminar—or, worse, a new avatar of your dissertation, which could suggest intellectual narrowness. Remember that the bulk of college teaching takes place at the introductory and survey levels. Recognizing this curricular reality will make you sound more like a colleague and less like a graduate student.

Include a short paragraph describing important service you performed for the department during your years at UB (e.g. serving on a search committee, involvement with English Graduate Student Association). Stress your enthusiastic willingness to participate just as actively in the life of your new institution but keep it short: service will matter little to most hiring committees.

Conclude your letter with another boilerplate paragraph expressing your availability for an interview at the committee’s convenience.

Dissertation Abstract

Formatting: Two single-spaced pages; normal blank paper

The abstract summarizes your dissertation and exhibits its most fascinating claims. The more compelling you can make your project sound, the more likely committee members will want to read your writing sample. The first two paragraphs should state your dissertation’s argument and make clear why it matters. The *why* is crucial. How does this project contribute to your field? How does it move beyond your field to engage theoretical/historical questions? Note that unlike conference abstracts, which describe work to be completed in the future, your dissertation abstract must speak concretely and logically about what you have already learned and accomplished.

Next explain how each chapter introduces a variation or extension of the main argument. Some abstracts dedicate one paragraph to each chapter, though you should condense chapter descriptions when it provides more space to explain the theoretical stakes of your project. The dissertation must sound like a single piece of cogent writing rather than a scholarly miscellany. Remind readers: which texts/authors are the focus of each chapter? What is each chapter's main argument? How do you engage with existing criticism on the author/text? How do the chapters form a book-length work greater than the sum of its parts? As hard as it may seem, avoid using language from your job letter. Your research should be rich enough to support multiple articulations.

Writing a good abstract takes time, but it will help fix your dissertation in your mind and prepare you to describe it during interviews. Many job candidates report that the abstract has helped them compose and revising their dissertations.

CV

Formatting: Two to four pages; normal blank paper

Your CV should present your qualifications briefly and clearly. This is not a creative genre. Don't distract your reader with busy formatting, font size changes, hyperlinks, or aesthetic flourishes. It's best to find an effective CV that you can use as a model for your own. If you are unsure, talk to the placement director. The standard CV order is:

1) Professional History

If you are currently employed at a job or post-doc, name your position, home institution, and start and completion dates.

2) Education

List the degrees you received at the undergraduate and graduate levels. If you received Latin Honors or were invited to join Phi Beta Kappa, say so here.

3) Dissertation

Include the title. Add the names of your dissertation chair and readers if you wish.

4) Publications

List any critical work that has been published or is forthcoming (under contract for publication). Make each article, book chapter, and book review resemble a Chicago Style citation. (This goes for sections #5 and #7 too.)

For jobs in creative writing, include citations of each poem, short story, novel, etc. that you have published. For non-creative writing jobs, include only major publications. If you are unsure what counts as a major publication talk to your advisor and the placement director.

5) Critical Work Under Consideration

List any critical work that you have submitted but has not yet been accepted. Include the name of the journal or collection here. This will convey a sense of ongoing progress and momentum in your scholarly career.

6) Awards and Honors

7) Conference Presentations

8) Teaching.

List each course title you have taught, the semester you taught it (e.g. “Fall 2019”), and the institution where you taught it.

9) Departmental Service

List any roles you have undertaken, and the time period during which you held those responsibilities.

Before adding any piece of information to your CV, ask whether it will help the committee reach a decision. If not, leave it out. Keep in mind that insignificant items can diminish those things you want to highlight: if you list the *PMLA* article next to a publication in your neighborhood newsletter, it could make the former look strange. It's better to have a short, strong CV than an aimless long one.

You may be able to use one CV for all jobs, tailoring your individual job letters to emphasize various skills. However, there are some cases where you might want to draft a second CV for a particular job. If, for instance, you have published a good deal of poetry and fiction in small journals, a complete listing might overwhelm a CV design for criticism positions. In this case, consider drawing up two CVs: one for jobs that emphasize literary history and theory (with a summary list of your most impressive poetry and fiction publications) and one for jobs that emphasize creative writing (listing all published creative works). Seek your committee's advice.

