

Practical Matters: Remaking the Humanities PhD in the Age of Alt-Ac

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I want to begin with a few comments about the title of my lecture. The phrase “practical matters” gestures in a couple of directions. First of all, I want to explore practical ways in which humanities doctoral programs can adjust to the new realities of the academic marketplace, and how students right now can shape their courses of study in ways that can maximize the practical utility of their degrees. But I also want to argue that *the practical matters*, that it's important to foreground the transferable skills taught in humanities doctoral programs and to find ways to underscore their importance and maximize their utility, not only for teaching jobs but for careers outside the classroom and outside academia altogether. This is not to say that I don't recognize the danger of reducing the value of a liberal arts or humanities education to the skills it teaches and their utility in the marketplace. Far from it. I cherish the humanities as a site from which to constructively *contest* our society's obsession with the practical and the utilitarian, to push back against the increasing tendency to see the value of higher education in strictly vocational terms. The humanities are a place for free and unfettered thinking and speculation the value of which ought not to be reduced to some measure of practical utility. But at the same time, I think it's important that humanists respond to questions about the value of the humanities by stressing the transferable skills humanities majors and PhDs possess, and that we work to maximize the ability of those students to use

those skills in a variety of non-academic venues. This means that I'm using the term "alt-ac" in its most expansive form in the second part of my title. I want to talk about how to make the humanities PhD a more viable credential for alternative careers inside academia, but outside as well. So, while I'll be stressing ways in which doctoral programs can attend more carefully to teacher training, the "alt" in my title refers to alternatives to teaching both inside and outside of higher education.

We wouldn't be here today talking about changing the curriculum for graduate students in the humanities, or expanding their employment options after they graduate, if it weren't for the jobs crisis in higher education, so I want to start by talking a bit about the forces that have produced this crisis. First of all, it's important to keep in mind that this isn't just a humanities jobs crisis. The jobs crisis in higher education is also affecting the STEM disciplines, where the bulk of PhDs are awarded. According to an April, 2016 article in *Inside Higher Ed* that discusses the latest "Survey of Earned Doctorates" done by the National Science Foundation:

Increasingly, the pool of doctoral degrees coming out of American universities is dominated by science and engineering Ph.D.s. Their numbers were up 2 percent in 2014, compared to the prior year, while all other research doctorates were down by 2 percent. With those changes, science and engineering Ph.D.s make up 75 percent of all doctorates awarded in 2014. In 1974, they made up only 58 percent of the total.

The article goes on to note that while the job crisis in the humanities tends to get the most attention, things are not much better in the sciences:

[T]he data in the report on the postdoctorate plans of new Ph.D.s show that the tightening job market for doctorate holders is by no means unique to the humanities. Across the board, including STEM disciplines, the percentage of new Ph.D.s with job commitments (including postdocs) after they earn their doctorates is dropping.

According to the NSF report, while between 2004 and 2014 the number of PhDs with teaching jobs or a post doc in the humanities has fallen from 63% to 54%, the comparable figures for life sciences PhDs is 71% to 56%, for physical sciences 71% to 64%, and for engineering 63% to 57%. The article also goes on to point out that among humanities PhDs, while the profession has lately been making a strong push to orient graduate studies toward alt-ac or non-academic careers, the bulk of humanities PhD students seek academic teaching and research positions. However, it's a different story in the STEM disciplines, where many aspire to corporate, think tank, foundation, or government jobs.

So, in an age of technological dominance in which the humanities have been routinely thought of as quaint, marginal, “dessert,” and an economic dead end, science PhDs aren't doing all that much better than are humanities PhDs. The problem across all the disciplines seems to be glut. Too many PhDs, too few jobs for those requiring the PhD. However, as I just noted, because the traditional job opportunities for humanities PhDs are more narrowly academic than are those for the sciences, the drop in academic jobs has hit them particularly hard. While the science PhD has historically been a marketable credential in the corporate world and in government, the humanities PhD has by-and-large been a credential to teach, and as the number of tenure-track jobs shrink, the value of the humanities PhD shrinks. Seen from this perspective, the push to expand job opportunities for humanities doctoral students

seeks to make the humanities doctorate as flexible a credential as STEM PhDs have always been.

