Finding Meaning After Academia

or, planning the next stage of your journey

Elizabeth Segran, Ph.D.
Leaving Academia

★ What Has Gone Wrong?
★ You Have Other Options
★ Finding Meaning After Academia
What Has Gone Wrong?
What Has Gone Wrong?

- In 1970, 30% of college faculty were adjuncts.
- Today, over 70% of college faculty are adjuncts.
- Report concludes many adjuncts and visiting lecturers live “on the edge of poverty.”

2014 Study by U.S. House of Representatives
Between 1998 and 2009:

- 50% of History Ph.D.s did not get tenure track jobs
- 50% of English and Foreign Language Ph.D.s did not get tenure track jobs

MLA and AHA
What Has Gone Wrong?

More than one million people are now working as contingent faculty and instructors at U.S. institutions of higher education.
What Has Gone Wrong?

- Adjuncts constitute 76.4% of U.S. faculty
- Median pay for three-credit course is $2,700.
- 22.6% of respondents had access to health benefits
- Average respondent had worked 10 years as a part-time worker.
What Has Gone Wrong?

“Whether some adjunct professors piece together a living from their teaching job or only use it to supplement a more stable primary career elsewhere, many contingent faculty might be best classified as working poor.”

House Committee on Education and Workforce
You Have Other Options
24.1% of History Ph.D.s and 21% of English and Foreign Language Ph.D.s tool jobs in business, museums and publishing, among other industries.
1995 survey found 16.6% of humanities Ph.D.s were going into management-level positions outside the academy, while 4.9% would work in media and the arts.
You Have Other Options

“People who take their Ph.D.s into other realms are not necessarily being hired for their content expertise, but for their process skills: the ability to do excellent research, to write, to make cogent arguments.”

Victoria Blodgett, Yale
You Have Other Options

“There is a discourse of failure and shame that intimidates Ph.D.s and makes them feel not good enough if they don’t get an academic job.”

“Some dissertation advisors are prejudiced against many jobs outside academia that Ph.D.s pursue and find highly satisfying: They cannot imagine a ‘life of the mind’ unless you become a scholar.”

Rosemary Feal, MLA
“Academic institutions hold a responsibility to advance knowledge everywhere. They should be in the business of putting Ph.D.s in government, non-profits, the media and lots of industries where society will be better off if we have people who are trained to think as deeply as Ph.D.s are.”

Victoria Blodgett, Yale University
Finding Meaning After Academia
The “Do What You Love” Philosophy of work
1) Notions of Time
2) The Public Intellectual
3) That Horrible First Year
4) There Are Many Ways to Be Happy in Life
“We can be mistaken about our views on happiness as anything else”

Gordon Marino, New York Times