

LinkedIn as a Networking Tool

A WORKSHOP FOR HUMANITIES & INTERDISCIPLINARY MAJORS

Course context: Upper-level seminar within the major (e.g., gender studies, English, history, philosophy). Best for weeks 2–4 of the semester.

Class length: 75 minutes

Prerequisite: Students arrive with a LinkedIn profile already created. Devices/computers needed.

THIS LESSON IS STEP 1 OF A 3-PART CAREER READINESS ARC

1 TODAY — LinkedIn workshop + identify 5–10 target professionals to follow

2 MID-SEMESTER — Translating academic skills into professional language (this is where the Skills section of the profile will be developed)

3 LATER IN SEMESTER — Informational interview assignment (3 outreach requests)

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, students will:

- Articulate how to use LinkedIn for their career stage
- Apply 2–3 concrete improvements to their own profile
- Identify 5–10 professionals in their target fields or at companies of interest
- Draft one substantive comment on a real post from someone they want to learn from
- Understand how to build a relationship online before asking for anything

Faculty Prep (60–90 minutes)

If you do not currently use LinkedIn actively, this guide explains how to get set up.

Step 1: Audit your own profile using the same five elements you'll teach (below). It's ideal to be able to use your profile as a model for the lesson.

Step 2: Build a feed worth scrolling. Follow 15–20 accounts that post regularly on topics adjacent to where your students might end up. A starter list of accounts known for substantive, frequent posting:

- **Bonnie Dilber** — recruiter at Zapier; posts straightforward career advice grounded in what hiring teams actually do
- **Sam Struan** — career coach focused on resumes, interviews, and job search strategy
- **Maren Wood** — founder of Beyond the Professoriate; helps humanities PhDs transition into industry, useful context for the broader humanities-to-work landscape
- **daniela (dani) herrera** — DEI and talent acquisition consultant
- **Daniela Amodei** — President and Co-founder of Anthropic, makers of Claude AI; BA in English
- **Jamia Wilson** — VP & Executive Editor at Penguin Random House; posts on feminist publishing, intersectionality, and race
- **Vu Le** — writer of NonprofitAF.com; posts on nonprofit equity, racial justice in philanthropy, and sector reform with irreverent humor
- **Tiffany Jana** — founder of TMI Consulting and LinkedIn Top Voice in DEI; posts on institutional bias, inclusion, and anti-racism
- **Christiana Figueres** — former Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change; posts on climate justice, sustainability, and international policy
- **Vanessa Nakate** — Ugandan climate activist and founder of the Rise Up Movement; posts on climate justice, Africa-centered narratives, and youth organizing
- **Mónica Ramírez** — founder of Justice for Migrant Women and labor rights attorney; posts on migrant justice, labor organizing, and intersectional feminism
- **Rinku Sen** — racial justice strategist and former Executive Director of Race Forward; posts on racial justice, movement strategy, and narrative change

Then add 8–10 of your own choosing in these categories:

- Alumni from your institution working in fields your students consider
- Career services professionals who write about humanities career outcomes
- People working at organizations your students mention as aspirational
- Voices in fields adjacent to your discipline (policy, advocacy, EdTech, nonprofit operations, etc.)

Step 3: Spend 20 minutes scrolling and commenting. Leave two substantive comments on posts that interest you. This is what students will be doing in class.

Step 4: Review articles listed at the end of this lesson plan.

Class Plan

1 Reframe what LinkedIn is for

10 MIN

Most students think LinkedIn is for applying to jobs or showcasing accomplishments. The frame to offer instead: LinkedIn is relationship infrastructure. The goal is to build a network of people doing work they want to learn about, so that by the time they graduate, they have warm contacts instead of cold applications.

The relevant context: most jobs are filled through networking rather than through cold applications. A strong network before senior year is a meaningful advantage in their job search.

2 Profile audit

15 MIN

Walk through five high-leverage profile elements while projecting your own profile or a sample. Then give students 8–10 minutes to update their own.

The five elements:

HEADLINE

not "Student at [University]." A descriptive line about what they study and what they care about. Example: *"Gender studies major researching reproductive policy and youth advocacy."*

ABOUT SECTION

three short paragraphs: what they study and why, what they have done that demonstrates capability (a project, an internship, substantive coursework), and what they are looking to learn or do next.

PROFILE PHOTO

clear, recent, eye contact, good lighting. Phone selfie with a plain wall is fine. Avoid party photos, pet photos, or graduation regalia.

BANNER IMAGE

one of LinkedIn's options or a free Canva template themed to their field. Removes the default blue and signals intentionality.

EDUCATION + EXPERIENCE ENTRIES

every role gets 2–3 bullet points describing what they actually did and what they learned, written in concrete language. Students who do not have formal work experience should add volunteering, extracurricular leadership, course-based research projects, or significant independent work in the Experience section. Treat a sustained leadership role in a student organization as the professional experience it is.

The Skills section is intentionally not included today. That is the focus of the second lesson in this arc, which builds on the work of translating academic skills into business vocabularies.

3 The networking core: how to find your people

15 MIN

This is the heart of the lesson. Distribute the search instructions handout (below) and walk students through the three search strategies it covers.

What they are looking for in a contact:

- Someone whose work or path interests them
- Ideally someone who posts on LinkedIn at least monthly (so engagement is possible)
- A mix: 2–3 people 1–2 years out of college, 2–3 mid-career, 1–2 senior

Why mix career stages: junior contacts can describe what the first year actually felt like; mid-career contacts can describe how the path branched; senior contacts can describe what they look for when hiring.