Teaching Statement

Formatting: one to two pages single-spaced; normal blank paper

Sometimes called a “statement of teaching philosophy,” this essay should convey a concrete sense of what you are like in the classroom. Describe actual moments where your teaching succeeded or (perhaps more interestingly) failed, and how such experiences have shaped you as an educator. This is not a forum for abstract pedagogical theorizing. Do not indulge in tedious self-flattery: boasting your empowered, student-centric, social-justice-minded, interactive classroom against the straw-man of authoritarian lecture will not distinguish you from other candidates. What sets apart good statements is their ability to convey actual experience. Show that you know your way around a classroom. Remember that your readers are also teachers. The goal here is to sound like a colleague.

Diversity Statement

Formatting: one to two pages single-spaced; normal blank paper

Some committees request diversity statements that ask how you will contribute to the diversity and/or “diversity goals” of their institution. If you have personal experience as the member of a minoritized group on the basis of race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, language, or any other attribute, you may convey your perspective here. You can also talk about your experiences teaching the diverse student body at UB, which includes many first-generation college attendees and international students. The diversity statement is a tricky genre, so make sure to consult with the placement director.

Writing Sample

Formatting: usually 20-25 double-spaced pages (unless otherwise specified—comply with any length requirements!); normal blank paper

This should be your absolute best academic writing. An excerpt of a dissertation chapter or forthcoming/published essay in the field you're applying for would be ideal, but above all your sample must be relevant to the job: a dissertation chapter on Samuel Johnson is much better than a published essay on James Joyce if you are applying for an eighteenth-century job. If you send a published article, note that the committee can probably find this on their own, so it may not help your candidacy as much as fresh work.

If you send a dissertation chapter, make sure it stands as a coherent whole (with minimal ellipses, self-referential language, etc.). If you are applying for a job in a literature department, you absolutely must focus on literature in the writing sample. A chapter on theory alone or a historical introduction will not suffice. Even a department that values theory or cultural history will want to see you analyze literature.

Remember that reading candidate writing samples—even brilliant ones—is an arduous task. Try to make things easy for committee members. Put your footnotes at the bottom of each page for easy access.

Letters of Recommendation

Most jobs request three or more letters of recommendation. You should have letters from the members of your dissertation committee. You may also have letters from other faculty in your field with whom you've worked or at institutions where you have taught.

Faculty are typically happy to write letters, but keep in mind that this is time-consuming work. Request *all* recommendation letters early and ask that they be in your file by September 1. If something changes (e.g. a new essay is accepted for publication), your recommenders can always update their letters. When requesting a letter, include a draft of your letter, CV, and abstract, as well as any recent articles you have written. If this is your second or third time on the market, make sure your recommenders update their letters, or at least change the dates on them.

It is standard for candidates to sign away their right of access to letters of recommendation. If requested, the placement director can examine files to head off problems. Though you cannot know the content of confidential recommendations, you do have the right to remove a letter should you suspect it will not help your candidacy. The Placement Director can help on these questions.

Transcripts

Some institutions may ask for graduate or even undergraduate transcripts. They are generally not interested in scrutinizing grades but in fulfilling institutional administrative mandates (don't sweat the C in Chemistry).

Professionalism

Imagine a typical search committee. It will consist of 5-6 faculty members drawn from across the department. Everyone has other work to do: teaching, grading, research, other committees. The committee is responsible for reviewing a large number of applications and will be look for a sorting principle: something that allows them to put applications in a 'reject' pile. Your goal is to make it difficult for readers to discard your application.

Punctuality

Start early. The earlier you get your materials to the Placement Director, the faster they can help you start the revision process. Moreover, it's better to submit your applications early, which allows time should any unforeseen problems arise.

