

Post Academic Syllabus

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Chapter 1

Introduction

There is likely a very good reason you've decided to search the internet for advice on leaving academia, been sent a link to this or have stumbled on this syllabus. Regardless of your stage of being in the academy, the way you've gotten here or your feelings about wanting to leave, you are welcome here. We probably don't have all the answers for you, but we have a few thoughts. And we certainly know what it's like to be where you are.

There are a lot of external reasons that could have come your way that would make this website needed. Maybe the job search process decided for you and you're not going to get that job you wanted. Maybe you're a grad student who knows she needs options. Maybe you're a tenured professor who doesn't want to stay. Maybe you're not sure but just want to know. Whatever stage you're at, you're welcome here.

You'll also likely have a lot of emotions about this too. We'll talk about that in Ch ?. Just know that those of us who have left we get it.

1.1 A Syllabus? Really?

Well, why not? We use syllabi to teach things to our students, why wouldn't we put together a framework for learning more about the job of leaving the academy? There are a few reasons why I chose this as a format. 1) Because you know what a syllabus is about if you're an academic. You have taken classes and read other people's syllabi. You might have written your own. This is comfortable. 2) When making your own classes you probably look at other people's syllabi and "borrow" from others. This is not only acceptable, it's normal. Same here. Take what you want, leave the rest. 3) Leaving academia and getting together the skills to make this leap is no different than any other class you've taken. It's just work. A syllabus reminds you that this is doable. 4) A syllabus is a living document and it changes from semester to semester. I'm hopeful that this will do the same. I also strongly encourage you to add to it, help me edit it as we go. I need what you know too.

1.2 Prerequisite

This syllabus expects that you have spent time in a graduate program that is designed to prepare you for a career in academia. This course also presumes that you have asked or are currently open to the question of what life would be like to not be an academic.

1.3 About

This syllabus is designed by me Beth Duckles, but it would not exist without the incredible group of women who have joined the Athenas Slack Channel for Post Ac women and the people who responded to a survey I put out for resources on Post Ac life.

This is a living document and while I take responsibility for the opinions inside, I strongly encourage additional resources, materials, ideas for assignments, or any other feedback you have. I know there's more, please share any resources that you think might fit with me here.

Chapter 2

Quit Lit

Quit lit is rarely defined but most academics have seen or heard of its prominence in recent years. These documents are a particular type of discussion of the challenges in higher education. They often take a first person perspective and reflect both on the individual's story and how this connects to the larger questions within the academy and higher education. By starting with an incomplete typology of perspectives on why people leave the academy, we get a sense of the variety of stories that are told and can reflect on how these themes may emerge in our own stories.

The point is to begin to own one's story and to take seriously how our own individual positions and experiences are connected to the larger world. Being willing to examine our own story in light of the larger structure, industry and mechanisms that we have been a part of can ease the individual burden and begin the healing process.

2.1 Readings

- Garber, Megan. "The Rise of Quit Lit" - Atlantic
- Schuman, Rebecca "Thesis Hatement" - Slate
- Bartram, Erin - "The Sublimated Grief of the Left Behind"
- Neff, Ali Colleen - "On Academic Precarity"
- Lee, Oliver - "I have one of the best jobs in Academia. Here's why I'm walking away" - Vox
- Conditionally Accepted, "Dear Department, I Quit."
- Harbin, Alison - "Why I Left Academia Part I & II"
- Dunn, Sydney - "Why So Many Academics Quit and Tell"
- For more, see the list of pieces in a Google Doc: "Quit Lit: The Vitae List"

2.2 Homework:

- 1) After reading the above quit lit, find more that fits with your experiences. Consider the themes and note which ones fit best with your story.