4 In-class practice: build the list

20 MIN

Students spend the next 20 minutes:

- Identifying 5–10 target contacts
- Following each of them (not connecting yet—see the handout for the difference)
- Reading the most recent post from at least three of them
- Drafting one substantive comment on one post

Where students get stuck: they don't know what to say. The distinction worth naming explicitly is the difference between performative comments ("So inspiring!") and substantive ones ("This made me think about how my research on [X] runs into the same issue. Did you find that [Y]?"). Substantive comments either add an observation, ask a real question, or share a relevant example from the commenter's own thinking, like successful engagement in class discussion or on discussion boards.

5 Wrap-up and bridge to next steps

10 MIN

Name the longer arc explicitly: by the time we do the informational interview assignment in [week X], you will have spent [X] weeks reading and engaging with these people's work. Your request will not be cold. They will have seen your name and your thinking.

Students should continue:

- Engaging with the 5–10 contacts: read their posts, leave 1–2 substantive comments per week
- Adding 2–3 more contacts as they discover them
- Bring a list of 3 contacts they would consider asking for an informational interview to the mid-semester lesson

Articles for Faculty (and Optional Student Assignment)

AAC&U RESEARCH ON LIBERAL ARTS CAREER OUTCOMES

[The Career-Ready Graduate: What Employers Say about the Difference College Makes](#) (2023) — eighth in AAC&U's longitudinal employer survey series; shows strong alignment between liberal education outcomes and employer priorities

[What Employers Want: Dispelling Myths about the Value of the Liberal Arts](#) — synthesizes the full run of AAC&U employer research; the cleanest single headline cite

NACE CAREER READINESS COMPETENCIES

[Career Readiness Defined](#) — canonical framework page defining all eight competencies, including the 2024 revision

KATINA ROGERS, *PUTTING THE HUMANITIES PHD TO WORK*

[Author's site](#) — chapter summaries and framing; no paywall

[LSE Review of Books](#) — accessible secondary summary; useful if you want context without assigning the book

INSIDE HIGHER ED — HUMANITIES CAREER OUTCOMES

[Study Finds Humanities Majors Land Jobs and Are Happy in Them](#) (2018) — covers American Academy of Arts & Sciences Humanities Indicators data on job satisfaction

[Preparing Humanities Majors for Postgraduation Success](#) (Mintz) — makes the case that humanities majors become managers at high rates; practical framing for career advising contexts

[Teach Your Discipline and Help Students Get Jobs](#) (Toor, 2022) — opinion piece arguing faculty need to integrate career awareness into teaching

[Career Exploration Is a Humanities Research Project](#) (2025) — frames job searching as qualitative research; the most directly useful piece for students

ANTHONY CARNEVALE / GEORGETOWN CEW

[The Economic Value of College Majors](#) — flagship report with interactive tool across 137 majors, including humanities earnings data with graduate degree premiums

[The Major Payoff](#) (2025) — most recent iteration; humanities/arts median earnings \$58k–\$73k, with 14 of 19 majors above \$65k for prime-age workers

CAREER-AWARE HUMANITIES PEDAGOGY

[Lessons in Public Scholarship](#) (Schaberg, 2023) — argument for humanities faculty engaging beyond the academy; directly relevant to career-aware pedagogy

[Cathy Davidson's *The New Education*](#) — IHE coverage with her "workforce ready vs. world ready" framing; accessible summary without requiring students to buy the book

Faculty note: verify each link before assigning; URLs and titles shift over time.

How to Search LinkedIn

LinkedIn's search functions are powerful but not intuitive. Three strategies will get you most of what you need.

STRATEGY 1

Alumni search

This is often the highest-yield strategy for students at any institution.

1. Go to your university's LinkedIn page (search the top bar for the school's name)
2. On the school page, click the **Alumni** tab
3. You'll see filters along the top: Where they live, Where they work, What they do, What they studied, What they're skilled at
4. Filter by "What they studied" → your major, or related majors
5. Filter by "What they do" → broad job functions (e.g., "Education," "Media and Communication," "Healthcare Services")
6. Scroll through the results. Click into profiles that look interesting.

Alumni from your own institution are statistically much more likely to respond to a student outreach message later in the semester. This is an important channel for info interviews.

STRATEGY 2

Job title + company search

Use the search bar at the top of LinkedIn.

1. Type a job title you're curious about (e.g., "program manager," "grant writer," "policy analyst")
2. Hit enter, then click the **People** filter at the top
3. Use the "All filters" button to add filters: location, current company, school, industry
4. Save the search if it looks useful (LinkedIn will email you when new people match)

If you have specific organizations in mind (a nonprofit, an EdTech company, a publishing house), search the company name first, click into the company page, and use the **People** tab on the company page to see who works there.

STRATEGY 3

Searching for posts (not just people)

Most people don't realize LinkedIn lets you search the content of posts, not just profiles.

1. Type a topic into the search bar (e.g., "sustainability organizing," "humanities to nonprofit," "first job after college")
2. Hit enter, then click the **Posts** filter at the top
3. Use the date filter on the left to narrow to recent posts
4. Find people whose posts you find substantive. Click into their profile and follow them.

This is how you find voices you didn't know existed. It's also how you find the people who actually post—the vast majority of LinkedIn users don't post content.

BEFORE YOU REACH OUT

Follow vs. connect: which to use

Follow is one-way. You see their posts; they don't get notified beyond a small "X started following you" alert. No approval needed. Use this for everyone you want to learn from.

Connect is mutual and requires the other person's approval. Use this only after you've engaged with someone's content for a few weeks, or when you have a specific reason (you've met them, you're an alum, you have a real question to ask). Connection requests with no message and no context are usually ignored.

For this assignment, follow your 5–10 contacts. Don't connect with them yet. The connection request comes later, and it comes with context.