Etiquette

After the initial application, most correspondence will take place over e-mail. Politely acknowledge receipt of e-mails and confirm important dates/times. Over-worked search committees may send communications in error. If you receive a letter thanking you for a writing sample that you did not send, assume there's been a glitch and find out what's going on.

Neatness

Proofread carefully: there will be typos, even omitted phrases, and you must catch them. The only way to proofread adequately is to read through your copy slowly, word for word, aloud, several times, and have others do so as well; nothing else will do the job. Beware the power of computers to lead you to egregious omissions and repetitions.

Style

Adopt a plain style for your job letter, abstract, CV, and teaching statement. This is not to say that you should compromise your beliefs—hide your Marxism, your feminism, your interest in post-Structuralism or psychoanalysis. But part of your belief, presumably is a desire to communicate with your present and future colleagues. Hermetic prose festooned with passive verbs, word play, arch allusions, and undefined terms will likely annoy your readers.

Remember that hiring committees draw members from a diversity of disciplinary backgrounds, so strive for clarity and concision. Don't "problematize epistemological lacunae" if you are just "questioning omissions." Never imagine that anyone reviewing your application will have the luxury of spending a crisp autumn afternoon idly musing over a cryptic slab of postsyntactical critical prose. Basic principles of composition, like those championed in Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*, will be indispensable here.

Seek friendly editors. It is important to find readers outside your field. Also, seek feedback from lay readers—friends, partners, and family members outside the profession will be helpfully intolerant of academic argot.

Tailoring Materials

It may be useful to tailor your job materials to particular positions, especially if you have a strong personal connection to the institution (e.g. you attended a similar school as an undergraduate; you grew up in Montana and wish to return to the Intermountain West, etc.) But be cautious. Demonstrating sensitivity to departmental needs can improve your chances, but it's also incredibly easy to shoot yourself in the foot by offending hiring committee members. Discuss any tailoring efforts with the placement coordinator.

Zoom Interviews

Usually, one to two months after application material deadlines, departments will contact you to schedule interviews. When you receive interview requests, thank the committee for their consideration. Let them know how pleased you are for an interview, remembering that this

invitation comes at the end of considerable work. Make sure you have all the information you need to prepare. You should know how long the interview will last and the names of those interviewing you.

Nearly all screening (first-round) interviews for faculty positions now takes place over Zoom, or other web conferencing software. Find a quiet place to conduct your interview where you will not be interrupted. Ensure that Wi-Fi is adequate. Make sure that you are positioned at the right distance from the computer screen and that your background is not distracting (a bookshelf often looks nice). Make eye contact with your computer camera rather than the screen image of committee members. Wear professional academic attire.

An office is often an ideal place to conduct Zoom interviews, though you may prefer to remain within your home. Either way, make sure to practice with a friend to ensure everything looks OK.

Researching the School

By this stage, you should know a good bit about the hiring department and the interview committee members from web research. It can be effective in an interview to begin a response with, “I notice you have an introductory class in the English novel; if I were teaching that, I would...” Such statements demonstrate your capacity to plan around departmental needs. Talk to people at UB to learn more about hiring schools—the more information you have, the better.

Mock Interviews

The placement director will arrange mock interviews in December. Sign up even if you don’t have any interviews scheduled yet or if you have completed a mock interview in the past. Mock interviews are essential preparation for the market. Prepare carefully for the mock. The more you treat it like a real interview, the more it will benefit you in terms of specific, concrete advice and fine-tuning.

Candidates often equate interviews with their PhD orals defense. This is a mistake. Examinations and interviews are radically different genres. An interview should resemble a stimulating conversation rather than labored demonstration of mastery. Behave like a colleague, not like a student. Remember that the committee likes your project, otherwise, you would not have made it this far. They want you to succeed. Worry less about being nailed on some fact than about giving your interviewers a clear sense of the content and the excitement of your research and teaching.