On the face of it, then, the current pressure to both change the curriculum and expand employment options for humanities PhDs seems like the response to a straight-forward supply-and-demand problem. U.S. doctoral programs are simply producing too many PhDs for the number of teaching positions available, and so, something has to give. Either we add more jobs, produce fewer PhDs, or keep the number of PhDs we produce steady but train students so that they are qualified for jobs outside of the academy. Right now, this last approach seems to be the most popular one.

Of course, the shrinking job market for humanities PhDs hasn't occurred in a vacuum. It's the product of a larger force, the corporatization of higher education. Colleges and universities today, as more and more commentators have been pointing out, are being challenged at every level by parents, politicians, boards of trustees, and a range of social commentators who increasingly conflate higher education with vocational training. This vocational training model of higher education runs directly counter to the liberal arts model central to the extraordinary success of higher education in the United States since the eighteenth century, and has emerged as the main challenge to business as usual in humanities departments.

While calls to expand the vocational scope of the humanities doctorate are clearly tied to the academic jobs crisis, I believe they are also a broader effect of the corporatization of higher education. To a significant degree, the jobs crisis in the humanities is driven by a managerial strategy aimed at driving down the costs of employing faculty and marginalizing their role in

governance, but it is also connected to the pragmatic and vocational orientation the corporate university takes toward higher education. Concern about the practical value of a PhD in the humanities cannot be separated from the corporatization of higher education, which puts a premium on the practical, the pragmatic, and the vocational. This pragmatic ethos is both a symptom and a cause of the corporatization of higher education, which is characterized by the convergence of a set of interrelated developments, some of them, as I just indicated, structural, economic, and managerial, to be sure, but others having to do with values --- with shifting ideas about the very purpose of a college education, and especially of an advanced degree in the humanities. At the structural and managerial levels, the corporatization of higher education is reflected in the fact that universities more and more are being run as corporations, both in terms of their increasingly complex managerial hierarchies, and their stress on the economic bottom line. College and university presidents operate as CEOs in an environment in which shared governance is on the wane. Faculty have less and less say about broad educational goals and curricular and program matters than they did in the past, which means not only disciplinary knowledge but disciplinary *values* can take a back seat to economic exigencies, or to ideas about what will sell to students and their parents. Boards of Trustees are increasingly made up of CEOs, bankers, hedge fund operators, and real estate developers who, not surprisingly, bring a business mentality not only to the budgetary and administrative aspects of higher education, but often to their philosophies of education as well.

The corporatization of higher education, and the increasing tendency to think of a college or university education narrowly in terms of vocational training, go hand-in-hand and feed off of one another. The more people in our society think of higher education as vocational training,

the more colleges and universities come to adopt the institutional characteristics and utilitarian values of corporations, and vice-versa. This environment, of course, is beginning to have a decidedly negative effect on the humanities in general and on my own field of literary studies in particular. Course enrollments are down, and the number of English majors has dropped (sometimes dramatically) at many colleges and universities (and keep in mind that new hiring is tied to the number of majors, so when that number drops tenure track positions begin to evaporate). Of course, statistics show that economic recessions always drive down enrollments in the humanities, so to some degree the current dip in enrollments is hardly surprising, since the effects of the 2008 recession, especially in terms of a depressed job market, are still with us today. However, there is reason to believe that we are witnessing a more deep-seated structural change in which the very conception of higher education is changing. Higher education is, increasingly, becoming *hire* education, as Americans come to think of the money they are spending to educate their children as an investment in job training that should pay for itself by preparing them for lucrative professions. Any courses, requirements, or majors that don't contribute to this bottom line goal become suspect.

