



Behind the Academic Curtain: How to Find Success and Happiness with a PhD (Chicago Guides to Academic Life)

By Frank F. Furstenberg

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More people than ever are going to graduate school to seek a PhD these days. When they get there, they discover a bewildering environment: a rapid immersion in their discipline, a keen competition for resources, and uncertain options for their future, whether inside or outside of academia. Life with a PhD can begin to resemble an unsolvable maze. In *Behind the Academic Curtain*, Frank F. Furstenberg offers a clear and user-friendly map to this maze. Drawing on decades of experience in academia, he provides a comprehensive, empirically grounded, and, most important of all, practical guide to academic life.

While the greatest anxieties for PhD candidates and postgrads are often centered on getting that tenure-track dream job, each stage of an academic career poses a series of distinctive problems. Furstenberg divides these stages into five chapters that cover the entire trajectory of an academic life, including how to make use of a PhD outside of academia. From finding the right job to earning tenure, from managing teaching loads to conducting research, from working on committees to easing into retirement, he illuminates all the challenges and opportunities an academic can expect to encounter. Each chapter is designed for easy consultation, with copious signposts, helpful suggestions, and a bevy of questions that all academics should ask themselves throughout their career, whether at a major university, junior college, or a nonacademic organization. An honest and up-to-date portrayal of how this life really works, *Behind the Academic Curtain* is an essential companion for any scholar, at any stage of his or her career.

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Editorial Review

Review

“An exceptionally comprehensive guide to an entire academic career, from deciding where to apply to grad school to determining when it's time to retire.”

(Inside Higher Education)

“A lot of academics are going to find in this book just what they need to stimulate their own thinking and assessment of their career, whatever stage they're in. Everyone who has worked in an academic position knows what these problems are, sort of, but a large number of professors and scholars refuse to think about them or to consider, calmly and with some reference to realities, what they should do about them. *Behind the Academic Curtain* will help them sort out what's important *to them*. It provides a humane perspective on the insoluble dilemmas that inform a scholarly life.”

(Howard S. Becker, author of Writing for Social Scientists)

“In this superb book, sociologist Furstenberg offers readers a sweeping description of the five stages of an academic's career from graduate school, to choosing a career in (or outside of) the academy, to tenure review, all the way to retirement. The author, who is an Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, provides graduate students and professors his personal reflections on the many twists and turns that every PhD will face in his or her career.”

(Reflective Teaching)

“Every academic or potential academic should read this book. Frank F. Furstenberg gives sage and humane advice about every step of an academic career from deciding whether to go to graduate school to when and how to retire. These pages are brimming with brilliant career and professional advice. But even more importantly, Furstenberg reminds his readers to live a good and balanced life and shares his successful strategies for doing so.”

(Mary C. Waters, Harvard University)

“Frank F. Furstenberg offers a wealth of insight into the arc of the academic career. From the first steps into graduate programs to the complexities of retirement, he draws on his personal experience as one of the nation's foremost scholars and his observations of hundreds of fellow academics in the making to enlighten the reader in ways practical, tactical, and philosophical. Anyone contemplating a life in the university world will want to devour this book and will come away from it equipped with invaluable insights into what it takes to succeed.”

(Katherine Newman, Dean of Arts and Sciences, John Hopkins University)

“This is a rare book. *Behind the Academic Curtain* offers a thoughtful reflection on the challenges of managing a career. It has great advice for individuals at different life stages. Are you trying to decide if you should go to graduate school? Are you in the pre-tenure track? Are you feeling stalled after tenure? Is retirement looming? With good humor, Frank F. Furstenberg offers honest, intelligent guidance. Highly recommended!”

(Annette Lareau, University of Pennsylvania)

About the Author

Frank F. Furstenberg is the Zellerbach Family Professor of Sociology Emeritus at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of many books, most recently *Destinies of the Disadvantaged: The Politics of Teenage Childbearing*. He lives in Philadelphia.

Users Review

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