

Harnessing Transferable Skills

Yale Office of Career Strategy

Yale Office of Career Strategy

What are Transferable Skills?

- Transferable skills (portable skills) - skills and abilities that are relevant and helpful across different areas of life: socially, academically, and professionally
- Examples: communication, management, research, teaching. etc.

Exercise 1: Brainstorming Potential Skills

- Before we begin to think about how to communicate transferable skills gained in academia to potential employers, we should identify the skills we want to communicate in the first place
- With a partner, list skills that you have or will gain before completing graduate school and identify the top five that you think would interest potential employers the most

Exercise 1: Debrief

- **Skills often attained in graduate school:**

public speaking

working effectively on a team, writing skills

making decisions/solving problems

planning, conceptualizing, organizing, prioritizing

accessing and processing information

analyzing qualitative/quantitative data

technical knowledge

computer software/programming

creating/editing reports

forming a supported argument

organizing/managing data

managing projects
objectives

leading/motivating others

setting goals and

- Any or all of these skills would be of interest to non-academic employers

Exercise 1: Debrief

Career Strategy Workbook GSAS – Page 13-14

Communication

Creative

Financial

Helping

Management

Organizational

Research

Teaching

Technical Skills

Workshop Outline

- Transferable skills in prose
 - Most relevant to body paragraphs in cover letters
- Transferable skills in bullet points
 - Most relevant to accomplishment statements in resumes

Part 1: Cover Letters

Basic Cover Letter Anatomy

YALIA GRADUATE

Yale Graduate Department Address • (xxx) xxx-xxxx • yalia.graduate@xxxx.edu •

Date

Dr. Important
Think Tank
Street Address
City, State Zipcode

Dear Dr. Important:

I am writing to apply for the Research Assistant position at XX Think Tank. I have just completed my doctoral dissertation entitled "TITLE HERE," at Yale University and expect to receive my Ph.D in May. My research background, combined with my rigorous training in quantitative and qualitative methods and my more than seven years of experience studying Latin American politics, conflict, and democratization, gives me the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute to the exciting intellectual life of XX Think Tank.

My interest in Latin American security, governance and U.S. policy in the region grew out of my first hand knowledge of the area. Specifically...[Here you will want to include a short story about how you became interested in this particular area of work and study] This background laid the foundation for my life's work researching and working in the realm of conflict and democratization.

I have worked on these kinds of issues for roughly seven years, starting with my master's degree in conflict resolution at X University and continuing with my Ph.D work at Yale University. At X University, my coursework focused on (fill this in), which gave me the opportunity to write in-depth papers on (fill this in). This knowledge would help me in this position (in this way). I also had the opportunity to work as research assistant to Prof. Z in the department of V for a year and a half. For her book on U.S. foreign policy in civil wars, I did extensive literature reviews, summaries, and quantitative analysis, as well as fact checking and editing. Taken together, these interests led me to pursue my Ph.D at Yale in Political Science.

In my first years at Yale, I took five courses in quantitative and qualitative research methods, helping me develop an expertise in (x) kind of analysis. Building on this expertise, I served as a teaching fellow for a course called "Quantitative Methods in International Politics" where I led a section of 12 students (and did x kind of preparation each week, which included grading, giving feedback, etc.). During this time, I also pursued two research projects that focused on Latin American politics, conflict, and democratization. The first focused on X and resulted in the publication of a paper where I argued (z). The second project was my own interview-based study of (x) where I argued for (d).

My dissertation research focused on (x). Using a (quantitative or qualitative) approach, I studied how (fill this in). My fieldwork consisted of (fill this in). My findings suggest (fill this in). These ideas would help me in this position at XX Think Tank in (this way).

I am excited to discuss further how my academic background in Latin American politics and my rigorous training in quantitative and qualitative methods could contribute to XX Think Tank's unique approach to addressing social problems. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Yalia Graduate

Introductory
paragraph

- Introduce yourself and state your goal, summarize the rest of the letter

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Interest paragraph

- Summarize your interest in the company, being as specific as possible

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Body paragraphs

- Provide examples of a few past experiences in detail
- This is the place to communicate your transferrable skills

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Conclusion paragraph

- Thank the employer for reading the letter and politely request an interview

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Because the body paragraphs are most relevant in communicating transferable skills, we will focus on writing them

Transferable Skills in the Cover Letter

- Most cover letters have 2-3 body paragraphs
- Focus as specifically as possible on one or a few related experiences per body paragraph
- As you describe your experiences, focus on relevant skills to the position for which you are applying
- End the paragraph by summarizing these skills explicitly and stating that they make you a good fit for the position

Transferable Skills in the Cover Letter

- Now, take a look at the following example paragraph
- What transferable skills do you think the author was trying to communicate?