Mock interviews are helpful in diagnosing problems that are easy to overlook. No one at an actual interview will take time at the end to suggest that you slow down, avoid one-syllable or ten-minute answers, stop interrupting or saying “uhhhhh,” polish your presentation of your dissertation, make eye contact, etc. Make sure to do a mock.

During the Interview

Interviews can be awkward. Do your best to make the conversation lively. Volunteer information when interviewers do a poor job of eliciting it. Convey enthusiasm for your home department, research, and teaching. Never start doing voice-over commentary on your interview—do not try to break down the fourth wall or in any way escape the performative conventions of the interview. Never say “I really blew that one,” refer to your “opening gambit,” or use any other self-referential language. Respect the formal seriousness of the event, but don’t hesitate to smile and laugh.

The committee will have your materials but don't assume that all members have done more than glance at your CV (someone may be a last-minute stand-in for a sick colleague). Don't be surprised if you are asked to repeat information from your letter—go ahead and respond as clearly as possible. Don't act offended or surprised. Never say "As I said in my letter..." This could come across as exasperation at a lazy or negligent interviewer.

When answering questions, distinguish clearly between what you know well and have done considerable research on, and what you are interested in but don't yet know about. Everyone has weak spots; neither glory in nor apologize for your ignorance of an area. Avoid time-wasting apologies and self-deprecation. If you haven't finished the dissertation, don't claim to have written more than you have. Avoid "That's a good question!" which can sound insincere and desperate. You don't need to fill every second with your voice.

Common Questions

You can anticipate hearing some version of many of the following questions. You should outline answers to each:

1. Tell us about your dissertation.

It is hard to overstate the importance of this question. Your answer will set the tone for the rest of the interview. You should have a lucid and jargon-free two-minute rap down cold. Mention the main authors and works you analyze. Don't go on too long and be sure to build in pauses. This way, the committee can move on to a new question when it has heard enough.

2. When do you plan to defend? Or How far along is the dissertation?

Everyone will want to know this. Volunteer the information clearly so they can check it off their lists. Avoid an answer past May. Use the active voice.

3. How does your dissertation fit into the larger context of work done on this period, genre, or theoretical school? What is your contribution to the field? What are the theoretical touchstones for your dissertation project? What other scholars working on your topic have influenced you?

4. Do you plan to turn your dissertation into a book?

You should have addressed this in your letter of application, so briefly recap. Even if you don't have any such plans, say yes. No matter how industrious you are, the committee may doubt your ability to complete a new book-length project time for tenure. Give some sense of your schedule and the revisions you plan.

5. In your letter, you mention "hegemony," "ideology," "ethnopoetics," "the dialogization of epic." How do you understand this term?

You should be able to speak intelligibly about specialized or controversial terms that you use. Clear empirical examples from your research will go over better than an abstract theoretical manifesto.

6. Have you read X?

Even if you haven't, you're not lost; this isn't your orals. Say "no" frankly but keep the ball rolling. Mention an article by the same author you have read, or simply say, "I've meant to—"

does it seem like it would bear on my work?" This may give your interviewers a chance to look smart and tell you something new.

7. Are you a Renaissance scholar or a Medievalist?

Most positions are defined by literary period. If you have a dissertation that sprawls across periods, be ready to declare a firm primary interest and expertise in one, and a secondary in the other; of course, your "primary" and "secondary" focus may shift from one interview to the next.

8. How do you define yourself within feminism? Postcolonial studies? Psychoanalysis?

Respond clearly and forthrightly, being as concrete as possible about the particular theoretical questions you engage. Along these lines, prepare for blunt binaries (e.g. Are you a cultural historian or a literary critic? Are you a structuralist or a post-structuralist?) Answer with respect to specific authors and texts.

9. How would you teach a survey in Earlier/Later, British/American literature?

These four courses are common in many departments. Know the particular variant in place in the interviewing department, and the level at which it is taught (freshman-sophomore, junior-senior). Be prepared to teach poetry, drama, non-fiction, and fiction. The most recent editions of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* can be useful in brainstorming responses.