As I said, these two forces are connected. The corporatization of higher education is largely to blame for the casualization of labor in academia, and the casualization of labor is one of the principal causes of the shortage in tenure track teaching positions for PhDs. One of the reasons there's a glut of humanities PhDs relative to the number of tenure track jobs being offered is that those jobs have disappeared as colleges and universities have converted them to part-time, adjunct, contract labor. According to a new study commissioned by *Inside Higher Ed* (with an assist from Gallup), this situation will not change anytime soon. *Inside Higher Ed* polled the Provosts (the chief academic officers) of colleges and universities across the nation

on a host of issues (“Provosts in the Middle,” January 25th, by Scott Jaschik). One of them had to do with trends in the casualization of labor. According to the report, while 71% of provosts “report that tenure 'remains important and viable at my institution,’” 61 percent “would favor a system of long-term contracts over the current tenure system.” 73% of the Provosts reported that their institution rely “significantly” on non-tenure-track professors, and most “provosts don't think their reliance on adjuncts will change in the years ahead -- if anything, they think their institutions will become *more* reliant on non-tenure-track faculty members.”

So, while calls to transform graduate study in the humanities so that doctoral students are trained for non-academic jobs are a response to the shrinking number of academic teaching positions, they are also inevitably connected to the increasing pressure to make higher education more practical, utilitarian, and vocational. From this point of view the problem isn't that a humanities PhD has suddenly become a kind of useless credential. The problem is that the casualization of labor has dramatically shrunk the number of jobs for which doctoral students have been traditionally qualified: tenure track teaching positions. And this problem is exacerbated by the growing perception that literature, philosophy, and history really don't matter all that much in a hyper technological age increasingly driven by capital accumulation. Skeptics wonder what practical good can possibly come from producing new assistant professors to teach undergraduate students about useless humanities subjects. If, like me, you want to resist this utilitarian reduction of education, and are alarmed by the shrinking number of tenure track positions at colleges and universities around the country, then the call to reform doctoral study so that it qualifies students for jobs outside of academia might not look progressive at all. Instead, it might seem like a capitulation to the modern corporate

university's new business model, which depends more and more on part-time and limited contract labor. For this reason, some have argued against turning the humanities doctorate into a credential for positions outside higher education. Critics of this move insist we ought to resist the casualization of labor and insist that universities return to the model of hiring tenure track faculty, so that doctoral students can once again compete for the kinds of academic jobs the PhD has traditionally been associated with.

While I'm sympathetic to this position I'm pessimistic that such a change is going to happen anytime soon, especially if undergraduate enrollments in humanities majors continue to drop, since that's going to keep putting the brakes on hiring new faculty in the humanities. For the time being, I think we're in the position of having to do two things at once: do everything we can to resist the casualization of labor in higher education while at the same time exploring ways to reform doctoral study in the humanities so that it broadens the employment options for students once they graduate.

So, let me turn my attention to the challenge of reform. I first tackled the question of why and how to reform graduate education in the humanities back in 2012 when I was asked to appear on a Washington, D.C. television show called "Higher Education Today," hosted by Steve Goodman. My co-discussant was professor Leonard Cassuto, who teaches English at Fordham University and writes a column on graduate education for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. (Mention new book) That appearance led to a collaboration which produced an essay Cassuto and I published in January of 2015 in *Pedagogy* entitled "The PhD Dissertation: in Search of a Usable Future." In preparing this address I reread our essay (with, I must say, some skepticism) and I want to highlight some of the proposals we made and

some of the problems I now see with them. Then I want to move on to discuss the more recent proposals contained in the MLA's Task Force on Doctoral Study in Language and Literature (the American Historical Association has a similar document), and others put forward by former MLA President Sidonie Smith in her recent book, *A Manifesto for the Humanities: Transforming Doctoral Education in Good Enough Times*. Then I'll conclude with some of my own suggestions both about what you can do as students to expand your job prospects, and how programs in the humanities might be revamped in order to maximize the employability of their students.

The main point Cassuto and I drove home was that if humanities PhD students need to be credentialed in order to qualify for non-academic jobs both inside and outside higher education, then the one-size-fits-all doctoral program, and the shape of the dissertation it requires, will have to change. We noted that while the vast majority of humanities doctoral students are interested in academic teaching positions, the reality is that many of them may have to seek employment outside the academy in for profit and not for profit jobs including but not limited to the publishing business, historical societies, government policy agencies, preservation foundations, planning agencies, museums, heritage tourism companies, community arts programs, and a wide range of other local, state, and federal nonprofit and/or community based cultural organizations dedicated to public policy, art and culture. The traditional doctoral program say, in English, History, or Philosophy probably serves well students preparing for teaching positions in research universities. However, many programs do a poor job training students for teaching-intensive positions, and even more are ill-equipped to prepare their students for jobs outside of academia. The challenge, we noted, was for all graduate programs to find ways to prepare all of their students either for research

intensive or teaching intensive academic positions, *and* alternative academic careers, a challenge that will require major revisions to virtually every humanities doctoral program.

