Manifesto for the Humanities

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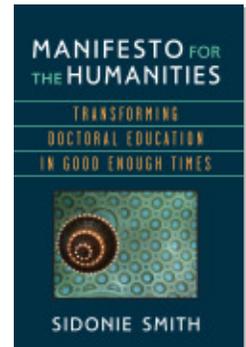Published by University of Michigan Press

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A 21st-Century Doctoral Education

In the words of Dwight McDonald, the goal of graduate education in the liberal arts is "to train future thought leaders" in humanities fields, in the academy, and beyond.[1] To that end, faculty need to design doctoral programs that are generative experiences for all students rather than experiences in bending toward conformity to a singular model of professionalization and success. Such programs would strive to enable students to stay true to their passions and affiliative commitments, enable them to follow secret desires, be playful and experimental, be irreverent.

Expanding options for the dissertation is one step in that transformation. But there is much to be done in terms of rethinking coursework, pedagogical training, professionalization, mentorship, and preparation for the job market. Just think of the kinds of preparation doctoral students will need for careers in the academic humanities alone, given the everyday life of academic humanists that is explored in Part II. Absolutely, the primary purpose is gaining broad and deep knowledge of one's field and recognizing and producing excellent, lively, and impactful scholarship out of that knowledge. But there is more.

Where to start? Well, at many points of entry. Here I telescope the kinds of responses that might go a ways to meeting heterogeneous preparatory needs, and addressing conditions on the ground.

But let me add a prefatory note before starting. Neither comprehensive nor detailed, my list of further changes incorporates many of the recommendations made in the SSHRC white paper and the MLA task force report, and adds to them. For me, it is an aspirational, overstuffed wish list. I don't imagine for a moment that these suggestions will be taken up by large numbers of faculty. But across North America many individuals and programs are taking on change, modeling new components of doctoral education in the humanities, while others are exploring how to incorporate one or two or a few of these changes into their courses and programs, some through foundation support. The times are good enough, and enough talk of change is in the air.

So let me plow forward.

Changes All Around

Graduate faculty are continually tweaking the introduction to graduate studies course offered to incoming cohorts. Obviously, there is no one model. Some introduce students to faculty in the program and their projects and methodology. Some focus on writing the seminar paper as a prerequisite to success. Some offer a history of the profession. Another iteration might productively offer an introduction to the history and emerging ecology of scholarly inquiry and communication.

Or programs might offer a collaborative minicourse on the model of what Catharine R. Stimpson terms "general education for graduate education."[2] A general education course, suggests Stimpson, might bring graduate students together across disciplines to explore disciplinary differences and cultures, methods and everyday practices; or to discover together the history of the university or the history of disciplines; or to explore the new scholarly ecology of higher education.

Beyond the introduction to graduate study, programs might approach the curriculum as unfolding in multiple kinds of formats and packages. Instead of the uniformity of the three-credit course, perhaps programs could experiment with one- and two- and three-credit courses; or project-based courses running across an academic year or two. They might conceptualize the broad scope of graduate coursework, moving from the intensity of deep reading in the seminar environment to the challenges of unpredictable experiences in projects of engaged scholarship. Programs might join with others to offer interdisciplinary, project-based courses whose goal is to build collaborative experience, provide skills training, explore issues of methodology in the humanities, and bring to fruition some kind of product, whether website or article or teaching resource. Such courses would go a ways to ensuring that students are trained in the skills needed to carry out multimodal digital projects, that they develop skills in visualization, digital design, and perhaps even coding and tool building.

A capstone seminar late in the student's education might focus on writing for publication. A minicourse later in their studies might encourage students to conceptualize and articulate a long-term research agenda or explore alternative careers or hone a transferable skill such as grant writing. A minicourse on self-curation might cover such topics as curating the dissertation and embargoes; cultivating a public persona for different audiences; fund-raising to secure subventions necessary to get one's work in print; blogging to get information about forthcoming work into the open; and establishing a culture of mutual citation.[3]

Within individual graduate courses, faculty might expand the kinds of

projects/papers they assign in seminars. Yes, seminar papers are central over the one or two or three years of classes. Seminar papers are where students perfect their writing styles, their understanding of the arc of an argument, where they begin to hone their generative questions, define their areas of specialization, and imagine a dissertation project. But, as Peter H. Klost, Debra Rudder Lohe, and Chuck Sweetman argue in an essay on the "uncoverage" model for seminars, few seminar requirements focus students on "cultivating the awareness of being writers" and learning from others the different objects, methods, and processes of scholarly inquiry and communication.[4] Theirs is a call for writing pedagogy as central to graduate seminars. Others call for more emphasis to be placed in all coursework on scholarly voice, offering opportunities for students to write in multiple genres for experts, peers in other disciplines, an online community, and an educated public.

