



The Languages/Linguistics Degree: The (Worth of a) Scholarly Path

Career Convention 2021: Passions and Possibilities

Lourdes School of Mandaluyong City

April 7, 2021

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Pronouns: *he/him or they/them*



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■ Today's Agenda

Part 1: Linguistics?

1. Why language? Why linguistics?
2. Knowledge and Skills Offered by a L/L Degree
3. Career Prospects for L/L Graduates
4. My Professional Background as an Applied Linguist

Part 2: Working in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

1. The Academic Path: The HEI Faculty
2. HEI Faculty Responsibilities
3. Things to Expect in the Academic Workplace
4. Where Lourdesian Values Play a Role





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**The Language(s) or
Linguistics Degree**

■ What's so special about language?

➤ It is an important resource for many (good or ill) purposes.

➤ It is an ever evolving system in terms of time and space.

➤ It can reflect diverse cultures and language practices across the world.

➤ It is powerful: It can shape policy and be (dis)empowering.

➤ Many societal problems have to do with language.



▪ What's Linguistics as a social science?

➤ The scientific study of language(s) that focuses on:

- what comprises the grammatical structure of languages;
- how they differ in their structures and constraints;
- how people use language in written or spoken interactions;

- how meanings of words change through time and/or context;
- why people speak differently (e.g., gender, social class, etc.);
- how people process, acquire, and learn languages;
- and **MORE.**



■ Some areas under linguistics:

phonetics

morphology

semantics

phonology

syntax

pragmatics

historical linguistics

language education

sociolinguistics

forensic linguistics

psycholinguistics

computational linguistics



■ Case: COVID-19 Metaphors (#ReframeCOVID)

- ❑ Metaphor involves **talking** and **potentially thinking about one thing in terms of another**.
- ❑ The two “things” are different, but some similarities could be sensed between them.
- ❑ **Example:** “I’m fast becoming a chemo *veteran*”
(from an online forum for people with cancer)



■ Case: COVID-19 Metaphors (#ReframeCOVID)

Different metaphors 'frame' experiences in different ways, highlighting some aspects and backgrounding others.

We use metaphors ALL THE TIME, but **metaphors may not always be empowering for everyone**. Some metaphors are more damaging than others.

Yes **this enemy** can be deadly, but it is also **beatable** – and we know how to beat it and we know that if as a country we follow the scientific advice that is now being given, we know that **we will beat it**.

And however tough the months ahead, **we have the resolve and the resources to win the fight**. (UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson)



■ Case: COVID-19 Metaphors (#ReframeCOVID)

Some reasons why war metaphors are damaging:

- ❑ “War metaphors suggest there will be a simple victory or defeat. They emphasize treatment over prevention. And they encourage the view that criticising government is unpatriotic.” (Richard Horton)
- ❑ **Political expediency:** Instead of people being outraged at the deaths of healthcare workers (e.g., due to inadequate PPE), they are encouraged to “honor the fallen” and shift the attention away from the cause: government inaction.
- ❑ **What if those “frontline” workers quite rightly object to being described as disposable, sacrificial lambs? Are they “traitors” like in a real war?**



■ Case: Interpreting the (Language of the) Law

Consider the following clause from the US Criminal Code:

“Whoever, during and in relation to any crime of violence or drug trafficking crime (...) uses or carries a firearm, shall, in addition to the punishment provided for such crime (...) be sentenced to imprisonment for five years, and if the firearm is a machine gun (...) to imprisonment for thirty years.”



■ Case: Interpreting the (Language of the) Law

Consider this scenario:

A man attended a meeting with people who turned out to be government agents and informants, where he agreed to trade an automatic weapon for some cocaine. He got cold feet and fled but was apprehended after a high-speed chase. He faces 30 years in prison.

Do you think the law applies in his case? Why (not)?



▪ Other Situations where Linguistics has Value

- ❑ Varieties of English and discrimination (e.g., accentism and native-speakerism)
- ❑ Colorism in beauty and skin whitening product advertisements
- ❑ Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education
- ❑ Plain language movement (i.e., avoiding legalese in texts for lay readers)
- ❑ Improving communication systems between doctors and patients
- ❑ Efforts to restore cultures ruined by colonialism and oppression



■ Knowledge and Skills Offered by Language Studies

Cross-cultural skills

Relating language to social, cultural and historical contexts;

Understanding local and global perspectives

Adapting to and functioning in different cultural settings;

