

The Academic Job Talk

The Job Talk

- During the job interview process, the job talk aims to reveal how well you fit in as a teacher, scholar, and colleague

Hiring Process in Academia

- Positions advertised (Chronicle, Higher Ed Jobs, newsletters, etc.)
- Applicants typically submit CV, references or recommendation letters, and cover letter
- The job talk begins with the cover letter

Hiring Process in Academia

- Phone interviews conducted for selected applicants (second opportunity for job talk)
- Typically 2-3 candidates invited for campus interviews
- 3rd and most comprehensive job talk takes place during campus visit

Preparation for Interviews

- Thoroughly research the:
 - Institution
 - Department
 - Faculty within the department
- Prior to campus visit find out what sort of talk is expected, expected content, your audience, allotted time, space/equipment you can use, etc.

Why is the job talk important?

- Typically a single opportunity to impress:
 - Most faculty and students may meet you only during the job talk
- Must be considered as a performance
- Ought to describe your teaching style, research abilities, personality traits, etc.

What is the talk about?

- Most often it's about the candidate's research
- May be replaced by a sample teaching lecture
- Either way, content must reflect why you are the best candidate for the position, describe your connection with the department

You Are Demonstrating

- That you can give an engaging presentation as a teacher / researcher
- That you can convey your research and its importance to non-specialists
- Your research potential
- That you can interact well with people

Before the Talk

- Attend as many job talks as possible
- Know your audience
(undergrads/faculty/university wide)
- Know how long the talk should take
(typically 30-35 minutes, the remaining for questions)

Crafting an Interesting Presentation

- It is not a dissertation defense!
- Do not overload presentation with minute details
- Use PowerPoint slides, but sparingly
 - Do not use complete sentences

Writing Your Job Talk

- Start out by giving an outline to the audience of what you will cover
- Provide an outline of key parts of dissertation (This does not mean chapter by chapter)
 - Present information thematically
 - Ex: The first part of my study X, the second part Y, the third part Z

The Job Talk continued...

- Start out with an interesting result, story, scenario, etc. that grabs the attention of the audience
- Result, story, etc. should function on multiple levels to demonstrate various things that relate to your research
- Avoid jargon and acronyms

The Presentation Should Answer

- What does your research seek to do?
(Articulate an argument)
- How does your work fit into a broader conceptual or theoretical framework and what, specifically, is that framework?
- What is your contribution to the field?
- Why should the audience care about your research?

The Presentation

- Practice, practice, practice!
- Know your talk well enough that you don't have to read word for word
- Occasionally stop and interject a scripted thought that appears natural
- Make eye contact

Remember

- It is a formal presentation. Err on the side of being overly professional vs. casual in your delivery
- Dress Appropriately
- Finish on time. A poorly planned and rehearsed talk will run over time.
- Be CONFIDENT.

The Q&A: The Do's

- Do anticipate questions
- Do Jot down questions
- Do take a minute to give a thorough response
- Do ask if the person can clarify what they are asking
- Do ask: "did I answer your question...or were you looking for..."

The Q&A

- Don't be afraid to say "I don't know. That's a great question and I'll have to think about it". (Just don't do this too much.)
- Think of questions as part of a dialogue, not as criticism you must deflect.
- Treat every question seriously and with respect.

The Q&A: The Don'ts

- Do not be dismissive of questions you may deem unimportant
- Do not ignore the questions of students
- Don't stand by the podium the entire time. (Don't lean on the podium)
- Beware of ego and arrogance

Tips

- Plan for disaster. Have a copy of your talk in various forms and e-places.
- Do not eat a big meal prior to talk
- If you need liquid, drinking with a straw will save you embarrassment