Across the curriculum as a whole and across particular courses, alternatives to the seminar paper could be introduced. These alternatives include collaborative essays; series of collaborative essays; collectively produced glossaries of terms and concepts; a cohort essay project; a grant application addressed to a real grant program; a deep reading journal; a creative portfolio; a lecture for an undergraduate survey course. Given the emergent ecology of scholarly communication in the humanities, seminars might be organized around a double format analytical project, with submission of scholarly objects in traditional print form and in a multimedia environments such as Wordpress or Scalar; a visualization or mapping project; a curation; a term-long blog; and other options.

Programs might adapt models for graduate training that build on initiatives of participants in the Praxis Network. A consortium of eight institutions, the Praxis Network partners are "engaged in rethinking pedagogy and campus partnerships in relation to the digital. Among other elements, the initiatives emphasize new models of methodological training and collaborative research."[5] Through their activities, students produce e-portfolios or develop software prototypes, such as the Prism tool, developed out of the Praxis program at the University of Virginia, which crowdsources interpretations.

Coursework in pedagogy might incorporate up-to-date research on how students learn now; or on teaching in and through digital environments, or in hybrid formats; or on purposefully encompassing multiple kinds of reading in everyday assignments and discussion. Doctoral students might be asked to write a publishable essay on teaching, or blog on classroom practice, or partake in a simulation game on building a new undergraduate curriculum. Or programs might work with graduate schools and institutional centers to develop non-course-based certificates in teaching, such as the GTC+ certificate offered through the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at

the University of Michigan.[6] The GTC+ asks students to fulfill a set of activities through which they gain experiential knowledge of digital pedagogies and teaching methods, hybrid learning environments, and supportive online teaching networks.

There may be opportunities to develop and offer courses with real work, to invoke the term from Part II's discussion of new concept coursework in undergraduate majors. This argument is advanced by John Wittman and Mariana Abuan in their piece "Socializing Future Professionals: Exploring the Matrix of Assessment." They propose that graduate students benefit from being socialized into the kinds of activities that they will be asked to do in tenure-track positions and in administrative positions they might take up in the future. "For students to develop adequate knowledge about the practices of academia (in this case assessment)," Wittman and Abuan argue, "they need to have opportunities to do so in their graduate education where thoughtful mentors can both encourage and work alongside them."[7]

Alternatively, or at the same time, programs might make funds available for interested students to attend summer institutes and workshops, such as the one at the University of Victoria, to gain expertise in methods of born-digital scholarship. Various funding agencies are currently supporting such institutes and workshops, as the Mellon Foundation is doing through the Humanities Without Walls initiative in the Midwest. In the coming decade there will be more and more opportunities for humanities doctoral students to gain digital literacies necessary for the projects they seek to undertake.

There are also opportunities for programs to develop and pilot new kinds of doctoral programs. The SSHRC white paper mentions two such innovative programs, noted above. And there are other innovative interdisciplinary doctorates waiting to be launched in such areas as narrative and medicine; archives, curation and humanities databases; literatures, languages, and public policy; and humanities and publics. One such new kind of humanities doctoral program is now offered at USC in "Media Arts and Practice," which has as its goal "support[ing] a new generation of scholar-practitioners who are able to combine historical and theoretical knowledge with creative and critical design skills."[8] There are also possibilities for new certificate programs targeted at humanities doctoral students, such as the certificate in public scholarship offered by the Simpson Center for the Humanities at the University of Washington.[9]

Graduate schools and humanities doctoral programs might pursue opportunities for internships, internally with professional staff in libraries or presses, or museums or public relations offices; and externally with cultural institutions or public policy centers or the for-profit sector. They might expand the network of the people critical to successful doctoral education by

identifying humanities professionals and others across the academy as mentors, tutors, teachers, and collaborators: humanists in libraries, in digital humanities centers and labs, in university publishing units, in tech labs. The MLA report describes this deployment of an expansive set of educators as "utiliz[ing] the whole university community."[10] The SSHRC white paper talks of internship tutelage by people in arts and cultural institutions outside the academy.[11]

Programs might fund a student-run, open-access journal.

