

FALL 2023

Proseminar

This proseminar will introduce you to graduate studies in the humanities. It is organized into four parts. Part I, “Scholarly Habits and Resources,” introduces students to a variety of resources at Penn, discusses the scholarly habits that graduate students should develop, and covers strategies for promoting mental and physical well-being as a graduate student. Part II, “Intervening in the Field,” introduces students to the processes of conference participation and article publication. Part III, “The Dissertation,” covers the ins-and-outs of writing the dissertation. Part IV, “Awards, Networking, and Jobs,” addresses the importance of awards and networking as well as the academic and non-academic job markets.

In addition to weekly discussions and activities, this course will include a number of guest speakers who will share their expertise and give guidance on the how-tos of the field. Students will be given pre- as well as post-class activities to reflect on each week’s topic and begin to prepare a dossier for later use in their graduate studies.

Much of the information in this proseminar becomes particularly relevant during the final years of coursework and your dissertation writing years, but it is important to be introduced to these topics and to begin to think about them now.

This course is designed for PhD students in Francophone, Italian, and Germanic Studies. Many of the topics apply to all three fields; however, students will also have the opportunity to work on areas that are specific to their language for certain topics. They will also be able to add to the course materials for future graduate students in FIGS.

Grades

Attendance and active participation, this includes coming to class prepared (having done the readings, exercises, etc.)	50%
Attendance at three campus events: one event at the library, one CTL event, one departmental event (submit via email a one-paragraph reflection within one week of the event)	15%
One-paragraph reflection of your take-away from meeting with a graduate student (cf Week 3 assignment) (submit via email within one week)	5%
Conference paper abstract (about 300 words)	5%
Create/update departmental website profile (mandatory) AND choose among ORCID.org, LinkedIn, Academia.edu, or Handshake to create a professional profile	5%
Academic CV	10%
Resume for non-academic job	10%

Participation

Students are expected to be present at each class, except in the event of a legitimate conflict (illness, family emergency, travel for academic conference, etc.), and to participate actively in the discussion based on the weekly readings and assignments.

Campus Events

In order to familiarize themselves with the different resources on campus and to broaden their knowledge, students will be required to attend at least three campus events:

1. Library events
 - a. Events at [Van Pelt](#)
 - b. Workshops and events at the [Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts](#)
 - c. Events at [Price Lab for Digital Humanities](#)
2. [Center for Teaching and Learning](#) events
3. Departmental events (in French, Italian and/or Germanic)

For each event attended, students will send a one-paragraph reflection to the instructor within one week of the said event.

Supplemental Readings

- 1) [*The Professor Is In: The Essential Guide to Turning Your PhD Into a Job*](#)
- 2) [*A Field Guide to Grad School*](#)
- 3) [*How to Write A Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing*](#)
- 4) [*The Craft of Research*](#)
- 5) [*MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*](#)
- 6) [*The Academic Job Search Handbook*](#)

Plagiarism and academic integrity

Students are expected to be familiar with the University of Pennsylvania's Code of Academic Integrity, a clearly defined set of rules governing student conduct in terms of crediting the work of others, collaborating with others on coursework, and completing assignments in a proper fashion. The instructor will hold students to the Code, and any and all violations of it will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

Online version: <https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity/>.

General set of guidelines on how to cite sources properly and avoid plagiarism:

<http://gethelp.library.upenn.edu/guides/engineering/ee/plagiarize.html>.

Students are encouraged to discuss course materials or lessons with one another. They may NOT, however, complete all or part of any assignment for other students or share their work with other students for exercises or essays.

PART I: SCHOLARLY HABITS AND RESOURCES

Week 1 (08/29-09/01)

Syllabus Presentation & Penn Resources

Suggested Guests

- Penn Graduate Center
- GAPSA
- SASGOV
- Student Health Services
- Centers
 - Women's Center
 - LGBT Center
 - Etc.

Pre-class readings for next week

- [Studying for a humanities PhD can make you feel cut off from humanity](#) (The Guardian)
- [Grad-School Blues](#) (The Chronicle of Higher Education)

September 4: Labor Day

Week 2 (09/04-09/08)

Mental Health & Impostor Syndrome

Guest: Wellness at Penn

In-class activities

- Discussion of health insurance (including for therapy) and of therapist availability (via Penn vs. off-campus), massage and acupuncture at SHS
- Guest speaker
- Group reflections on responses to adverse situations. What do you tend to do when you are stressed or anxious? What positive coping strategies do you have? Is there a new one you want to try? (Think about meditation, yoga, exercise, intramural sport, therapy, religious group, etc.)