Some of the initiatives Cassuto and I explored were also recommended by the MLA Task Force on Doctoral Studies. The key issue the Task Force report confronts is how to balance literary study and professional preparation (both for teaching jobs in the academy and positions outside of it). While the report acknowledges that there is an overproduction of PhDs in literary studies and a shrinking number of tenure track jobs, it rejects the idea that we ought to simply cut back on the number of graduate programs and the PhDs they produce. Instead, they opt for a set of dramatic proposals for redesigning graduate education in English in ways that expand the employment options of those who graduate with the PhD. Such a position both embraces and expands the alt-ac movement that predated the report. Among other things, they call for reducing historical coverage requirements, increasing research and teaching training, and augmenting both with professional training in transferable skills applicable across a range of possible career paths and/or professional competencies like the ones Cassuto and I referenced in our article. The report also insists graduate programs need to tackle the vexing problem of time to degree both by streamlining course requirements and modifying the doctoral dissertation.

While I see the logic in many of the proposals put forward by the task force report, I wonder how easily they can be implemented. For example, while it makes sense to reduce historical coverage requirements and to allow doctoral students to specialize earlier, many undergraduate programs are already scaling back historical coverage requirements, which means that students majoring in English or comparative literature may lose a broad historical

perspective altogether. And while these cuts are designed to make room for a greater stress on teacher preparation, technology training, and other transferable skills, and to create more room for systematic exposure to alternative career preparation in doctoral programs, this is going to require departments to hire faculty with expertise in these areas, or force them to ask existing faculty to retool. Very few literature, history, or philosophy professors have been trained – or are even inclined – to teach pedagogy or digital humanities courses, nor have they been trained in the kind of expertise it takes to help professionalize their doctoral students for jobs outside of academia. And while the MLA Task Force Report calls for department placement officers to “marshal expertise in non-teaching careers, alumni networks, and career development resources,” very few placement officers have the expertise, training, or resources to do these tasks. There are daunting challenges here.

The MLA Task Force Report also calls for an overhaul of the doctoral dissertation. As I noted earlier, this is something Cassuto and I pursued at length. There are a lot of good ideas along these lines in the chapter entitled “Breathing Life Into the Dissertation,” which appears near the end of Sidonie Smith's provocative *Manifesto for the Humanities*. In her widely shared view, the problem with the dissertation monograph is that it's wedded to the “traditional book culture format,” which is both narrowly designed around a research-intensive model of doctoral study *and* tied to a publishing enterprise (university presses) that is in dire economic straits. In an age when most doctoral students in the humanities are either getting teaching intensive jobs or are having to find employment outside of academia, the dissertation monograph reinforces the idea that “scholarliness” is the single and only predictor of success for doctoral students. Smith notes that Lindsay Waters, the long-time editor at Harvard University Press, has written about “the tyranny of the monograph,” and that the MLA has

expressed its deep concern about the fetishization of the book in doctoral education.

While Smith acknowledges the value of the traditional monograph dissertation for many students, she also calls for dissertations in a range of new formats, including those that are teaching centered, digital or multimedia, and/or take the form of a portfolio, a suite of essays, or an ensemble of materials shaped around the needs and expertise of the student and the kinds of positions they are seeking. Smith makes five arguments for expanding the range of the dissertation: 1. the digital revolution, 2. the need for students to engage in and be capable of collaborative work, 3. the need for teaching-centered projects, 4. the need for projects that are calibrated for multiple audiences and so are produced in multiple voices, and 5. the flexibility that comes from a shift away from the one-size-fits-all long form. This last, it seems to me, is key. In effect, while she wants to leave the option of the traditional monograph firmly in place for those who want to use it, she is calling for a variety of what she calls “capstone” projects that will allow students to create everything from teaching portfolios made up of both classroom materials and essays on pedagogy and the relationship between research and teaching, to a suite of linked essays and digital projects that might involve curation, or the actual building of networked online tools to help facilitate the work of others, such as the Infinite *Ulysses*, a project produced by Amanda Visconti as her digital dissertation in 2015. Smith's options to the traditional dissertation are focused not just on flexibility, but on building and curating for a world of teaching and scholarship that, by virtue of being online, connects to audiences both inside and outside of the academy, rather than being narrowly focused on the solitary prose production of new, long form knowledge.

