

# Preparing for (and Thinking About) the Academic Job Market

Eric Min

University of California, Los Angeles

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**The job market process is hot garbage and mercilessly awful.**

Over the months-long adventure, you will:

- Struggle to communicate your research
- Wonder whether your work has any value
- Get whiplash from contradictory advice
- Feel crushing waves of hopelessness
- Doubt whether you have a future
- Lack almost any sense of control

All of this is terrible... but completely normal.

# Let's be candid

- The job market is always chaotic and random.
- Any advice about it will be noisy.
- But no matter what, there are some fundamentals that help alleviate some of these problems.

# The lingering impacts of COVID-19

- COVID-19 adds another degree of uncertainty to the academic job market.
- Some places may institute freezing hires.
- Some people will re-enter the market when jobs rebound (like after 2008 recession).
- But the effects are not as bad as they appeared in the peak pandemic.

# What does this mean for you?

- Always have a Plan B: Do not limit yourself to academic positions.
  - The goal is to be employed and secure.
  - There should be no stigma about this.
  - It's a nice way to distract yourself.
  - That said, today's discussion is about the academic market.
- Do not forget about the postdoc market.
  - Link to YouTube version of postdoc event:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7IN2b6GJXaA>

# What we'll cover today

- Timeline
- Job packet
- Applications
- Surviving the process
- What we will cover in the future:
  - Job talks

## ■ By June

- Have discussions with your committee and faculty
- Address tough questions
  - Is my work ready for the market?
  - What is my current financial situation?
  - Where am I willing to live? At what salary?
  - Does my partner impact my decision?
  - Do I need/want an extra year?
- Make a personal website
- Clean up your social media presence
- Verify/Renew your APSA membership (for eJobs)

## ■ July

- First polished draft of your job market paper; get feedback
- First draft of application materials completed; get feedback
- Jobs start being posted on APSA eJobs
- Get working papers under review

## ■ Mid-August

- Provide materials to letter writers
- Submit info for placement candidate website
- Get early start on searching for postdocs
- Try arranging appointments at APSA

# Short-term tasks

- Late August
  - First wave of applications due
- Labor Day
  - Be ready to do a practice job talk
- September to February-ish
  - Flyouts take place
- October
  - Search for postdocs and other positions

# The key elements

## ■ Cover letter

- *Extremely difficult to write effectively*
- Who you are (1 paragraph)
- Your research (3-5 paragraphs)
- What you can teach (1 paragraph)
- What is enclosed (1 paragraph)
- Two pages maximum, single-spaced
- This is your opening statement and advertisement
- Several examples posted on the PoliSciResources page (<https://bruinlearn.ucla.edu/courses/84036>)

## ■ CV

- Look at junior faculty CVs for guidance
- Include a paragraph summarizing/advertising your dissertation
- Four pages maximum

# The key elements

- Research statement
  - Three or four pages about your current and future research
- Teaching statement
  - A couple paragraphs on your teaching philosophy
  - Courses you would teach, evidence of teaching ability
- Diversity statement
  - A couple paragraphs on how you would contribute to and/or promote diversity

# The key elements

- Graduate transcript
  - Unofficial copies typically fine, but be sure to check
- Writing sample (job market paper)
  - The crown jewel of the application
  - Polished paper of 30-50 pages
  - Polished chapters (2 or 3) from your dissertation
  - *Not* an awesome paper co-written with your advisor
  - *Not* a really cool work in progress
  - Do not be surprised if people don't read it (at) all...
- Letter writers
  - Make sure at least one senior faculty (your chair) writes one
  - Do not ask a super famous person who does not really know you
  - Ask younger faculty if they know your project
  - Let faculty know sooner than later
  - Make their job easy by giving them your packet

# Applying for jobs

- You are either ready for the market or you are not.
- Applying for “just a couple jobs” is usually not a smart idea.
- Almost all jobs will appear on APSA eJobs.
  - The search function is mediocre, so sift through everything.
- Most applications use one of the following:
  - Interfolio
  - AcademicJobsOnline (AJO)
  - University’s own job submission page
- Interfolio and AJO help streamline multiple applications.
- Applying to any jobs posted on Interfolio is free, but it costs money to use Interfolio to submit to non-Interfolio positions.
  - You will need to cover this fee (\$60 for 50 applications).
- Make and update a spreadsheet of all positions and statuses.
- Considering making a shared Box folder with your committee.

- This is a small world.
- Do not apply for jobs you definitely would not take.
- *Never* use any applications/flyouts as “practice.”
- Do apply for jobs you’re not sure whether you’d take.

# Self-care is critical

- The process is incredibly stressful and taxing.
- You need to distract yourself while you wait.
- Try to keep making progress on your dissertation and research (but don't stress too much about it).
- Create support groups with others also on the market.
- Take care of yourself mentally, emotionally, and physically.
- Reach out to friends, advisors, counseling, and other resources as necessary.
- Do not try to go through this process alone.