Preparing for Your Non-Academic Career

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A Few Notes

- Welcome, it's great to have you here!
- We're using Zoom for video, this Google Docs for notes, and Google Slides for a basic slide desk.
  - The slide deck is basic, used as a means of orientation for folks who are not following along with this doc.
- How to use this document:
  - Click on a link in this table of contents (below) to jump to that section.
  - Comment in the notes at any time by adding a new bullet.
  - Feel free to use +1s to show appreciation for or agreement with a comment someone else wrote.
  - Multiple people writing in one online document can be overwhelming. It's always ok to step away and add your thoughts later.
  - This doc will be available to you after the presentation, and you can also make a copy for yourself.
- **Everything you share in this document is available to everyone else with the link.**
  - No one will know that you added something unless you indicate it.
- Feel free to interrupt me to ask clarifying questions.
- After each section there will be dedicated time for Q&A related to that topic.
- There is a lot of text in this doc! Much of it I will read out verbatim.

Sign In (Optional)

Name / Pronouns / Professional interests or academic subfield(s) / Anything else you want to share / Contact info

- Jennifer Polk / she, her / PhD careers / my cat Izzy may appear / jen@fromphdtolife.com / @FromPhDtoLife on Twitter
- [add yourself]
Introduction

What will we cover today?

→ Presentation Agenda

1. Know Yourself
2. Know What's Possible
3. Network
4. Apply
5. Your Next Steps

→ Learning Outcomes

- Learn about career possibilities for philosophy PhDs
- Understand the importance of career exploration and how to do it while you’re still a student
- Understand the purpose and value of networking as part of job searching
- Understand the purpose of resumes and how to approach writing one
- Identify next steps you can take to prepare for your career during your PhD program

→ My Assumptions

- There are a great many wonderful jobs out there, some of which are in academia
- You already have all the education to you need to build a fantastic career for yourself, in a wide range of fields
- You want to do work that you enjoy (most of the time), that's engaging and meaningful to you, where you can experience success and have positive relationships with colleagues
- You get to determine what counts as career success for you
- You can do all the work we'll talk about doing long before you ever need a job, and ideally you will, starting now

In this presentation I'm outlining what seems like a clear 4-step approach. Reality is messy and that mess is a feature, not a bug.

Reminder: You will have an opportunity to ask questions at the end of each section, and throughout as needed. Please do.
Check In (Optional)

What are you most hoping to take away from this presentation and discussion?

- [add your answer]
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One: Know Yourself

This section is about self-reflection and assessments.

This is important because while you may have the same degree as someone else, you aren’t the same person. That means you aren’t the same professional either.

I suggest doing this first and come back to it frequently. It'll help keep you grounded and focused on your interests and goals.

A lot of people may have suggestions and opinions and some of those may not be relevant given what you know about yourself.

→ Self-reflection Questions

- What are your goals and lifestyle desires?
- What are your top values?
- What are your top strengths? Consider strengths as “values in action” (VIA) and “natural talents” (Gallup)
  - VIA Survey (character strengths)
  - CliftonStrengths (Gallup)
- What do you do that others don't? / How are you unique (as a scholar/professional) in the program?
- What are you doing when you feel most energized?
  - Bonus: Do the “standout moments” exercise
- What are your skills? Broad (“teaching,” “research”) and specific (“event poster design using Canva,” “formatting in-text citations using APA”)
  - Challenge yourself to make a list of 100+ -- see how many you can come up with!
  - Then, rank them in two ways: 1) proficiency and 2) enjoyment (and I recognize these may be context specific)
- What knowledge do you have? Consider academic and all other domains
- What (at least semi) professional experiences do you have? Ditto
Online Assessments, Surveys, and Related Resources

Imagine PhD was designed with you in mind.

Do you like this kind of thing? Cool.

A variety of other assessments and tools:

- Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
- Strong Interest Inventory
- O*Net Interest Profile
- National Occupational Classification
- Enneagram
- Sparketype
- More at Truity.com

A final thought re self-assessment: Please don’t skip this step, and do come back to it in future, changing and refining as needed. (It will be needed.) Make lists, draw diagrams, create a vision board, whatever.

→ Your Questions

What questions do you have about this section?

- [add your question or comment]

Two: Know What's Possible

This section is about researching possibilities for employment beyond what we think of as traditional academic careers.

→ Where Philosophy PhDs Work

Short answer: In and around academia, higher education, and associated fields. And in government roles, nonprofit organizations, and businesses large and small. They work as consultants (self-employed, business owners, firms large and small); strategists, advisors, and analysts; managers (of accounts, people, projects, programs, and products); and lots more.
Frustrating answer: There’s no list of jobs, because a wide range of possibilities exist for people who happen to have philosophy PhD education.