Smith's ideas about the dissertation are part of her more wide-ranging call for transforming

doctoral study in the humanities for 21st century students. For example, she questions the rigidity of the “narrow scaffolding” of the triad of graduate education: coursework, exams, and the dissertation monograph. She calls for more flexibility for 21s century students who increasingly will be seeking positions at teaching-intensive institutions, or in alt-ac positions in college and university libraries, institutes, administrative offices, student services, development, and outreach, and for students who will inevitably be looking for jobs outside of academia in government, and public policy, corporate research, or heritage institutions (museums, public history projects, humanities foundations, etc.). Her ideas include breaking up the uniform 3 credit hour course into 1, 2, and 3 credit hour courses based on a range of topics and projects that might also be collaborative in nature. She also envisions a course that could run the entire year, a capstone seminar on writing for publication, and a mini-course on what she calls “self-curation,” which would focus on how students can present themselves and their range of expertise for different audiences. She also encourages professors to explore alternatives to the seminar paper – collaborative essays or digital projects, the production not just of new knowledge but of tools for teaching and scholarship, say, a lecture for an undergraduate survey or the plan for a new course, or bogging on classroom practice.

Smith's ideas are provocative, as are those contained in the MLA task force report. I'd like to take a few minutes to add some of my own. I'll begin with my own field. It may be that the first step doctoral programs in English can take in reforming themselves to better serve 21st century students is to stop thinking of themselves narrowly as literature departments.

Professors of English do not belong to the Modern Literature Association. They belong to the Modern Language Association. This fact serves to remind us that our call is not simply to teach courses about literature and its uses but to teach courses about language and its uses.

The discipline of English encompasses the study not just of literature per se, but of rhetoric, the history of the language, narrative, aesthetics, poetics, semiotics, representation, interpretation, textual and editorial practices, and of course, composition. A stress on these practices, and the transferable skills they foster, ought not to be seen as a shift away from what the discipline has traditionally taught, but rather, as a return to the breadth and range of its subjects. It seems to me that this is the case in other humanities disciplines as well.

Philosophy, history, and religious studies programs don't just teach subject matters. They teach forms of thinking. There is a practical value in being able to think philosophically or historically, and the theories and methodologies informing work in these disciplines constitute a set of valuable skills you can foreground if you're looking for employment outside of academia.

I also think allowing students to develop their own programmatic concentrations makes a lot of sense, and can help move us away from the one-size-fits-all doctoral program. Some humanities students might opt for conventional concentrations in particular literary, philosophical, or historical periods or movements, schools, or genres, but others should have the flexibility to construct concentrations aimed at positions outside academia. In literary studies that would mean training that reaches beyond literature and theory to include rhetoric, composition, training in digital technologies, editing, and writing for both print and new media. That means we would need more required courses that stress training in language, research, analytical, and communicative skills, courses that are not simply focused on literature. What I've got in mind here, for example, are concentrations for doctoral students interested in language and literature but who also want, early on in their careers, to develop their research, analytical, writing, and editorial skills with an eye toward employment outside of academia.

Your own undergraduate program here at USF could be adapted at the graduate level to fill such a need. Instead of a one-size-fits all doctoral program in English why not offer separate but overlapping tracks in Literary Studies, Professional Writing, and Rhetoric, & Technology? As your description of this last concentration puts it, the “Professional Writing, Rhetoric & Technology” concentration “provides students with both a practical and a theoretical orientation to communication in a variety of media and genres” and “prepares students to work as innovative professional communicators in a variety of fields – from government to business to medicine.” This kind of training seems thoroughly compatible with what the MLA task force is calling for at the doctoral level, and what Smith envisions in terms for training for 21st century doctoral students in the humanities. Of course, this concentration requires students to take a range of courses not often offered in many current doctoral programs – like technical communication, new media, and visual rhetoric -- but it also requires courses in the traditional areas of advanced composition, professional, expository and rhetorical writing, rhetorical theory, and technical writing. The challenge of staffing here is significant. If doctoral programs in the humanities are to turn their attention to training students for non-academic careers, then the faculty will have to significantly change. This will be a big challenge on many levels.