Working effectively with individuals from diverse backgrounds



■ Knowledge and Skills Offered by Language Studies

Communication skills

Dealing with complexities of meaning and social uses of language

Understanding the properties of discourse

Understanding language change and variation

Organizing and explaining complex ideas

Presenting information effectively in speech and writing

Gaining insight into human-computer interaction



■ Knowledge and Skills Offered by Language Studies

Analytical skills

Critically interpreting spoken and written language

Analyzing and interpreting data

Identifying patterns

Observing people and their behavior

Evaluating evidence

Comparing interpretations



■ Knowledge and Skills Offered by Language Studies

Research Skills

Constructing and applying theories

Using data as evidence, comparatively or historically

Working with research subjects

Applying methodologies from many disciplines

Working in interdisciplinary settings



■ Some Courses in AB English Language Studies

- Development of the English Language
- Psychology of Language
- Introduction to Language, Society, and Culture
- Language and Power
- Language and the Media
- Language and the Law
- Language, Gender, and Sexuality
- Developing Reading and Critical Thinking Skills
- Foundations of Language Teaching and Learning
- Intercultural Communication
- Organizational Communication
- Computer-mediated Communication
- Grammars of Philippine Languages

**** MAY VARY PER SCHOOL**

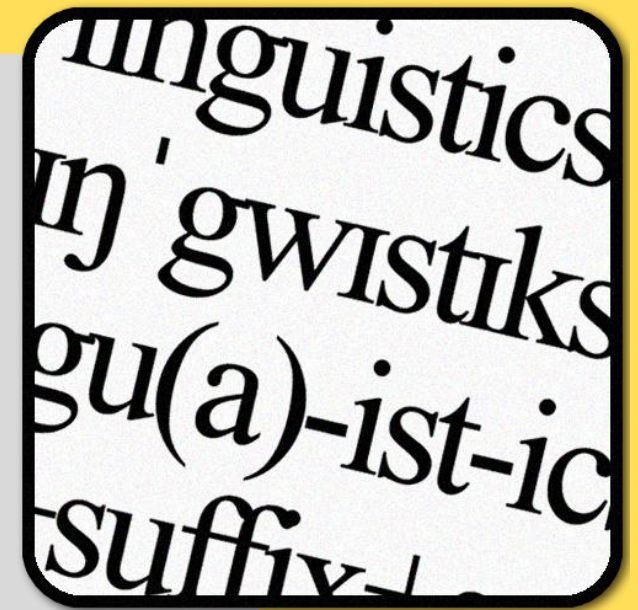
inguistics
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■ Career Prospects for a Languages/Linguistics Graduate

- government, law, and diplomatic services;
- advertising and branding;
- journalism and publishing;
- acting and performance;
- translation and interpretation
- language technology;
- language consultancy work;
- language documentation and fieldwork;
- language education and research**

**** NOT AN EXHAUSTIVE LIST**



A black and white line-art illustration of a diverse group of students in school uniforms, including boys and girls of various ethnicities, surrounding a central yellow rectangular box. The students are depicted from the chest up, some smiling and some looking neutral. The yellow box is positioned in the center of the page, containing the title and page number.

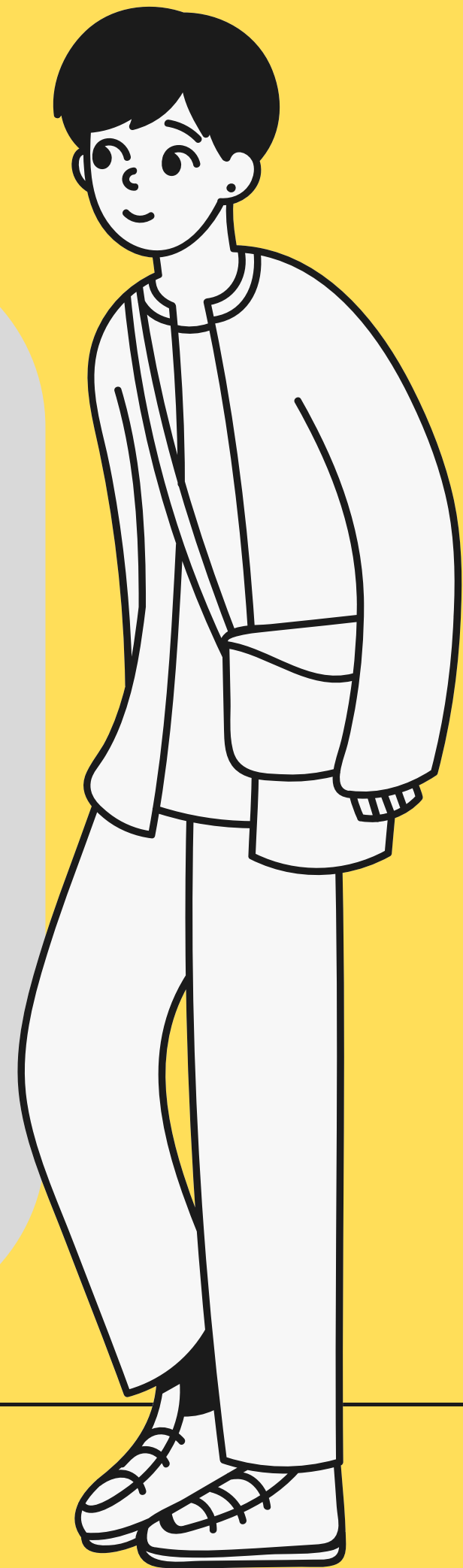
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Working in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