Chose among any combination of the following topics/themes: - academic precarity and economic instability - the contingent labor market and low-paid adjunct positions - not enough tenure track jobs and the competition for tenure track positions, academia is not for me, academia is for me but I didn't get a job, academia is for me but I hate teaching, unfair teaching burdens, student apathy, student entitlement, unprepared students, student as customer, the rise of online education, increased student tuition, student loan bloat, the

broken hiring process, the broken tenure process, the broken academic publishing process, decreased university funding, increased higher education administration, low faculty salaries, declining funding for research, the declining liberal arts, anti-intellectualism, classism, geographic isolation, loneliness, grief, the “two body” problem, having a child, having a child with special needs, having small children, incompatible careers, family illness, divorce, everyday institutional racism and microaggressions, mental illness, workaholism, everyday sexism, sexual harrassment, sexual assault, assault, verbal abuse, gaslighting, unequal emotional labor workload, illegal behavior, institutional politics and infighting, sabotage, the trap of post doctoral positions, the trap of visiting assistant positions, the trap of adjuncting, dropping out of a Ph.D program, the desire to do work that matters, the desire to do manual work or the desire to have a life.

- 2) Write your own quit lit piece. If you have not already left, imagine you have or will soon leave. If you have left, make your writing cathartic.

Optional Extra credit: Let someone (or a lot of someones) read your quit lit piece.

Chapter 3

You Are Not Alone

This class will remind you that there are others who have been successful in doing this and actually, there is some evidence that you will be happier if you do leave the academy.

3.1 Resources

- Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum.

3.2 Readings

- What I wish I had Known - Beth M. Duckles
- The Professor is In
- Imagine Ph.D.
- Beyond the Professoriate
- Perel, Greta - “What Happens When Academics Quit? Good Things it Turns Out.”

Chapter 4

Networking

This class will demystify and simplify the task of networking by encouraging you to note your strengths (yes introverts have networking strengths) and to give you a chance to play around with and consider how best to network into new ideas.

The truth is, that getting a new job, starting a new career, or even being a public academic requires networking. I am not suggesting that you change who you are, or do anything that turns you into a smarmy salesperson. You gotta be you.

- “Bajuniemi, Abby - “Networking Strategies for Beginners”
- LinkedIn
- Meetup.com
- Twitter
- Facebook Groups

4.1 Homework

- 1) Create social media profiles for Linked In, Twitter and Meetup. If you dislike or are nervous about being on one or more of these platforms consider creating very specific boundaries around how you choose to use them. For instance, you might decide that you will not friend people on Linked in that were in your classes. Or you might only tweet things that you think people who are in your field would be interested in. Or you might decide
- 2a) Connect with five new people on LinkedIn that you already know. Write them a short personal note saying something along the lines of: “It’s great to see you on here, hope you are doing well. - YourName” or “I was thinking about you the other day and it’s good to look you up on here and see you’re doing well.” - YourName or “I saw this article/anecdote/event/meme and thought of you. Hope you’re doing well.” - YourName
- 2b) Follow someone you think is interesting on Twitter. Read their tweets.
- 2c) Look for some Meetups you might consider going to. Put one on the calendar.
- 2d) Join a new Facebook Group and respond to or “like” someone’s post.

Chapter 5

A Job

There are a thousand and one books out there on how to find a job and a ton of people who can help. That said, it can be somewhat overwhelming to approach those when you're an academic. We face very specific challenges like - how do I turn my CV into a resume? or how do I talk to people about my research without boring them to tears? or what on earth do I have to share that's marketable? I have a few brief thoughts about the act of trying to find a job after being an academic, but there are resources.

First, recognize that you have skills. Even if you have the most esoteric dissertation in the world, you have skills and often can teach them or use them in service to all kinds of projects. Consider what you did love about academia. Was it reading? Writing? Teaching? Was it the content you were working on? Was it the methods you were using? Did you like the meetings or prefer to hide out in the lab/library/archives? Consider your answers to these questions as you look for your job and try to find places where those skills are valued.

Second, the path of finding your post ac job can be trial and error. It often does not follow a clear path and there isn't anyone else who can know what the next step is for you to take. It can be bewildering, frustrating and incredibly scary for academics who have had the path laid out for them (take these classes, then do these exams, then write this paper etc). This kind of figure-it-out-as-you-go mentality is actually normal for non academics. If you need to be reminded of this, go talk to a friend who never went to grad school and ask them how they got their current job. You might be surprised.

