

THE MLA INTERVIEW

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Before the interview:

Research the department/school:

- * -Research catalogs of target institutions (on web, hard copy at PCL); copy and bring along the description of German program.
- * -Check Monatshefte/DAAD directory and web sites, and MLA International Bibliography and LLBA (also will help remember names).
- * -Check statistics in most recent Fall issue of Monatshefte.
- * -Who is there? What are their specializations?
- * -How large/strong is their program?
- * -Analyze strengths and weaknesses. How could you fit in?
- * -Try to anticipate their needs. Why would they want to hire you? Are they likely to look primarily for a language teacher?
- * -Are they looking for a strong researcher or teacher? Do they expect a lot of service work?

When scheduling interviews: try to leave at least one hour between interviews.

Questions you should expect:

Expect the unexpected. Some interviewers like to see how you react to a surprising question. You might encounter some comprehensive-exam-type questions ("Is Simplicissimus a Bildungsroman?"). Typically, part of the interview will be in English, part in German. Native speakers of German should be prepared to do the entire interview in English. Some colleagues--specially from smaller institutions--might feel intimidated by native speakers of German.

A) TEACHING

Remember: At most smaller institutions teaching is more important than at large research-oriented schools. You can show interest in teaching by volunteering information. Show that you have ideas about program development and extracurricular activities.

- * -Which textbooks do you use now in first/second-year language instruction? Do you like it?
- * -Which textbooks would suggest for ***? Why?
- * -Which approaches do you use in elementary language teaching? What factors influence the approaches you choose (large/small classes, community college vs. Ivy League, etc.)?
- * -What is your experience with / approach to computer-assisted instruction in the language classroom?
- * -Would you be willing to co-ordinate a first-year language program?

- * -Could you teach a course on under-water aerobics--or just about any other imaginable topic?
- * -How would you design a undergraduate course in your specialty? Which texts would you include?
- * -How can you make Baroque literature (fill in the blanks) palatable to American undergraduates?
- * -How would you design a graduate course (survey course, seminar) in your specialty? Which texts would you include?
- * -What course would you like to teach? (Think of a couple of courses you would like to teach!)

B) DISSERTATION

Questions about the dissertation often serve as warm-ups. Here, you can show that you can express ideas and that you can engage in a scholarly discussion.

- * -What is the main idea of your dissertation? Tell us about your dissertation--in two minutes or less.
- * -In what way does it contribute to scholarship? What is the unique contribution of your dissertation to scholarship?
- * -Why should I care about your dissertation?
- * -Why did you choose this topic? How did you get into this topic?
- * -What is your methodology? Why do you use this approach?
- * -What does the timetable on the completion of your diss. look like?

C) FUTURE RESEARCH

- * -What will your next project be? What is your next book going to be about?
- * -What does your research program for the next five years look like?
- * -Which book would you like to be famous for in twenty years?

D) PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

- * -We at *** University don't have a language requirement. How would you go about attracting students into our language classes?
- * -We at *** have problems attracting enough students to our upper division German courses. Do you have any strategies how this could be achieved?
- * -Do you have an interest in extracurricular activities?
- * -Would you be willing to run German House, Film Club, German Club, German Play, Stammtisch, etc.?
- * -What's the place of culture in a FL curriculum?

E) PROFESSION

- * -What are the most pressing problems facing our profession in the next decade?
- * -How can we generate more enrollment in our elementary language classes?
- * -What is the value of language instruction in our university curriculum today?
- * -What is the value of a humanities education in our technological age? Do we act responsibly by convincing our students to become humanities majors?
- * -Is the language requirement good or bad for our profession?
- * -What is German Studies? What is your definition of German Studies?
- * -Should we continue to offer traditional literature classes, or should we frame them in a German Studies curriculum?

F) LOADED QUESTIONS (which doesn't mean others aren't ...)

* -Do you see yourself teaching elementary language as part of your professional future?

* -Would a young woman like yourself be comfortable in our community? in our department? in our foreign language department?

* -Was that your wife/husband I talked to on the phone the other day?

Questions to ask (and not to ask)

Try to make questions specific to their situation! Your questions also should indicate that you know something about the target institution.

* -Do you have a language requirement?

* -Do you have study abroad programs?

* -How many majors/grad students?

* -Possibility to teach interdisciplinary courses?

* -Library holdings (small school: major research library nearby?)

* -One-year job: chances for extension?

* -What do they expect of their new colleague?

* -Don't ask about salary and health insurance at this point!