I am fully aware of the pressures such changes put on all parties involved, staff, administrators, faculty, and doctoral students themselves. With a long history of administrative appointments, I know only too well that academics operate within administrative practices with their constraints and inelasticity, even at the unit of the course itself. Yet I know there are small shifts to be made on a pilot basis. I try to make my own changes. I have been teaching the graduate course the English department offers called Writing for Publication for over a half decade now. And students well past their coursework take it and submit their essays to journals at the end of the term. In that course I offer an overview of the changing ecology of scholarly communication. Inevitably, I learn from my students new aspects of that ecology.

Institutional change often moves at a glacial pace. Faculty find themselves enervated by the intensity of their multiple obligations. Many just cannot take on a new kind of course, or introduce new kinds of course requirements. But some do. And some chairs or heads find ways to work with or around obstacles. A more challenging situation obtains when faculty are asked or expected to advise and mentor students on alternative academic positions and alternative careers outside the academy. I know I'm not qualified to successfully provide such mentoring. But there are networks that can be put together—networks of graduates who have gone on to careers outside the academy; networks of people in the university who have humanities doctorates, especially in the library. Mentoring can play out across a distributed network. The same difficulty pertains when programs seek ways to train doctoral students in new skills required for digitally environed scholarship. Humanities faculty, except for those identifying as digital humanists, rarely have the expertise to teach such things as concept design, coding, visualization. Nonetheless, there are often professionals across the campus to enlist in alternative modes of training; graduate students who come in with considerable skills; and tech-savvy undergraduates who can be collaborators in the classroom.

Faculty are making incremental change in the graduate classroom. Some are engaging graduate students in collaborative projects in digital environments. Some are advocating for new kinds of job descriptions. Many programs are introducing elements mentioned in the list above. Some are mak-

ing paradigm-shifting changes, as are the institutions involved in the Praxis Program. The "mights" listed above have shifted to "done thats." I am buoyed by all the initiatives springing up across North America and elsewhere.

And What about Students?

I've been exploring how graduate schools, doctoral programs, and faculty in and out of the classroom can be agents of change. What about students themselves? Programs are changing, but at different rates and with different effects. And they are changing slowly. Graduate students, on the other hand, have a limited time to prepare themselves for academic positions and for alternative futures. And while on campus, "they are caught up," as Damrosch observes so incisively, "in a process of training and acculturation whose outcome they don't yet know."[12]

So what are they to do?

Doctoral programs appear to be unified in a simple template of successive stages. The people who move through these successive stages, however, move in many other directions as well. They are excited to start, periodically exhausted at the workload, anxious about performance, cynical about outcome. Some feel stuck; some regularly inadequate. I've worked with students who have switched faculty advisors, and then switched again. I've worked with students who have discovered they don't like teaching all that much; that the anxiety of going in front of a classroom regularly is just too excruciating for them. I've worked with students who discover that they just don't like the loneliness of the scholarly life; that it's too much like the loneliness of a long-distance runner, without the endorphins. I've worked with students who found the cloistered sense of graduate study too removed from their political and social commitments, who want to get out in the community to make change happen. I've worked with students for whom the stress has eventuated in a breakdown. I've worked with students who have drifted in and out of their studies. I've worked with students who have followed a partner and then struggled to stay on track. I've worked with one student who returned to complete a dissertation after 15 years out.

So much life is happening. So much struggle, so much euphoria, and so much despondency. And ahead, so much that is unpredictable. How to find ways to work toward the goal with the pressures—intellectual, personal, economic, political—that come at them. How to balance the call of doctoral study with the knowledge that there is always more to life than reading the next book, writing the next paper, preparing for the next exam, keeping the demons at bay. How to claim a space of agency when everything seems so

intense, when pressures don't abate, when reserve energy flags, when stress wracks the body.