■ The Road Not Taken (Robert Frost)

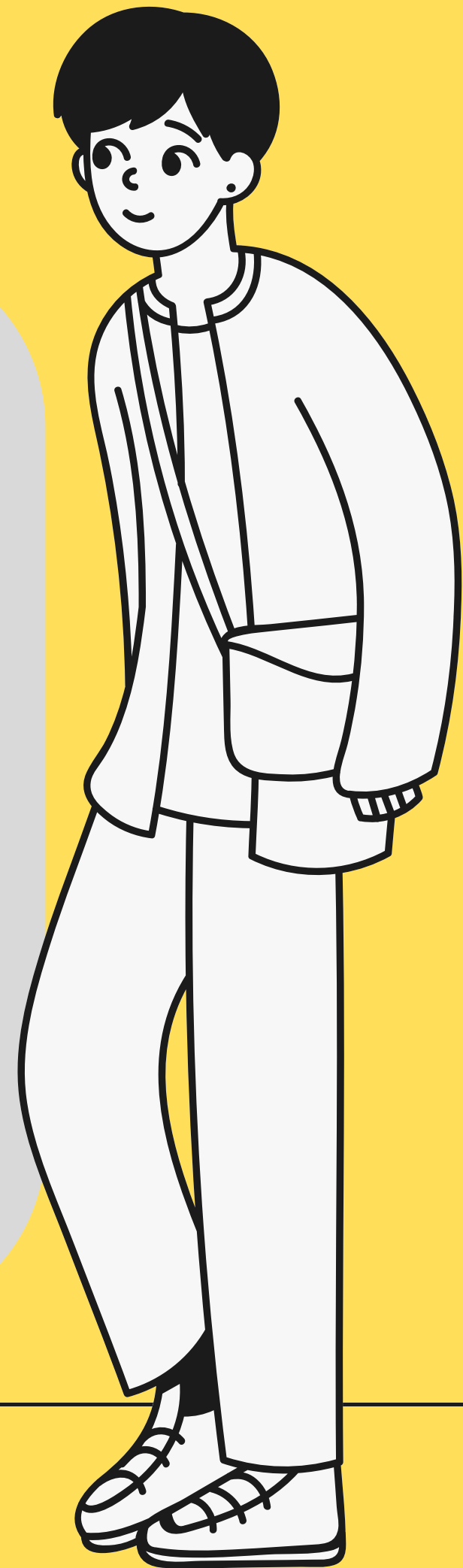
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*I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
**I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.***



