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Academic Job Tips by Costanza Rampini - Phone Interview

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**Academic Job Interview Tips by
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Phone interview questions:

This is a list of questions that came up often during my phone interviews. I had 8 phone interviews (2 research institutions & 6 teaching institutions, all in the United States). Most phone interviews lasted 30 minutes, though some were shorter (20 min) and one was quite long (1 hour). Half the time they were phone interviews, so I was able to look at my notes extensively. But the other half were video interviews, so I tried to look up at the camera as much as possible! I am happy to discuss my experience further over the phone or skype, etc., and I may try to compile a similar list for on-campus interviews, if there is enough demand!

- *Why do you want to work at this institution specifically? And why are you a good fit for this institution?* (if the institution has some specific characteristic, e.g. an all-women college or a Hispanic-serving institution, you should address that in your answer)
- *Why do you want to work in this department specifically? And how would you be a good fit for this department?* (think about how you complement existing strengths, but also bring something new both in terms of research and teaching. If your PhD is in a discipline that is different than the department, e.g. I had an interview for a job in a Department of International Studies but my PhD is in Environmental Studies, think how those two disciplines fit together)
- *How would you teach the following XYZ classes?* (for each class think about key topics you would touch, how you might organize the course, and key assignments. Sometimes they ask about classes that you discussed in your application as wanting to teach or offer, but they also often ask how you would teach the intro classes offered by the department. If you have been teaching, having your syllabi in front of you during the interview.)
- *What is your approach to mentoring grads/ undergrads? In which areas could you mentor PhD/master students?* (think about areas of expertise/research but also geographical regions and methodology)
- *What is your philosophy for integrating teaching and research?*
- *Have you encountered a hurdle teaching/researching (in an interdisciplinary department) and how did you overcome it?* (be specific, focus on success stories!)
- *How do you expect to get undergrad students involved in off-campus activities/service learning (via teaching/classes)? In research (via teaching/classes)?*

- *How do you integrate social and natural sciences in your teaching? In your research?*
- *What inspired you to pursue an academic job? To pursue this specific research focus?*
- *How does your research distinguish itself from other similar research in your field?*
- *What is your 3-5 year research plan?* (think about how your research might evolve/grow and of course, get published and where, and also include the mentoring of grad students)
- *What funding resources are available/are you planning to apply to for your research?*
- *What other skills do you bring to the job?* (Maybe some cool methodological or theoretical stuff, or perhaps you work in a very unique ecosystem or community, or have a unique teaching method...think broadly, but also they don't want to hear about your taekwondo belts. Trust me, I tried.)
- *How do you foresee "dealing with living here?"* (They don't want to hire someone who is definitely never moving there, so think of at least one reason why you would want to move to Normal, Illinois, or Nevada, Missouri. Similarly, San Francisco Bay Area universities (and maybe universities in places such as NYC?) don't want to make an offer to someone, who will turn it down due to the high costs of living and housing. Perhaps you have family in the area, or some link to the area that makes you want to move there and stay there.)
- *What questions do you have for us?* (ALWAYS have at least 2-3 questions for them. Make sure they can't be easily answered by visiting their website. One question I was advised to ask was 'what classes would I be expected to teach right away' and 'what new classes would I be able to develop?')

Also, being friendly and pleasant (but professional) helps. The hiring committee is even less stoked than you to be holding this interview...imagine scheduling 3-6 people for several interviews over the course of a few weeks! Sounding enthusiastic and excited about the position is also important.

Finally, if they don't provide this info when scheduling the interview, ask who will be present at the interview. If you see a name that doesn't show up anywhere on the department website, follow up with another email to ask who this person is. E.g. Two schools had an undergrad student take part and ask questions during the interview.