Pre-class readings for next week

- Familiarize yourself with your program's yearly benchmarks
 - [French](#)
 - [Italian](#)
 - [German](#)
- On reading effectively: watch ["Reading Effectively in Graduate School"](#)
- On the seminar paper: [How to Write a Seminar Paper in the Humanities](#)
- Consult the [MLA's "Advice to Graduate Students from Application to Career"](#)

Week 3 (09/11-09-15)

How to Be a Graduate Student: Degree Requirements, & Senior Graduate Student Experience

Topics: Graduate school: theory vs reality. Degree requirements. Coursework. [Academic integrity and plagiarism](#). How to read as a graduate student. How to write a graduate-level seminar paper. Developing research interests; how to continue refining your research interests (via final papers for seminars, conference papers, etc.).

In-class activities

- Discuss the above topics.
- Discuss FIGGS Department points of contact (e.g., Laura, Kim, Suzanne, Tina, Martina)
- Discuss various academic citation and formatting styles ([MLA](#), Chicago, etc.)
- Invite advanced graduate students to share their experience with the new cohort.
- Create a non-judgmental space in which students can openly discuss:
 - 1) Their research interests.
 - 2) Their familiarity with the research process.

At-home assignments

- Subscribe to listservs related to your field ([list here](#))
- Start thinking about your scholarly profile. Come prepared to discuss the following during the warm up to next week's class:
 - What are 1-3 areas of research that might interest you?
 - Will you pursue a graduate certificate? Consider obtaining one. List [here](#).
- Reach out to an advanced graduate student (in our department or in another department at Penn), and grab a coffee or Zoom with them. This can be someone whose research interests align with your own, or someone whose work you are just curious about. Have a conversation about their research: how they arrived at their topic, the difficulties they have encountered, what they have found rewarding, etc. Share your own research interests with them, too, and get their advice.

Pre-class readings for next week

- “Introduction,” [Digital Humanities : History and Development](#) by Olivier Le Deuff
- Optional:* “Chapter 1: Defining and Locating Digital Rhetoric,” [Digital Rhetoric: Theory, Method, Practice](#) by Douglas Eyman

Week 4 (09/18-09/22)

Penn Libraries, Kislak Center, Price Lab and Digital Humanities

Note: Class to be held in Van Pelt Library

Topics: Resources at the Penn Libraries (including BorrowDirect, E-Z Borrow). How to use the Kislak Center. How to take advantage of the Price Lab. Introduction to Digital Humanities and the relevance of the field. Other library resources in Philadelphia (e.g., [Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection](#), [The Rosenbach](#))

In-class activities

- Warm-Up
 - Share the areas of research you looked into, and discuss what you have learned from your interview with a graduate student
- Suggested Guest speakers
 - Presentation of the Penn Libraries (guest speaker)
 - Presentation of the Kislak Center (guest speaker), including serving on the committee for [The Lorraine Beitler Collection of the Dreyfus Affair](#)
 - Presentation of the Price Lab and introduction to Digital Humanities (guest speaker)
 - Examples of Digital Humanities projects which work to decolonize the field: <https://sameboats.org/>, <https://archipelagosjournal.org/>
 - Current Contemporary Publishing Fellow (e.g., Cosette Bruhns Alonso)

At-home assignments:

- Look at the Kislak Center Collections and schedule an appointment to look at at least one book/manuscript: <https://www.library.upenn.edu/kislak> and <https://franklin.library.upenn.edu/> to request it. Come prepared to class to talk about the book(s) you looked at.

OR

- Look at at least one DH project: <https://pricelab.sas.upenn.edu/projects>. Come prepared to class to discuss the project(s) you looked at.

Pre-class readings for next week

- Read the provided documents ([Emily Steinlight's tips](#)¹; [Marcus's tips](#), ["Writing a Conference Abstract or Proposal"](#))
- Read Chapters 19 and 20 in *The Professor is In*

¹ Permission obtained from Emily Steinlight via email on 9/21/22 to use and circulate this document.

PART II: INTERVENING IN THE FIELD

Week 5 (09/25-09/29)

Conferences

Topics: Conferences; the conference timeline (from application to presentation); the various types of conferences (graduate student vs. professional, century-specific, field-specific, interdisciplinary, MLA, etc.); when to attend conferences of each type; why to attend a conference; where to find CFPs; how and why to write a paper abstract; submitting solo vs. as a complete panel; the genre of the conference paper; handling the Q&A period; conference funding; chairing a panel; what to do with a conference paper post-conference.

In-class activities

- Warm-Up
 - Share your experience at the Kislak Center or exploring a DH project
- Address the topics listed above
 - [List of conferences](#)

At-home assignments

- Locate a conference that you want to apply to. Write an abstract in response to its CFP. (Alternative idea: the professor provides a CFP to students for them to respond to.)