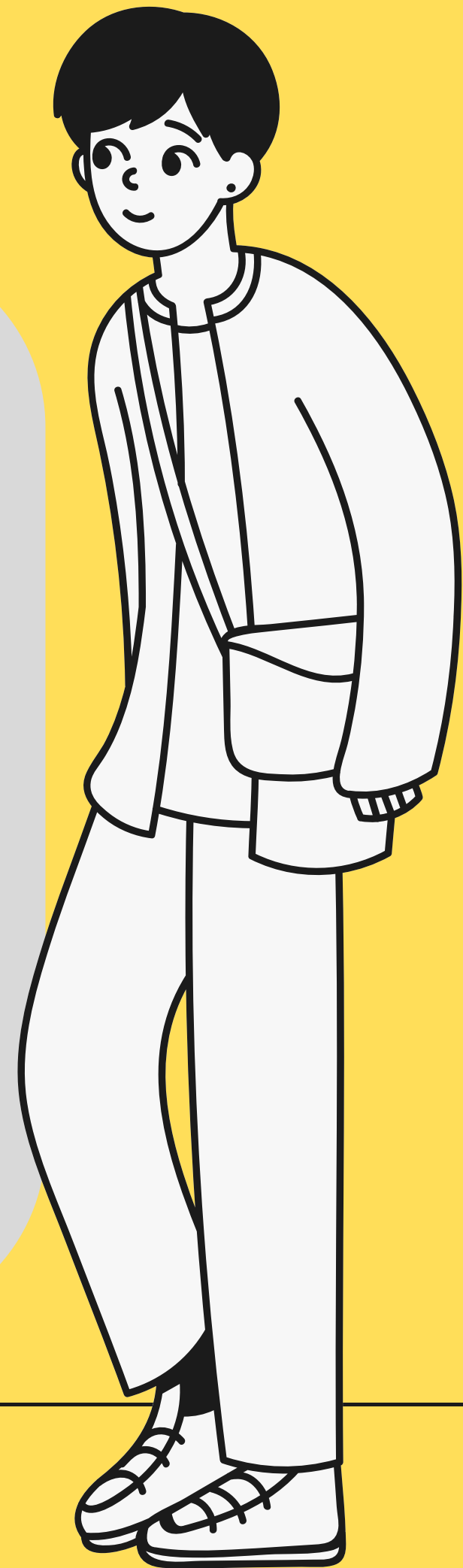
■ The Academic Path: The HEI Faculty

- **My situation before my first teaching stint:** NO master's degree (yet) and NO teaching license
- Was invited to teach by a former professor who happened to be an administrator at the university
- After the chaos in many universities over K-12 transition (many universities made their tenured faculty members **retire** or be subject to **retrenchment**)



▪ Long-term Professional Objective

- *To become an inspirational language educator who possesses the values and competencies essential in nurturing students into competent, committed, and responsible citizens of the 21st century*



■ HEI Faculty Responsibilities

Service to the university (e.g., committee assignments)

Research (e.g., patents, conference presentations, grants, publications)

Teaching and mentoring

- Curriculum and syllabus development;
- Planning student-centered lessons;
- Preparing high-quality assessments;
- Preparing instructional materials (e.g., handouts);
- Reviewing and marking papers;
- Collaborating with stakeholders;
- Engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning



■ Background Reality: Universities Worldwide

- ❑ **Universities are in “crisis” and is a highly unstable industry**
- ❑ **Economic reason:** Decades of systemic disinvestment and defunding of HEIs and research and development initiatives
- ❑ **Political reason:** Business and corporate logic (i.e., neoliberal management practices) has taken over administrations and boards of trustees, leading to cost-cutting and downsizing