The introduction to graduate studies course will also probably have to change in many programs, and perhaps be extended for a full year. If we're serious about the kinds of changes being proposed by professional associations, and experts like Smith, then doctoral programs across the humanities are going to have to do a lot more than they've been doing, which means the introductory graduate course will have to orient and prepare students for courses that stress their discipline's engagement with the larger professional, social, and

cultural worlds. What we now call an “engaged humanities” will need to inform graduate study. As characterized by the National Humanities Alliance, an engaged humanities fosters “collaboration between universities and colleges and organizations working outside the academy,” cultivates “active engagement with the humanities among diverse community members and stakeholders,” and showcases “the power of the humanities to address issues of local concern.” It seems to me we ought to use this concept of engagement as a way to think concretely about vocational intersections between humanities disciplines and the larger public sphere. Introduction to graduate studies courses ought to feature the concept of an engaged humanities in order to broaden the scope of how students think about the applicability and usefulness of their work at the very beginning of their coursework. Questions to consider include what areas of specialization not obvious within a narrow academic framework might help credential students for jobs outside academia? What transferable skills will your doctoral program teach you, and how can they be applied to work both inside and outside of academia?

So far I've been talking about changes in doctoral study that are programmatic in nature and may take years of struggle and debate to implement. Meanwhile, what can you do to maximize your employability as a teacher, and/or to position yourself for non-teaching jobs – both in higher education and outside of it?

I assume everyone who enrolls in a doctoral program in the humanities does so because they want an academic teaching position. You can maximize your chances of getting such a position by taking advantage of every opportunity your program offers to engage in teacher training and to teach your own classes. Of course, in order to do this, you're going to need the

support of programs that take teacher training seriously. One of the biggest mistakes doctoral programs in the humanities at elite universities have made in the past is to pretend that their students will figure out how to teach on their own. These programs are going to have to stop acting as if original research and scholarship is the be all and end all of graduate study, and that the students with the most original dissertations produced by the most renowned programs are going to get teaching positions. Doctoral programs in the humanities, as the MLA Task Force Report rightly insists, need to pay more systematic attention to teacher training. This means more courses on pedagogy, more mentoring with faculty in the classroom, and more opportunities to teach both general and specialized courses. New PhDs going on the job market need to be able to document the systematic teacher training they received. It can't be casual or ad hoc, but rather, must be a major feature of the program. If your program doesn't offer such training it should, which means one thing you need to do is to put pressure on your program to implement them. In the meantime, take every opportunity you can to mentor with teaching faculty, take courses in pedagogy and classroom practices, and take advantage of whatever teaching opportunities come your way in graduate school.

Of course, you need to do all of this while simultaneously preparing yourself for a job search beyond academia. In order to do that you need to *think outside the box of how the subject matter you've studied is what you know*. Focus as well on transferable skills. Think of your doctoral courses as training in communication and research skills that can qualify you for jobs in the public and private sectors. You're being trained to do primary research, summarize findings, isolate and explain key issues, and to offer multiple solutions to the problems you've researched. That template of skills is valuable for a wide range of jobs in the areas I mentioned earlier. In addition to the CV you'll be using in the academic job search, you should

have a non-teaching resume that foregrounds these skills and documents the training that stands behind them. Also, think of the work you've done as training in critical thinking that questions orthodoxies. In all of my research on what employers say they value in humanities and liberal arts students, this is one of the competencies that gets mentioned the most. Critical thinking is another transferable skill, and you should be prepared to talk about it, to be able to explain what it is, and why its valuable.