Pre-class readings for next week

- Read the model article chosen by your professor, identify its sections, and come prepared to discuss it.
- “Writing Journal Articles,” *How to Write A Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing*

Week 6 (10/02-10/06)

Article Writing (Pt. 1)

Topics: What is an article; its role in one’s career and in the field; the difference between an article and a seminar paper; looking for bibliography; the importance of feedback before submission; publication in the US or abroad.

In-class activities

- Warm-Up
 - Share your thoughts on conferences (cf assignments)
- Discuss the article provided by the instructor and identify the components of the text, such as argument, introduction, scope, etc.

At-home assignments

- Read: “Week 0”, pp. 390–400, in Wendy Laura Belcher, *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success*. Second edition.
- Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqCCXYqje1g>

Pre-class readings for next week

- Read/peruse the websites of next week’s guest(s): [Bibliotheca Dantesca](#), [French Forum](#), and a guest from a German review ([Unterrichtspraxis](#); [Monatshefte](#); [New German Critique](#); [Journal of Austrian Studies](#); [Seminar](#); and [Women in German Yearbook](#))

Week 7 (10/09-10/13)

Article Writing (Pt. 2)

Suggested guests: Editor(s) of [Bibliotheca Dantesca](#), [French Forum](#), and an external German review ([Unterrichtspraxis](#); [Monatshefte](#); [New German Critique](#); [Journal of Austrian Studies](#); [Seminar](#); and [Women in German Yearbook](#))

Topics: Scopes of academic journals; peer review (single/double blind, etc.); the process; feedback; editorial norms.

In-class activities

- Discussion with the guest(s) & questions.

At-home assignments:

- Identify three academic journals in your field ([list of FIGS journals](#), [list of French journals](#); see also [MLA Directory of Periodicals](#)). Understand their process, requirements, and peer review norms.

Pre-class readings for next week

- Read the [UT Dallas “Guide to the Humanities Dissertation Proposal”](#) and examine one of the provided examples
- Read [this Chronicle article](#) or [“Marcus’s Tips for Developing Research Interests and a Dissertation Topic”](#) on how to begin developing a research interest
- Optional:* Read Toril Moi’s two-part series of advice on writing a dissertation and on writing generally: [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#)

October 12-15: Fall break

PART III: THE DISSERTATION

Week 8 (10/16-10/20)

Hot Academic Trends and Devising a Dissertation

Guest speaker: [Invite FIGGS faculty member to discuss “hot trends” in academia]

Topics:

Defining a dissertation topic. Discussing “hot trends” in research (Mediterranean Studies, Transnational Studies, Environmental Humanities, etc).

In-class activities

- Warm-Up
 - Share your thoughts on article writing and publishing (cf assignments)
- Discuss the following:
 - (1) Finding a dissertation topic (Field Statement, Dissertation Proposal)
 - (2) How to write a dissertation that will appeal to a variety of audiences?
What are the “hot trends” in research?

At-home assignments

- Look at 1-2 [dissertations submitted at Penn](#). What is the average page length for the whole dissertation? For the introduction? For the conclusion? For a chapter? Identify the different style, and elements. Create a table to show your result.

Week 9 (10/23-10/27)

The Different Stages Toward Dissertation Completion

Suggested guest: The Graduate Student Coordinator (i.e., Laura Flippin)

Topics: Fulfilling the dissertation requirement. Dissertation writing, editing, defending, submitting, graduating. Choosing a dissertation committee.

In-class activities

- Warm-Up
 - Share the results of the table that you created about Penn dissertations with a peer.
- Discuss the following:
 - (1) The dissertation. What is a dissertation? Presentation of a dissertation’s goals and content (introduction, chapters, conclusion, annexes, table of contents, etc.).
 - (2) Research. How to organize research? Research tools ([Zotero](#), [EasyBib](#), [BibMe](#)).

(3) Writing. How to write effectively. Time management and writing strategies.

-Presentation by Graduate Student Coordinator about the defending process.

At-home assignments

-Look through the [doctoral dissertation manual](#) to become familiar with the different aspects of defending and graduating, notably dissertation and thesis deposit, Ph.D. graduating checklist, formatting checklist, and the dissertation embargo guidelines.

- *Optional:* Read [Alexandra Gold, “The Great Embargo Debate”](#) ; [Justin Weinberg, “Should PhD Students Embargo Their Dissertations?”](#)

Pre-class readings for next week

-Read Chapter 17 in *The Professor is In*

-*Optional:* Read Chapters 51-54 (“Part VIII: Grants and Postdocs”) in [The Professor is In](#)

PART IV: GRANTS, NETWORKING, AND JOB MARKET

Week 10 (10/30-11/03)

Postdocs, Grants, and Grant Proposal

In-class activities

-Research process using archives: how to access and navigate archives?