10. How would you design a course in [the period or topic described in the job advertisement]?

You should deliver a coherent, one-minute description integrating the topics you'll foreground and the titles of books you'd emphasize, with a word or two on pedagogy and structure. Try to attach every general point you make to a particular author or text. For instance, if asked "how would you teach an undergraduate survey of sixteenth-century literature" you might respond:

I'd use the Norton volume on the Renaissance as my main text, with some supplementary books and printouts. We'd concentrate on four sites. First, the public sphere of radical humanism, with More's *Utopia* and Latimer's *Sermon on the Plowmen*. Second, the scaffolds of religious controversy, with poetry by Southwell and Anne Askew's captivity narrative. Third, the courtly literature of the eighties and nineties, including *The Old Arcadia* and long excerpts from *The Faerie Queene*. And fourth, the public stage: *Henry VI, Part II*, and *Arden of Feversham*. A continuing theme of the course would be agrarian class struggle, and we would read a contemporary account of Kett's Rebellion in 1549. Students write daily short essays, a midterm and final, an interpretive commentary on an unrepublished pamphlet and a final seminar paper.

12. How would you teach a writing class?

Draw upon classroom experience here. Also, refer as specifically as possible to the particular writing courses set up at the school that is interviewing you.

13. How do you teach non-traditional students?

This question anticipates problems (real or imagined) that you might have in working with first-generation college attendees, working students, non-native speakers of English, etc. Use examples from teaching at UB.

14. What's your philosophy of teaching Y / approach to teaching X?

This question can tempt self-aggrandizing bluster. Instead, talk about specific techniques, writing assignments, successes, or recuperable failures you've had. Mention a particular student (not by name) or group of students. Show rather than tell what a dynamic, caring, and creative teacher you are. Your teaching statement will be useful in preparing an answer to this question.

15. If you could design a senior seminar in a topic close to your heart, what would you do?

This is an opportunity to give interviewers a sense of your creative spark. Keep your audience in mind. Avoid proposing a seminar based on your dissertation. Try describing something altogether fresh, underlining your resourcefulness as scholar and teacher and perhaps pointing toward a second book project.

16. What will your second book be about? What do you see yourself doing in five years?

This question aims to see whether you have been intellectually fired up or wrung dry by writing a dissertation. You should have a few ideas here, however provisional. Several sentences will usually suffice, perhaps in reference to essays you're hoping to draft.

17. How would you feel about living in Atlanta? Eastern Oregon? China?

Some research will be helpful here; people who have committed to living in a particular place will often warm to hearing something good about it, or some connection you have to it. Be aware of the snobbery of professional class academics toward certain areas of the country or world. An unenthusiastic or ignorant comment about the place you would be living can be fatal to your candidacy.

19. Inappropriate questions (Are you married? Planning to have kids? Etc.)

Direct or oblique questions about your age, marital status, and sexuality are illegal; you don't have to answer them. But there are better and worse ways to respond. If the offensive comment is not a direct question, try not to notice it. If some response seems necessary, a quietly puzzled but self-confident "I don't feel it's appropriate for me to respond at this time" is good. Your grace and strength may impress other members of the committee who are likely embarrassed by their colleague.

20. Do you have any questions for us?

Shoot for questions that will flatter the institution and showcase your willingness to contribute to it. Are there opportunities to bring speakers to campus? What mentorship opportunities are available? Is there a student literary journal? Where do your students come from? What are they like? Make sure to test out your questions at the mock interview. This is a time to show what a good colleague you would be. Don't ask about salary, benefits, leave time, or anything of that sort.

Common Interview Mistakes

1) Talking too much.

Most interviewers sincerely want to hear what you have to tell them, so help them out as much as you can. Your goal should not be to hold the floor but to maximize the number of empirically

rich and theoretically astute exchanges with your interviewers. Lead with your main point. Avoid convoluted setups.

