Let’s Get Serious About Pursuing a Ph.D. in English

Student’s name______________________________

Before you and your adviser discuss graduate school, please fill out this questionnaire. Bring the completed form with you to your appointment with your adviser.

1. Having a graduate degree in the humanities will not increase your income or your employability outside academia. What are three good reasons for you to go to grad school? The following do not count as good reasons: *I don’t know what to do with my life. I want to defer my student loans. I can’t find a job. I don’t know where else to meet a significant other. My significant other plans to go to grad school.*

A.

B.

C.

2. What are three good reasons that a graduate program would find your application more attractive than three or four hundred other applications? Be sure to include publications, conference presentations, and literary prizes. The following do not count as good reasons: *I like books. I’ve always enjoyed reading.*

A.

B.

C.

3. Only half the people who begin grad school in English complete a Ph.D., and only a handful of those find full-time, tenure-track professorships. Outside academia, many employers will not hire people with doctoral degrees in the humanities. If you can’t get a professorial job, what other career possibilities have you explored?
4. Many people spend two years to earn a master’s degree and another four to seven years to earn a Ph.D. Please list any conflicting priorities that might make it difficult to spend that much time in school. (Examples: marriage, children, finances.)

5. Most doctoral programs require students to demonstrate advanced reading proficiency in two languages other than English. Which other languages can you read at a sophisticated level?

6. In grad school you will compete with students who find joy and purpose in their research. In your own upper-division English courses, in what ways did you enjoy researching and writing papers at least as much as you enjoyed reading the literature itself?