Better answer: Your knowledge (including of options), experience, skills, network, location, and interests (among other things) will shape your own list.

Depending on you, your options may include positions in the following industries or roles (listed in alphabetical order):

- **Arts and Culture** (program management, communications, fundraising and grant writing)
- **Business** -- enterprise and startup (management consulting, analyst or strategist roles, communications, marketing, sales and business development, research, learning and development, recruiting, and lots more besides)
- **Freelancing and Independent Consulting**, aka self-employment / solopreneurship (editing, writing, coaching, tutoring, research)
- **Government** (policy analysis, lots more)
- **Healthcare** (research administration and research development, including grant writing; other communication-heavy roles; ethics)
- **Higher Education, including University Presses** ("admin" or staff jobs serving institutional, faculty, or student needs and priorities -- see this list for suggestions)
- **K-12 Education** (private schools may not require a teaching credential)
- **Nonprofits** (as above)
- **Tech, including EdTech** (customer service or client relations, sales and business development, product or project management; see also Business)
- And more -- this is *not* an exhaustive list

→ Philosophy-specific Information Online

- APA’s *Beyond Academia: Professional Opportunities for Philosophers* (2016, ebook)
  - 37-page downloadable .pdf
  - US sources and profiles of philosophy grads who earned degrees decades ago
  - Decent overall but do seek other info and advice
- “Placement” info
  - *Academic Placement Data and Analysis*
    - Seems accurate, generally, through 2018, if incomplete
  - See also Charles Lassiter’s [placement data](#) website
    - Not very accurate
    - See a [discussion of this project](#) on the Daily Nous
  - You can look up McMaster on both these sites
- Stories and interviews:
  - Phil Skills
  - Free Range Philosophers
→ Research Job Options

Start making your own list of options.

What do you already know is a thing that might be interesting?

There are jobs at universities (and colleges). See my 1-page list for ideas and inspiration.

Keep in mind: A lot of jobs are broadly similar. And a lot of those jobs are ones you can do, if not today than after a bit of relevant experience or skill- or building.

Reading job ads is a useful way to research possibilities:

* LinkedIn Jobs
* Glassdoor.com
* Indeed.com
* Specialized job boards
* University career sites
* Company / organization “careers” pages
* Government hiring portals
* Do you have anything specific to add?
  * [add your suggestion]
  * 
  * 

→ Your Questions

What questions do you have about this section?

* [add your question or comment]
* 
* 
*
Three: Network

This section is about talking with and otherwise learning from and engaging in conversation with professionals in fields of interests to you.

→ Definition of Networking

Networking is any activity that puts you in active conversation with members of your professional community, or a community you are interested in joining.

Networking is a good and useful thing, generally, and is an important, even crucial, activity to engage in as part of career development. Studies consistently show this.

Networking isn’t just for job seekers. You might engage in networking activities more intensively or in certain ways at different times in your life and career.

The purpose of networking:

- Build positive relationships with people who share your interests (your network)
- Gain and share knowledge, especially insider information
- Learn new insights and perspectives to enhance your own expertise
- Give and receive referrals for collaborations, paid work, or any other professional opportunities

But also, if you Google “networking” you’ll see things like

- “70% of jobs aren't posted anywhere”
- "78% of recruiters find candidates through referrals"
- "85% of jobs are filled as a result of networking"

My own informal research suggests 95%+ of PhDs credit networking -- and what they learned from it -- for their success on the job market. It’s not only down to networking, but the good stuff wouldn’t have happened without it.

→ Your Network

Who do you know? More people than you think.

For example, you probably know (or know of) Chandra Kavanagh, who graduated from here not that long ago.
- Personal life
- Hobbies
- High school classmates
- Undergrad and master's degree contacts
- PhD alumni and ABDs (former PhD candidates who now work full-time)
- Colleagues from part- or full-time jobs you had/have
- People you’ve met at conferences or campus events
- Students and alumni from other departments
- “Alt-ac” staff you know
- Your social media followers and people you follow (Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)
- What else?
  - [add your suggestions here]
  - 
  - 

→ How to Connect with People Online

Networking can be formal or informal:

- 1-on-1 meetings
- Small group meetings
- Networking events
- Planned events or experiences can turn into impromptu networking opportunities:
  - Conference presentation → conversation over (virtual) coffee
  - Guest lecture by visiting researcher → meeting select grad students

What else can count as or turn into a networking opportunity:

- Social media interactions (Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, exchanges in the comments sections)
- Interactions on other online communities/forums (Slack, Discogs, Mighty Networks)
- Email exchanges
- Chat conversations during Zoom meetings
- Any interaction with someone else, in any context (you never know!)

