

Commuting

Factor commuting into your decision about employment, your choice of housing, and your allocation of time. In an increasingly mobile society where it seems that fewer and fewer people live near their jobs, commuting is becoming a major issue in quality of life planning. Be realistic. Know that the trade-off for endless hours in your car or on a subway or bus can be positive—the newspaper read, a good novel on tape, some time to yourself for a change. Alternatively, it can be negative—loss of research time, a crowded, unpleasant, stressful part of your daily routine. Some of it is unavoidable, such as plane rides if you and your partner live in different cities or if you take a visiting appointment for a bit. In that case, be sure you book a direct flight, get your frequent flyer points, and travel light.

Some of the hassle of commuting is avoidable now that telecommuting is possible. Academic schedules being what they are, you might be able to keep your on-site workweek to three or four days, create a home office, and join the fray from the comfort of your own modem. Be creative and ecological in all of this, saving yourself and the environment at the same time.

Competition

Our field is as competitive as many, not as cutthroat as some. Recall that at Harvard Law School, students were known to cut assigned articles out of journals so their peers could not read them. Happily, there are few reports of that in religion.

Graduate school is, by history, culture, and structure, competitive. Getting in is competitive, and once in, some faculty thrive on having graduate students compete with one another for their attention. That is the bad news. The good news is that after course work and comprehensive exams, the drive to compete softens up substantially. Dissertations are so diverse that there is little worry about having your work appropriated by someone else.

The issue of women in competition with one another in graduate school and in professional positions can be particularly