Transferable Skills in the Cover Letter

Sample paragraph:

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Exercise 2: Writing Your Own Body Paragraph

- Now, write your own body paragraph (5-8 sentences), communicating transferrable skills from an academic experience to a professional position
- After around 10 minutes of writing, you will be paired up with a partner, and you will each give each other 5 minutes of feedback
- We will then discuss writing these paragraphs as a large group

Exercise 2: Debrief

- Does anyone want to share his/her or his/her partner's paragraph?
- If not, does anyone want to share a particular sentence that they thought was especially effective?
- What do you think was straightforward in writing these paragraphs? What was difficult?

Part 2: Resumes

Basic Resume Anatomy

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EDUCATION

Yale University, New Haven, CT
Ph.D, Political Science *Expected May 20XX*
Concentrations: Comparative Politics, Quantitative Empirical Methods, Political Economy

Ivy University, School of Public and International Studies, Somewhere, US
Master in Public Affairs, Economics and Public Policy *May 20XX*

Anywhere College, Anywhere, US
Bachelor of Arts, Anthropology *May 20XX*

POLICY, ADVOCACY, AND RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Yale University, Department of Political Science **New Haven, CT**
Dissertation Research *20XX - Present*
Dissertation: "International Policy Work and its Effects on the Political Economy"

- Located and procured data on international policies and associated financial figures in the political economy
- Standardized data from multiple sources and created an Access database
- Analyzed quantitative data with advanced statistical techniques
- Designed a survey using Qualtrics, administrated it to 9,000 government officials with over 1,000 respondents
- Presented findings in a paper presentation at the International Political Economy Meeting

Yale University, Macmillan Center for International Affairs **New Haven, CT**
Research Assistant *20XX - Present*

- Assist Dr. Faculty Member, Director of X Initiative, in all stages of the research process, including reading and synthesizing literature, data-gathering via semi-structured interviews and survey distribution, thematic coding and data analysis, writing, and editing in the field of international affairs
- Conduct all statistical analysis and interpretation for Dr. Faculty Member's work, which includes a book chapter on international policy and regulation

United Nations Finance for Development **New York, NY**
Research Consultant *December 20XX - August 20XX*

- Conducted economic, political, and financial analysis to inform high-level UN policy
- Developed policy/advocacy agenda for meetings with heads of state and ministers of finance on topics including financial systems and regulations, macroeconomic policy, and use of financial services
- Contributed to development of financial access indices and indicators for central banks statisticians; represented UNFD at multi-national and inter-agency dialogue on financial data collection

Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) **Kumasi, Ghana**
Country Research Director, Ghana *April 20XX - July 20XX*

- Initiated, designed and coordinated eighteen randomized field experiments with over 30,000 participants in 14 districts and a budget over \$2 million to assess the impact of development projects in the areas of behavioral micro savings, public service delivery and technology adaptation
- Co-developed the research questions, hypotheses, research design, and the survey; oversaw data collection; guided the data analysis; and established a network of local and international partner organizations

International Center on Nonviolent Conflict **Washington, D.C.**
Editorial Assistant *Summer 20XX*

- Scanned 250+ news sources to compose biweekly "New Digests," in order to track the civil resistance campaigns and movements developing worldwide
- Wrote book reviews related to civil resistance, contentious politics, and nonviolent movements; all reviews were published on ICNC's website
- Provided feedback on written work produced by ICNC staff and on English-Spanish translations

Education

- List all post-secondary degrees, including location and dates

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Concentrations: Comparative Politics, Quantitative Empirical Methods, Political Economy

Ivy University, School of Public and International Studies, Somewhere, US
Master in Public Affairs, Economics and Public Policy *May 20XX*

Anywhere College, Anywhere, US
Bachelor of Arts, Anthropology *May 20XX*

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Relevant Experience

- List all positions and dates, with bullet points below to describe them

Basic Resume Anatomy

National Democratic Institute

Election Analyst, Gender and Minorities Expert

- Monitored government compliance with national electoral law and international regulations across 26 districts
- Conducted 300+ in-depth interviews, assessed credibility of information and monitored 30+ campaign events
- Researched and analyzed data on participation of women and minorities
- Adjudicated competitiveness of elections in internal and public reports

Samarkand, Uzbekistan

January 20XX – August 20XX

World Bank, Development Impact Evaluation Initiative

Field Coordinator

- Developed sampling design, evaluation frameworks and coordinated data management for a portfolio of impact evaluation projects in three countries; topics focused on health policy, health systems strengthening, mobile technology for health, governance and economic justice, and infrastructure
- Designed and tested survey instruments, managed field logistics, and conducted enumerator training

Washington, D.C.

