

Research Trajectories:

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From Idea to Presentation, to Journal Article, and to Book

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Whether you are interested in work in ed policy, administration, or as a professor, when you go through EPE's programs, you are a scholar. This lunch and connect meeting will cover the idea of "research trajectories," considering who you are, where you've been, what you're interested in, and where you see yourself going with your reading, thinking, and writing. With that context in mind, we will consider steps you can take along a trajectory that would be exciting to each of you as lifelong learners. You've all written many papers. We'll talk about submitting your work and envisioning exciting possibilities for the future of your projects.

I. What is a research trajectory and why plan yours?

1. Research, broadly understood: Reading, thinking, conferring, testing, analyzing, & writing
2. Trajectory, path: Accidental or unplanned versus planned
3. Scope, Large and Small: From the scale of career/full life to individual projects, being intentional
4. The why: Being on a mission of your choosing, following your calling, learning to say no, & telling prospective employers what your vision is for your future, as a scholar or as an employee

II. Who needs to think about research trajectories?

Not just faculty members! Anyone who wants to be a lifelong learner, hopefully all of you:

1. Ed policy professionals
2. School, college, and university administrators
3. Future faculty members

III. What planning one's path can look like:

1. The Big Picture – Large Scope
 - a. A mission statement. Here's the one I wrote many years ago when I taught at the University of Mississippi:

“As a scholar, teacher, and citizen, I aim to use the tools of philosophical inquiry and clear, persuasive communication for the advancement of freedom, opportunity, and justice in a number of areas. These include quality public education and life opportunities for disadvantaged, under-resourced, and disabled persons. I study ethics, leadership, and public policy with a background in American philosophy in order to write, teach, and engage the public on pressing moral challenges.
 - b. Envision the animating themes of you interests to inspire your work & look for the nexus(es).
 - c. Consider the activities that you love to do, looking for nexus(es) & application to III.1.b.
 - d. Think retrospectively. Imagine a long life and what, looking back, you'd feel proud to have contributed.

2. The Project Scale – Smaller Scope, from Idea to Presentation, to Journal Article, and to Book

The trajectory of a research project can sound linear, but is in fact an **iterative, progressive loop**, with each stage ideally improving the work.



- a. Idea:
 - i. Topics vs. issues
 - ii. Connections or breaks from the Big Picture
 - iii. Can arise in course material, in work challenges, in conference inspiration, etc.
 - iv. Never forget to consider how and why it matters
 - v. Make a plan: how you'll study the issue; how you'll pursue it in steps & products
- b. Presentation:
 - i. Staff meetings / collaborative meetings with teammates / writing groups
 - ii. Conference presentations, in-person once COVID-19 has passed or virtual events, great for networking & learning "better practices" / what worked, or simply new findings & theorizing
 - iii. Courses
 - iv. Book reviews
 - v. Podcast interviews
- c. Article:
 - i. Scholars typically focus on journal articles, but there are great varieties of journals and publications that can be highly meaningful:
 - 1. Academic journals, standard, but sometimes obscure, less reach
 - 2. Professional periodicals for staff & practice focused faculty members: [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#); [InsideHigherEd](#); [EvoIllution](#); [Change](#); [Journal of Research & Practice in Assessment](#)*
 - 3. Newspapers / op-eds
- d. Book

Envisioning a book is a lot like creating a bigger picture trajectory for a project based on your ideas & interests, but requiring several smaller steps.

- i. Audience: University Press, Trade Press, Other options. See [Oxford University Press's Guidelines for Authors – Submitting a Proposal](#)
- ii. Dissertations can become articles or books. See Germano's [From Dissertation to Book](#)
- iii. If you want to reach wide audiences, you're going to need platform, reach, and you may need an agent. See Hyatt, [Platform: Get Noticed in a Noisy World](#) and Brewer, [Writer's Market Guide to Literary Agents 2020](#).

*Inclusion in this list is not to deny that the journal is academic, but to highlight its overlapping audiences.