■ Background Reality: Universities Worldwide

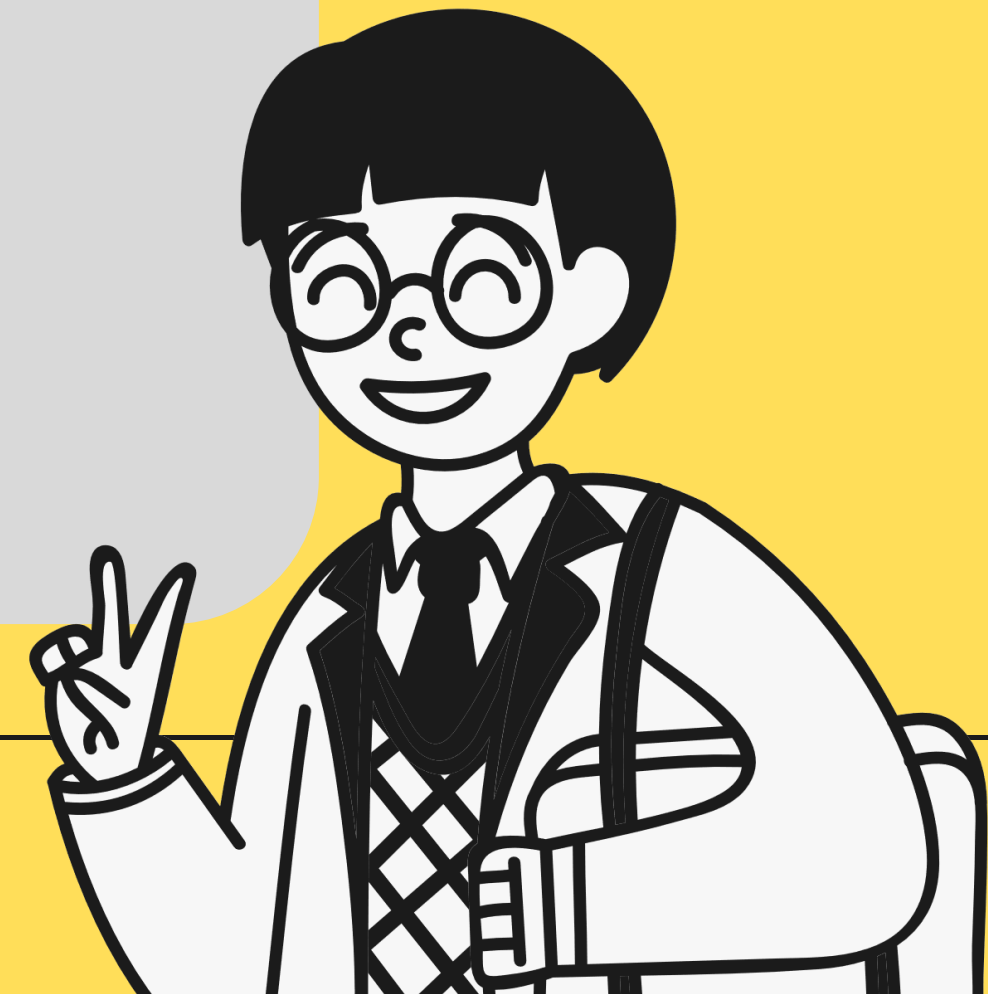
- ❑ “The Precariat” by Guy Standing (2013; Bloomsbury Publishing)
- ❑ Studied the impact of the 2008/2009 Global Financial Crisis on employment
- ❑ Explained how workers ended up **carrying the risks from entrepreneurs**, so that they have flexibility over their employees
- ❑ **Two groups:** the **precariat** (employees without benefits and security of tenure such as casual or contractual lecturers) and the **salarialiat** (employees with benefits)



■ Background Reality: Universities Worldwide

- ❑ COVID-19: “A likely extinction event for small schools and colleges”

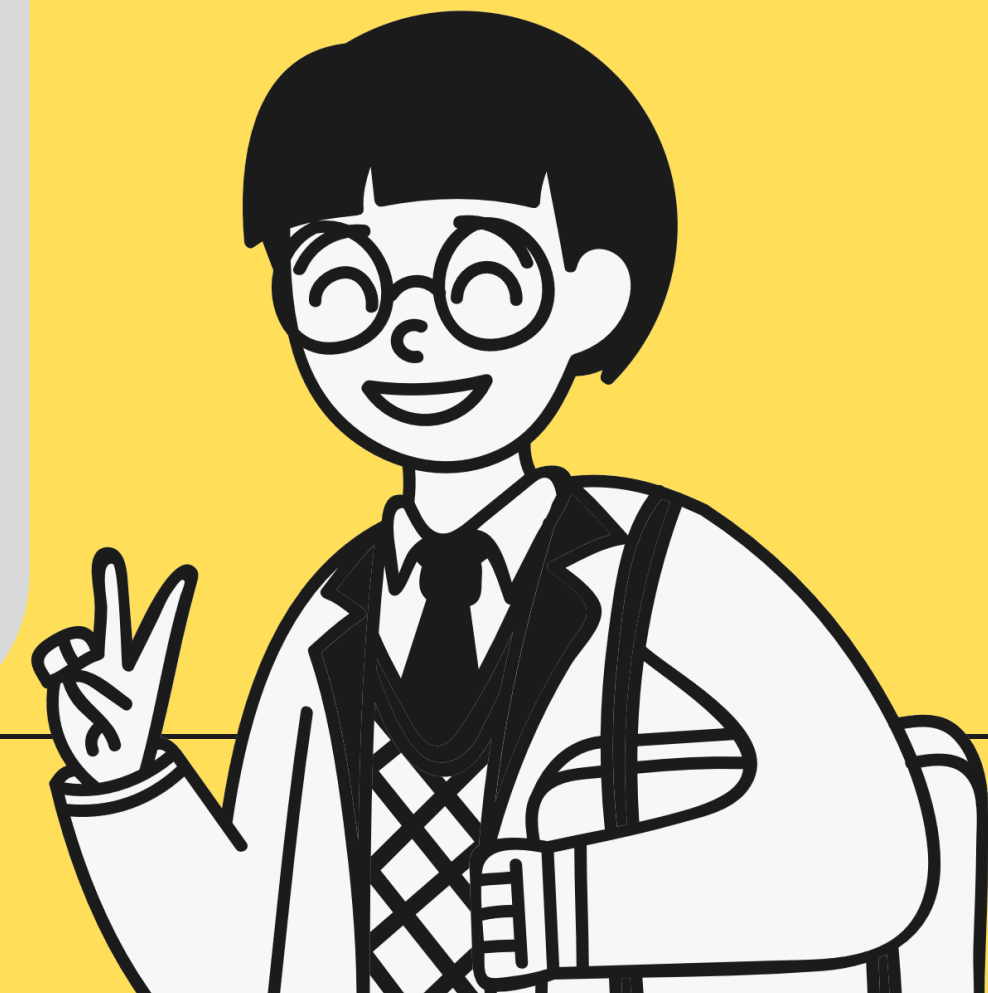
- ❑ Manifestations:
 - ❑ Hiring freezes
 - ❑ Firings
 - ❑ Furloughs and retrenchment
 - ❑ Bankruptcy
 - ❑ Permanent closures