And by all means, supplement the skills you develop in your chosen fields with training in technology. In my view, every doctoral student in the humanities ought to take some courses in the computer science department and become familiar with work in the digital humanities. This is important whether you're searching for a teaching position or one outside of the academy. With regard to academic and research positions within the academy, I think Cassuto was correct in an article he published a few weeks ago in the Chronicle of Higher Education (citation) in which he argued that expertise in digital technology has become, at least in the short term, a crucial secondary area of specialization for all humanities doctoral students seeking teaching positions. But he also stressed that this may give students a leg-up on the job market only in the short term. Like the rush of departments in the 1970s and 1980s to hire PhDs with expertise in literary and critical theory, this bubble of opportunity, he argued, may well pop once enough departments have hired people with skills in DH. However, he doesn't point out that expertise in technology, including the ability not only to work with but build digital resources, is becoming a requirement for more and more jobs *outside* of academia. For this reason, you can maximize your employability by supplementing the traditional skills you learn in your graduate programs with training in how to both use and build programs and applications. The ability to work with and create software may be the most

important transferable skill you pick up in graduate school – and I think Cassuto is right that at least in the short term such expertise can give you an edge in the academic job market, and beyond.

Finally, be sure to stay connected to online sites dedicated to exploring the wide-variety of positions potentially available to humanities PhDs. I have links to a number of them at my Alt? Ack! website. They contain a lot of constructive, encouraging, and supportive articles about alternative academic careers, and lots of concrete advice about how to pursue them. They also offer you a chance to network with a range of people who have succeeded in finding rewarding professional positions that utilize the knowledge and skills they learned while earning their doctorates. I would recommend in particular that you spend some time at “#alt-academy,” a “media commons project” run by the Modern Language Association. This is a comprehensive site with lots of useful information and advice. See in particular their 2013 report on alternative career paths entitled “Humanities Unbound: Supporting Careers and Scholarship Beyond the Tenure Track.” If you don’t have time to read the full report, at least read through the presentation on the report put together by Katina Rogers, which is available in a link in the “Who We Are” section of the #alt-academy site. You can also download an e-book from the site containing 24 essays previously published in #alt-academy.

Conclusion

We're at a crossroads. Graduate programs in the humanities, collectively, are going to have to decide to what extent they're going to remain dedicated to their traditional mission of producing scholar-teachers, and to what extent they are going to extend that mission to job

preparation outside the professoriate. or whether the PhD as a credential is to be dramatically re-calibrated so that it also prepares students for jobs outside of the academy. As I've already indicated, taking the latter route will present significant challenges. Just getting everyone on board will be a major challenge. Most faculty I know in my discipline want to go on teaching the graduate courses they've always taught, mentoring their doctoral students for positions like the ones they have. For this reason, transforming the faculty of English, Comp Lit, Philosophy, or History doctoral programs so that, collectively, they put more of a stress on transferable skills useful in non-academic jobs will be a challenging task, as will developing professional counseling services for those students.

For all of these reasons, I can understand the temptation of some to resist these changes and to retain the traditional academic focus of the humanities PhD, cutting back on the production of new PhDs so it is right-sized to the job market, while at the same time resisting the casualization of labor in higher education and advocating for the addition of more tenure track lines. The humanities PhD has always been about training research scholars for teaching positions, and the proposals I've been reviewing are all aimed at making dramatic changes that will transform doctoral study in controversial ways not to everyone's liking. However, it seems to me that we in higher education owe it to our students – now and in the future – to find ways to offer graduate-level educational opportunities in the humanities that both engage their passion for the subject matter of its traditional disciplines *and* helps to prepare them for jobs when they graduate that meaningfully engage both those passions and the skills and habits of mind their educational experience has fostered. While this may mean that fewer humanities PhDs are going to find careers in the classroom, the changes I've been discussing also hold the promise of making the humanities more relevant outside academia. The more

humanities scholars are engaged in the private and public spheres outside of academia, the better off our society will be. Culture needs the humanities. The corporate world needs the humanities. And government agencies – now, more than ever – need the humanities. So, while it seems likely that in the decades to come fewer humanities PhDs are going to enter the professoriate, more of them may find themselves applying their knowledge, skills, and habits of mind to identifying and solving problems in the larger culture, adding their voices, expertise, and knowledge to a wide variety of institutions and publics that sorely need them.