

## **Recommended Timeline from the A-exam to the Job Market**

### **THIRD YEAR**

#### **At the A-exam**

There should be a discussion not only of the dissertation project as a whole but also of two other pieces of writing that the student will shortly undertake: 1) a brief prospectus or a description of the thesis topic (5 pages), along with a bibliography, and 2) a draft of something that might form part of the dissertation. Students should be prepared to begin working on these projects immediately after the exam. The prospectus/research description will also be of use in applying for research grants, in requesting letters of recommendation from faculty, and in composing a job letter.

### **FOURTH YEAR**

Students are encouraged to join a dissertation writing workshop immediately after they have completed the A-exam and to continue to participate until the dissertation has been completed (electronic participation is an option when not in residence). The Comparative Literature department will organize its own workshop, but students are encouraged to join similar workshops in their specific fields of research run by other departments or by individual faculty members for their own dissertation students.

**Within six months of the A-exam, students should meet again with their entire special committee to discuss the prospectus/description and the piece of writing they have produced.** The hope is that the writing will help to clarify the direction of the students' research. At this meeting with the committee, there should be another discussion of the dissertation project as a whole and, more specifically, of how the piece of writing might be revised into a chapter.

**A chapter of the dissertation should be completed by the end of the eighth semester, preferably by May.** This chapter could then serve a number of functions: as the basis for a conference paper, a published article, and a writing sample for the job market. Another meeting with the full committee would be appropriate at this time to discuss the first chapter and the work to be done over the summer and in the fall on the dissertation but also to prepare for entering the job market. The committee chair is particularly important to consult concerning **all the tasks to be completed over the summer** (see below).

**All students should plan to apply for jobs in their fifth year.** Although the chances of obtaining a position increase the closer one is to completing the dissertation, it is still possible to be hired on the basis of a couple of chapters. At the very least, since most students will need to enter the market more than once, the early experience of being interviewed will be extremely helpful the second or third time around.

**To prepare for the job market, students should attend a job placement meeting no later than the spring semester of their fourth year, if not already in the third year.** On account of the large number of its students entering the market every year, the English department holds an exceptionally well-organized and informative job placement meeting every spring, to which Comparative Literature students are generously invited. In addition, students are urged to attend the job placement meetings in other departments in whose fields they will be seeking employment. Comparative Literature will hold its own placement meeting to address the specific challenges facing our job seekers, who typically apply for jobs in single-language or area studies departments as well as in Comparative Literature departments.

**The following tasks should be undertaken during the summer before the fifth year:**

- 1) Turn 20 or 25 pages of the first chapter into a writing sample for the job market.
- 2) Write a draft of a job letter. The committee members, especially the chair, will offer advice and suggestions on the letter. The DGS can also be a helpful resource.

- 3) Write an abstract (5 pages) of the dissertation, presumably based on the prospectus or thesis description.
- 4) Begin to write a second chapter.
- 5) Think about what other piece of writing (a term paper, for example, or a conference paper) might be the basis of an on-campus job talk. The job talk might be drawn from the second chapter, although it is sometimes useful to have an alternative.

## **FIFTH YEAR**

**By September 1 or thereabouts, students should set up a dossier and ask their committee members and other faculty to write recommendations for the job market.** When doing so, students should provide their recommenders with a dissertation abstract, a job letter, and their chapter(s), **ideally including a draft of a second chapter.** Faculty need to be given a few weeks to read the work and write a recommendation. The MLA Job List usually appears by the end of September or early October, and students should aim to submit applications as soon as possible thereafter.

Usually, all members of the special committee write recommendations based on the student's research and writing. In addition to these letters, there should be one that evaluates the student's teaching, usually written by a TA supervisor or course leader, or by a faculty member who has observed the student in the classroom. Other faculty members with whom the student has worked closely (at Cornell or elsewhere) might also be asked to write a letter.

**A second chapter should be completed by December 1.** Sometimes students are asked to send all completed work on the dissertation to a search committee either before or after an MLA interview; obviously, more is better.

**Students should participate in a mock-interview in December.** The English department has recently been helping Comparative Literature to set up mock interviews for our job seekers.

**Ideally, students should also give a trial run of a job talk to the department in late November or early December.** Traditionally, the DGS schedules such talks as part of the Graduate Student Colloquium.

If students obtain a job in their fifth year, they will have to work quickly to complete their dissertations by the time they leave town. If they are not so fortunate, the same process will be repeated in the sixth year.