Third, you gotta pay your bills. Don't discard jobs that are completely different than your academic work, if they fit for you and make you happy. There is no shame in doing work that is non academic to make ends meet. Do side gigs if you need to, start up an etsy shop, work with high school kids on their SAT prep, teach art classes, do freelance writing or editing. Consider arranging flowers, being a cheesemonger, becoming a sommelier, a bike mechanic, doing community organizing, running online seminars, Let me reiterate, there is no shame in any of these jobs. Or rather, you can feel ashamed if you really want to but you might consider that most people are not judging you.

- Jobs on Toast
- Versatile Ph.D.
- <https://medium.com/design-leadership/benefits-of-a-non-linear-design-career-path-d0add49a90c8>
- Side gig book - Chris Guillibeau
- https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/12/18/study-humanities-and-social-science-phds-working-outside-academutm_source=Inside+Higher+Ed

5.1 Homework

- Write down ten jobs you would like to do. Don't think about it, just write them down. Doesn't matter if they're silly or strange. Feel free to put circus performer, professional basketweaver or person who does nature walks for a living. Do this every day for a week.
- Ask someone you trust to tell you what they think you're good at. Listen without interrupting. Write down what they say.

Chapter 6

Creativity

It may seem strange for me to have a week on creativity but in my own recovery from academia I've found it to be an incredibly potent tool for dealing with what I feel and think as well as a way for me to feel more content and happy in my life.

I believe we are all creative. I don't think there are any among us who are not creative. For many academics, the creative urges have been quashed by the desire to please those who we have looked up to in our school years. We may also believe ourselves not to be creative, or to have taken to hear the kind of language that tells us that a "true" scientist/historian/professor isn't a creative person.

My number one recommendation is Julia Cameron's "The Artist's Way". In that book she describes much of what has caused many of us academics a lot of pain. She does so with compassion and grace and she slowly, steadily and lovingly encourages the nascent artists inside of us out of their shell.

- Julia Cameron "The Artist's Way"
- SARK's book

6.1 Homework

- Do one thing that seems fun and creative. A few ideas: Play with legos, cook a meal, doodle on a piece of scrap paper until the page is filled up, write bad poetry about something you can see in the room you're in now, take a train, take a pottery class, bus or car trip and spend the entire trip looking out of the window, hum a song, play an instrument, drum on the tabletop, paint, garden, sew, knit, crochet, find a youtube video that teaches you a dance step, make snow/sand angels, make splashes in the water and watch the shape they make, eat your favorite childhood snack, walk somewhere interesting, skip stones, build a little teepee out of sticks in the woods, make a fire, do karaoke, read a poem or a speech out loud, watch a movie, make paper airplanes, play with arduino, go see a play, do a zumba class, learn a few words in another language, watch a dance performance and anything else your heart desires.

Chapter 7

Entrepreneurship for Post Academics

Freelancers Union []<https://www.freelancersunion.org/> - Being Boss Podcast - Your local small business development council (SBDC) - SCORE office <https://www.score.org/> - \$100 Startup Marketing - Seth Godin - Books/Marketing Seminar/Akimbo Podcast - Marketing Mentor Podcast - We Write You - How to Write Like a Person
- Leonie Dawson's Workbook - Biz <https://shiningacademy.com/2018-life-and-business-goals-workbooks-and-diary-planners-Tools> - <https://app.and.co/>

Chapter 8

Industry Specific Resources

8.1 Writing/Publishing

- www.loft.org - writing classes
- www.pw.org
- <https://www.authorspublish.com/>
- <http://www.theinternationalfreelancer.com/>

8.2 Linguistics

- careerlinguist.com

8.3 Social Scientists

- <https://www.epicpeople.org/>

8.4 Other Resources

- herc.com
- The Artful Adjunct
- The Art of Nonconformity

Chapter 9

Money

- YNAB - You Need a Budget
- Overcoming Underearning, Barbara Stanny
- Chelsea Fagan - Financial Diet
- JD Roth - “Your Money The Missing Manual”
- Your money or your life.
- Personal Finance for PhDs <http://pfforphds.com/>
- Negotiation - <http://www.singlefounder.com/tips-on-negotiating-a-great-consulting-rate/>

9.1 Articles/Stories

- <http://erinbartram.com/uncategorized/the-sublimated-grief-of-the-left-behind/>