→ Informational Interviews

An informational interview is when you speak with someone about their job, their career, and their field in general.

These informal interviews are your best opportunity to learn about the world of work direct from insiders, and they are a standard practice, particularly for new grads and career changers.
They are a form of networking, but they're a bit more lopsided than other networking conversations you might have because you'll do much more listening than talking.

→ Tips for Emailing Requests

- Be direct and keep it short and to the point
- Specify your “why” (why them specifically)
- Make taking action easy (have a clear next step)
- Follow up (this is a kindness, not a bother)

What to keep in mind: As a current PhD student you have status and social capital that can help you connect with interesting people working in a variety of fields, including at McMaster itself.

→ Your Questions

What questions do you have about this section?

- [add your question or comment]
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Four: Apply

This section is about applying to jobs, including writing a resume.

→ Relevant Experience, Transferable Skills, Interests, and "Fit"

Hiring is expensive for employers and for applicants, if you consider all the time and other resources involved.

It’s hard to give an exact answer to the question, “What are employers looking for?” In general, though, they want to hire people with

- Strong track records of success doing either the same or highly relevant work
- Evidence of great skills relevant to the problems they’re looking to solve
- A keen interest in doing the work
- And a general “fit” in the ways and means of the workplace -- someone who they and their clients will enjoy and otherwise appreciate working with day in and day out
Bottom line: Experience does matter, which doesn’t always seem to be the case when it comes to academic (faculty, sessional) hiring.

→ Resumes vs Academic CVs

The whole "CV to resume" thing downplays the importance of starting resumes from scratch, particularly if you haven’t applied for a certain kind of job before.

Similarities:

- Marketing document
- Select information
- Standard format
- Meant to get you an interview

Differences:

- Resumes are highly tailored to specific position, much more so than CVs
- Long vs. short: Resumes are 1-2 pages
- Education often last on a resume, not first as on a CV
- CVs are largely a list of completed work
- Resumes provide evidence -- often with numbers -- of relevant experience and significant accomplishments
- Resumes may include a LOT of things that might never even be hinted at in a CV

Using a reverse chronological or combination resume format; avoid the functional resume format because it’s difficult for hiring managers to parse. They do want to know what experience you’ve had and what you achieved in each position.

And yes, your time as a graduate student can count as experience on your resume.

Remember: Resumes are about how you are a good fit for this one specific position (as far as you’re able to tell from what you know). Only include relevant information.

→ What about LinkedIn?

You don’t need a profile but you probably want to have one. It needn’t include all the things it could include to give you a valuable online space to tell your (professional) story. It’s also a great place to search for information.

Check out a few profiles of Canadian philosophy PhDs now working in non-academic careers:

- [Chandra Kavanagh](#) (ethics, health innovation, medtech)
**Daniel Mullin** (sales, recruitment, program management)
**Jenn Nielson** (currently a BC Green Party candidate)
**James Pratt** (research development, faculty governance, policy, project management)
**Kyla Reid** (research facilitation)
**Craig Roxborough** (policy analyst)
**Ryan Samaroo** (policy analyst)
**Aaron Barth** (business owner, organizational culture and learning)

And see also these philosophy PhD (and one ABD) folks in the US:

**Ashley Acosta-Fox** (instructional design, e-learning)
**Ryan D. Cobb** (account manager, client relations)
**Emily Crookston** (business owner, ghostwriter)
**Krista Duttenhaver Ratcliff** (product and program management)
**Vincent Picciuto** (financial analyst, investment advisor)

→ Your Questions

What questions do you have about this section?

- [add your question or comment]

→ Your Next Steps

Consider what we’ve discussed. What do you think is the next thing you could do, whether it involves self-reflection, online research, talking to people, or taking a stab at branding yourself as a professional via your LinkedIn profile or a resume?

What do you need to do next?

- [your answer]
→ Resources at McMaster

Did you know? Grad students are disproportionately high users of student services at McMaster. You may have access to the following resources and services:

- Personal counselling
- Employee career services via Homewood Health (incl if you're a TA)
- Alumni career counsellor (your own former unis may have similar offerings available to you)
- Student Success Centre - Career and Employment
  - Take advantage even if it doesn’t seem to be for you as a humanities PhD
- Graduate Studies - Career and Professional Development
  - Consider making time for Mitacs workshops
- Look for mentorship programs, offerings from the alumni office, student club events
- If you see something that interests you, ask if you can attend / access

→ Your Questions

What questions do you have about this section?

- [add your question or comment]
- 
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Additional Resources

- Transition Q&As
- Recommended Reading
- [Add your own]

Feedback!

Give us your thoughts.

What went well during this presentation and discussion?

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- 
-
△ What would you like to change?

△ What would you like to share gratitude for?

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