2) *Inability to describe a course efficiently.*

You must prepare brief, evocative, course descriptions. A little preparation goes a long way. Always offer a brief account of the course's aims (or driving questions) followed by a narrative of its progression (including authors and texts).

3) *Returning to the same primary texts.*

When describing your courses, *leave out* those books in your dissertation and concentrate on others. Try to convey the breadth of your reading and interests.

Campus Visits

Some departments hire off the screening interview, but most will invite two or three finalist candidates to visit their campus. You may receive invitations at any point. When the department calls or emails, make sure you are clear on travel and contact arrangements. Get as much information as possible as to what will be expected of you. Are you delivering a research talk? Teaching a class? Meeting the provost? It is better to come as prepared as possible. Err on the side of structure when preparing a talk or leading a discussion.

While on Campus

Most of the interview advice above pertains here, but don't assume you have to keep selling yourself every minute. The campus visit is a two-way street. Learn everything you can about your new potential employer and home. If someone offers to show you the town, a museum, the library, some local point of interest, etc. express enthusiasm. Try to get a sense of the campus and surrounding area as a whole.

The Job Talk

Your departmental presentation will be the most important part of your campus visit. Don't assume that prospective colleagues have read your writing sample or even your letter. Many faculty will make their decision on the basis of a brief conversation with you, some advice from the committee, and your job talk. When you receive a campus invitation, make sure to inform the placement director so that they can schedule a mock job talk.

You must write your job talk to be heard rather than read. Make it accessible: your goal is intelligibility, not rhetorical pyrotechnics. Place your talk in the larger context of your ongoing dissertation research and deliver a thesis up front with as much clarity as possible. Try to avoid reading at your audience. Look up from your text, ad lib, and bring up related points that come to mind. Make sure the talk shows off your close writing and interpretive chops. Do not compress a longer talk into a shorter frame by reading quickly or jaggedly cutting away. It's your responsibility to make everything fit.

Handouts and PowerPoint slides can be effective. Your slides should have a uniform design that is clean and unobtrusive—no clip art or goofy transitions. Include blank slides when you want to refocus your audience's attention on you. Your verbal talk should be able to stand on its own in the case of AV failures.

The Q&A

Answer questions as clearly, briefly, and directly as you can. If you don't understand a question, ask for clarification in a friendly way. You can answer, "I need to think more about that," once during the Q&A. Your job is to intrigue people, make friends, and give them a reason for wanting you as a colleague. You want as many people as possible to understand and learn from your talk.

Teaching a Sample Class

Smaller schools will often ask you to teach a class (real or simulated) to undergraduates and faculty. Guest lecturing is the best preparation for this event. "This is not like teaching your own class," writes UB graduate Natalie Grinnell, "it's a performance, not a discussion, so don't assume years of teaching will prepare you in any way." Others have found the genre a bit stilted. Another UB graduate, Lisa Wilson, reports, "it is not like teaching your own class in the middle of the semester. It's like teaching your own class the first week of school." Consider the strategic advantages of teaching poetry: your text can be there on a single handout, distributed at the beginning of class.

Job Offers

If a university makes a job offer, savor the experience. Per MLA guidelines, you should have at least two weeks to make a decision. You should not need to accept right away. Make sure you get the nuts and bolts of the appointment, including salary, benefits, sabbatical opportunities, and tenure and promotion expectations. Inform the committee of your special needs: employment for a partner, delayed start if you have a fellowship, etc.

If the committee asks about other pending offers, you need not answer directly. Even if you don't have any other prospects, you can at least say "Well, I do have to make a few calls before giving my final answer"—which is true, even if those calls are only to the placement director and your committee. If you do have other searches in progress, inform those schools of your offer and decision timeline. Talk to the placement director.

If You Don't Get a Job

It happens. There's more going on behind the scenes than you can ever know, so it is good to keep in mind that much lies outside your control. You can do everything right and not get a job. That said, keep in mind that the application process is not over. As a consequence of the new year-round job market calendar, many candidates land jobs in the late spring and summer.