But there are spaces of agency to claim. Yes, graduate students are constrained by the requirements of their programs and the interests and energy and commitment of the faculty with whom they work. They are concerned about the woeful job market. But they can and do take charge of their own learning, stewarding their intellectual passions, gaining knowledge about the academy now, and, however their formal program is configured, preparing themselves, with whatever help and guidance they can find, for the future ahead.

Here are brief observations on two major arenas of potential agency through which doctoral students can prepare themselves.

Professionalization has become a central feature of doctoral education in the humanities. In the humanities and humanistic social sciences, "professionalization" is commonly understood as gaining experience in giving papers and revising seminar papers and dissertation chapters for submission to journals. Yes, that is a central and critical part of doctoral training, acts of becoming and performing scholarliness. But given the changes in higher education that I have explored here, and given the profile of future faculty I have been projecting, there are many more aspects of the new everyday in the academy that will be beneficial for doctoral students to know about as they prepare for the next stage of their career. Recognizing, gaining, and honing a range of skills should also be part of everyday life in graduate school.

In some cases they will only need to name the skills that they already have. A person speaks three languages fluently. Discovers interesting archives. Organizes a conference or symposium. Works collaboratively to start an online journal. Teaches an innovative, hybrid course. Experiments with new platforms for scholarly communication. Runs a listserv. Takes advantage of seminars on how students learn now, and thus is prepared to motivate people by drawing on that knowledge. Once the list is begun, it can accrue a remarkable number of items, becoming itemization as academic profile.

In other cases, there is agency in determining where to gain knowledge and additional skills, which, by the by, can be understood not as pedestrian but as forms of knowledge in themselves. Perhaps the target is the basic information of how university life is organized and how it works. Perhaps knowledge of the current and projected shifts in institutions and institutional practices in higher education nationally and globally. Perhaps in reading and preparing budgets. Perhaps in coding. Perhaps in project management. Perhaps in social media outreach. Perhaps in advocacy for the humanities. Perhaps in an internship. Or in a public fellows program. In these circumstances, there are institutional resources to find and use. There are summer workshops to lo-

cate, initiatives to research, institutes to apply to, fellowships to seek. There are networks to join, through which to deepen one's knowledge of the field, seek career advice, exchange information, swap stories, build audiences for one's work. There are mentors to identify. There are links to be made, steps to be taken, change to be seeded.

Professionalization in the scholarly life is an aspect of career planning. But there is more to thinking about career planning than publishing, presenting papers, gaining skills.

Doctoral students will go on to teach in small liberal arts colleges and in the expanding system of community colleges and in large urban universities. They will go on to teach in Research 1 institutions and regional state universities, in traditionally black colleges and Indian colleges. On the tenure track or tenured, they will pursue scholarship that gains them recognition in their field, or brings new audiences across disciplines, or changes the way colleagues think about their teaching, or develops a community-based humanities project. Some will become public intellectuals. Some will become academic leaders— graduate directors, chairs, deans, presidents. Many will spend their careers changing the academy to meet the Grand Challenges facing higher education. The purposefulness they exercise in gaining breadth and depth in their field, developing their scholarly voice(s), honing their writing and presentational style, and building their repertoire of prodigious skills and competencies will prepare them well for the trajectory of careers in the academy.

Another percentage of students will take up alternative careers in the academy: in the libraries of the future, in academic presses, in administrative positions, in development, in programs reaching across academic and non-academic communities. In these positions they will continue their scholarly work, often in partnership with faculty and students; they will communicate that work in various forms; they will establish collaborative relationships; they will be increasingly central to the work of the humanities and its communication. Some of them will become academic "stars" with national and international reputations as thought leaders. This is true of Bethany Nowviskie, now a CLIR (Council on Library and Information Resources) Distinguished Presidential Fellow and also a special advisor to the provost at the University of Virginia, for the advancement of digital humanities research. She is one of the go-to people for thinking on the future of the humanities in the academy; and she coined the term #alt-ac.[13]