-Discuss the timeline for awards, postdocs, and fellowships and what is generally required for each.

-Look at this [list of awards, fellowships, and postdocs](#). Brainstorm some postdocs in the databases that you would be interested in.

At-home assignments

1. Research archives related to your field of interest. Make a preliminary list of archives that could potentially be part of your research.

2. Research national conferences in your language and field of interest and see if they have any awards for the best paper and the deadlines for their submission. Add the name and the website to the Google doc list.

3. Add any other awards at Penn or other institutions and organizations relevant to your language and field of interest to this document and your own files.

Pre-class readings for next week

-<https://academicpositions.com/career-advice/how-to-start-academic-networking>

- <https://academicpositions.be/career-advice/how-to-write-an-elevator-pitch>
- Karen Kelsky, *The Professor is In*, Chapter 18: Cultivating Your References.

Week 11 (11/06-11/10)

Networking (elevator pitch, LinkedIn, Handshake)

Topics: What is networking? The importance of a community. Where and how. Etiquette. Elevator pitch. Keep contacts. How to write academic email and how to stay in contact with other academics.

In-class activities:

- Work on your elevator pitch and prepare to present it in less than 60 seconds. Provide feedback on your colleagues' pitches.

At-home assignments:

- Research and identify your top 5 professional organizations. Create/update profile on departmental website AND LinkedIn, Academia.edu, Handshake, or ORCID.org

Pre-class readings for next week:

- Watch [Welcome to Career Services](#)
- Read [article from the Chronicle on the PhD degree](#)

Week 12 (11/13-11/17)

Job Markets (Academic and Non-Academic)

Guest: Penn Career Services

Topics: Getting familiar with the job markets and knowing your options. Building your PhD career. Strategies for job search.

In-class activities

- Hear from speakers from Penn Career Services
- Discuss the importance of being familiar with the job markets at an early stage of PhD
- Tools and resources for students to use (guest speaker from Penn Career Services)

Pre-class readings

- Watch [Creating a cohesive application packet for the academic job search](#)
- Read PART I. WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW BEFORE YOU START, [The Academic Job Search Handbook](#)

- Chronicle of Higher Education, “How To Read a Faculty Job Ad”:
<https://jobs.chronicle.com/article/how-to-read-a-faculty-job-ad>
- Look at [H-Net Jobs](#); [Higher Ed Jobs](#); [Academic Jobs Wiki](#); [MLA Job List](#)

Week 13 (11/20-11/24)

Academic Jobs

Topics: What does applying to academic jobs entail? What is the timeline of academic jobs applications?

In-class activities

- Discuss academic jobs (different kinds: SLACs, R1s, etc.; tenure process)
- Review and discuss the different academic job application materials (CV, cover letter, teaching statement, research statement, diversity statement, teaching dossier), articulating research interests and teaching interests
- Workshop on CV, on diversity/inclusion, and research statements.
- Introduction on how to decolonize one’s sample syllabi for the job market (CTL course samplings)

At-home assignments

- Read “Chapter 9: CVs,” [The Academic Job Search Handbook](#)
- Optional reading:* [Self-fashioning in the Curriculum Vitae: Leonardo, the Duke, and the CV](#)
- Write your academic CV (to be reviewed in class during the last session)

Pre-class readings:

- Watch the series of videos [Career Courses: Resumes and CVs](#)
- Complete Lesson 1 of online course [STEP 1: Discover “Know Your Options”](#) (Beyond the Professoriate)

November 23-26 : Thanksgiving break
(November 21-22: Thur-Fri class schedule on Tue-Wed)

Week 14 (11/27-12/01)

Non-Academic and Alt-Ac Jobs

Topics: What is the difference between a CV and a resume? What are alt-ac careers? How to transfer skills for nonacademic jobs. How to use your dissertation skills to market your employability.

In-class activities:

- Address the topics listed above
- Discuss with guest speaker(s) (alumni who work in alt-ac jobs)

At-home assignments:

- Watch [10 steps for converting your CV into a resume](#)
- Write a resume for a non-academic job of your choice (to be reviewed in class during the last session).
- Peruse [So What Are You Going to Do with That? Finding Careers Outside Academia](#), by Susan Basalla and Maggie Debelius for guidance on how to convert your academic skills and knowledge to alt-ac job posting qualifications.
- Optional*: Become familiar with the [Knock 'Em Dead Collection](#) job search series by Martin Yate (Job Search, Networking, Resumés, Cover Letters, Interviews) N.B. Franklin has older versions. The most updated versions of the three books are on Amazon.com.
- Bring your CV and resume to class next week!!!**

Week 15 (12/04-12/08)

Conclusion

In-class activities

- Discuss/peer-review CVs and resumes

December 11: Last day of classes