■ Things to Expect in the Academic Workplace

The Good Side:

- ✓ Availability of resources and support to do research
- ✓ Professional development opportunities (e.g., seminars, conferences, workshops, etc.)
- ✓ Teaching and learning **WITH** (and often **FROM**) learners and other colleagues
- ✓ Community building opportunities
- ✓ Advancing scholarship in the 21st century Philippines



■ Things to Expect in the Academic Workplace

The Bad and the Ugly Side:

- ❑ Managing graduate school and teaching responsibilities;
- ❑ “Publish-or-perish” culture in academia;
- ❑ Dealing with constant rejection and the impostor syndrome;
- ❑ Institutional lack of positive (financial) support for researchers pursuing graduate degrees (e.g., delayed stipends, rude scholarship coordinators)



■ Things to Expect in the Academic Workplace

The Bad and the Ugly Side:

- ❑ Lack of financial support for casual faculty members (e.g., when attending conferences hosted abroad)
- ❑ Ableism, elitism, bullying, gaslighting, and other forms of injustice
- ❑ Precariousness of the position
 - “Teaching is not a profession or a career. It’s a devotion – a dedication...” (Margaret Mary Vojtko, *formerly* of Duquesne University)
 - Died at her lawn at age 83 after being abruptly let go by the university, destitute and nearly homeless



■ Things to Expect in the Academic Workplace

“The Human Condition” by Hannah Arendt (1958)

- ❑ Described the most dangerous social and political condition in the world.
- ❑ All the challenges, disasters, and issues in the world start with *thoughtlessness*
- ❑ Consider how each of us in our daily lives exhibit thoughtlessness. Perhaps we are able to move through life and we never had to think about **systematic marginalization**?



▪ Where is the Lourdesian identity?

1. Becoming an ethical and responsible teacher and researcher

2. Becoming a compassionate academic mentor and colleague

3. Becoming a socially active glocal citizen (e.g., not being complicit to injustice)

4. Becoming a devoted service-oriented disciplinary expert

5. Becoming a steward in the service of others, especially those in poverty and disadvantage



Be a Brother to all.

■ What's next? Continuing My Journey

Plan A: Search for language teaching posts abroad (e.g., Taiwan).

Plan B: Apply for PhD placements and scholarships abroad.

Plan C: Continue freelance editing and proofreading sidelines.

Plan D: Pursue education units and take the LET in order to teach in high school settings.

Plan E: Maybe it's time to look to industries beyond teaching?



■ Should you pursue graduate degrees? YES!!!

It is a noble pursuit – we *desperately* need more people to solve many social, political, cultural, and economic problems with which we are confronted.

But please remember that taking the academic route is only one of many viable career options. **Your worth is not tied to your university or your degree.**

IMPORTANT: Prioritizing a livable income, your spiritual, mental, and physical health



■ **And since college is your next stage...**

- Ask who is teaching your classes.**
- Ask where your tuition goes (because often it does not go to faculty members)!**
- Please write to your political leaders (e.g., senators and your member of the House) to fund education and a more healthy knowledge economy.**





1. Follow a purpose, never a person.

2. Redefine success by setting your own goal and plan to reach it.

3. Integrity matters: Success has to do with what you leave behind.

4. Be determined to work hard to your goal.

5. Find success in your present circumstances.



Thank you so much!
Maraming salamat!
Daghang salamat!
Muchas gracias!
감사합니다~

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Icon artwork by Noriel Beltran (@dinorisaur)