A percentage will take up positions outside the academy in the larger humanities workforce. Some will be drawn to K-12 education; some to the new fields at the intersection of library studies and information science; some to the nonprofit world of the humanities workforce; some to the world of gov-

ernment and public policy; some to research positions in the corporate world; some to heritage institutions—museums, public history projects, in the NEH, the ACLS, in NPR and PBS, in Words Without Borders and human rights venues. Contributions to and leadership in this expanded field of venues also advances the work of humanities in the world. As Paula Krebs argued back in 2010, "placing thoughtful, well-trained humanists in government, nonprofit associations, and even business or the military" is invaluable.[14]

Graduate students who proactively imagine multiple possible futures, define the story they want to tell about the transferability of skills they have already mastered, and create opportunities to gain additional skills become especially attractive and competitive candidates for the positions they pursue. But a cautionary note needs to be added. Students are often cautious about, if not even dissuaded from, talking with faculty advisors about seeking information on alternative careers. There can be repercussions in their departments. There can be repercussions in their relationship with faculty advisors. So if doctoral programs have not reoriented their criteria and culture of success, if they haven't organized opportunities for students to explore alternative careers, students will have to find other resources for support.

Fortunately, there are online resources and networks to tap for information and advice. Students can identify summer institutes on planning for multiple futures. They can look to the *Versatile Ph.D.* website, owned by Paula Chambers, which promises "to help . . . humanities and social science grad students prepare for nonacademic careers."[15] Or they can stayed tuned to "#alt-academy, a mediacommons project," a grassroots gathering place for people "working or seeking employment—generally off the tenure track, but within the academic orbit—in universities and colleges, or allied knowledge and cultural heritage institutions such as museums, libraries, academic presses, historical societies, and governmental humanities organizations."[16] Nowviskie writes of the site:

> The *#Alt-Academy* site is for them, for their academic partners and institutional leaders, and for the next generation of hybrid humanities scholars—people who are building skills and experience in precisely those areas of the academy that are most in flux, and most in need of guidance and attention by sensitive, capable, imaginative, and well-informed scholar-practitioners.

On the site, students and their mentors can find an open-access e-book entitled *#Alt-Academy*; the SCI Survey Report from August 2013 entitled *Humanities Unbound: Supporting Careers and Scholarship beyond the Tenure Track* written by

Katrina Rogers and reporting on the survey of humanists working in multiple careers; and a call for papers for the online journal *Graduate Training in the 21st Century*.[17]

Final Thoughts

There are dramatic changes to be made to doctoral programs. There are small changes. The challenge, as one of the reviewers of this book observed, is to "strike a reasonable balance between being responsible to current expectations, introducing innovation, and stressing new forms of professionalization." Through these changes, doctoral education must maintain its commitment to the scholarly and pedagogical values of the humanities. It must advance what produces and enhances value in the work of the humanities—nuanced and provocative readings, sophisticated interpretations, pleasure in language, in images and sound, the rhythms of sentences, the arcs of paragraphs, and in narrative; commitment to large and yet-to-be found archives; engagement with consequential issues of this time and of times past; and excitement in the interpretations, theoretical insights, analytical methods, and arguments faculty communicate to diverse individuals and audiences. *And* there is more that needs to be done—because there are profound changes in the institutions in which academic humanists work, the ecology of knowledge in those institutions, the way humanists will go about their work, the kind of work they will do, the way they will communicate their knowledge, the way they will teach about their fields and meet their obligations to students, and the ways they will advocate for the humanities in the academy and in public life.

It may be that these reorientations, changes both large and bold and small and circumspect, contribute to addressing the attrition rate, the completion rate, the average time to degree, and constrained job prospects for humanities PhDs. But it certainly will be the case that the intellectual and affective life of doctoral students and academic humanists will be enhanced by programs that bend to and with the receiver toward an as-yet-discovered ensemble of achievements. And it will be the case that moving away from the normativizing imperative of the one model of success as implicit ethos of doctoral study professionalization will, as David M. Ball, William Gleason, and Nancy J. Peterson, argue, "make [those students] better scholars and teachers, better advocates for the value of the humanities in the twenty-first century, and better candidates for careers in the range of other fields in which our graduates continue to excel."[18]