August 20XX – May 20XX

TEACHING AND PROGRAM MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE

Yale University, Office of Career Strategy

McDougal Fellow (August 20XX - Present)

- Design and deliver career-oriented programs for graduate and undergraduate students with a focus on interview skills, networking, and job search strategies
- Conduct 1:1 advising meeting with undergraduate students; evaluate their skills, interests, and values to assist students with career exploration
- Review and edit approximately five resumes and cover letters weekly

Yale Center for Teaching and Learning

Coordinator & Writing Fellow (August 20XX – Present)

- Develop, publicize, and manage monthly programs aimed at improving undergraduate students' writing skills, including the Writing Center's Anniversary event with over 200 attendees
- Supervise group of 12 Writing Fellows, managing the appointment schedule and leading refresher trainings to ensure Fellows give consistent feedback to students

Yale University, Department of Political Science

Teaching Fellow, Introduction to American Politics (Fall 20XX) & Inequality and Democracy (Spring 20XX)

- Led weekly sections with 15 students; clarified key themes from that week's readings and lecture and provided students with guiding questions to catalyze productive classroom discussions
- Taught students how to develop thesis statements, prove their assertions, and strengthen their writing

SELECT PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Author 1, Author 2, Author 3, "Three Theoretical Approaches to International Policy: Effects on the Political Economy" to be presented at the Society for International Policy. *Pending Publication*

Author 1 and Author 2, (November XX, 20XX). An Important Paper on International Policy. *Foreign Policy Journal*, 22 (4), pp. 57 – 80.

- Co-presented with Author 2 in panel on Challenges in International Policy; received prize for "best application of theory" at the meeting of the Society for Interesting Ideas, 20XX.

SKILLS

- Languages: French and Spanish (Professional Proficiency), Russian (Intermediate), Serbian (Basic)
- Computer Skills: Stata, R, CSPro, ArcGIS, Scientific Workplace, LATEX, Advanced Excel

Additional Experience

- List all positions and dates, with bullet points below to describe them

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Skills

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World Bank, Development Impact Evaluation Initiative

Field Coordinator

- Developed sampling design, evaluation frameworks and coordinated data management for a portfolio of impact evaluation projects in three countries; topics focused on health policy, health systems strengthening, mobile technology for health, governance and economic justice, and infrastructure
- Designed and tested survey instruments, managed field logistics, and conducted enumerator training

Washington, D.C.

August 20XX – May 20XX

TEACHING AND PROGRAM MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE

Yale University, Office of Career Strategy

McDougal Fellow (August 20XX - Present)

- Design and deliver career-oriented programs for graduate and undergraduate students with a focus on interview skills, networking, and job search strategies
- Conduct 1:1 advising meeting with undergraduate students; evaluate their skills, interests, and values to assist students with career exploration
- Review and edit approximately five resumes and cover letters weekly

Yale Center for Teaching and Learning

Coordinator & Writing Fellow (August 20XX – Present)

- Develop, publicize, and manage monthly programs aimed at improving undergraduate students' writing skills, including the Writing Center's Anniversary event with over 200 attendees
- Supervise group of 12 Writing Fellows, managing the appointment schedule and leading refresher trainings to ensure Fellows give consistent feedback to students

Yale University, Department of Political Science

Teaching Fellow, Introduction to American Politics (Fall 20XX) & Inequality and Democracy (Spring 20XX)

- Led weekly sections with 15 students; clarified key themes from that week's readings and lecture and provided students with guiding questions to catalyze productive classroom discussions
- Taught students how to develop thesis statements, prove their assertions, and strengthen their writing

SELECT PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Author 1, Author 2, Author 3, "Three Theoretical Approaches to International Policy: Effects on the Political Economy" to be presented at the Society for International Policy. *Pending Publication*

Author 1 and Author 2, (November XX, 20XX). An Important Paper on International Policy. *Foreign Policy Journal*, 22 (4), pp. 57 – 80.

- Co-presented with Author 2 in panel on Challenges in International Policy; received prize for "best application of theory" at the meeting of the Society for Interesting Ideas, 20XX.

SKILLS

- Languages: French and Spanish (Professional Proficiency), Russian (Intermediate), Serbian (Basic)
- Computer Skills: Stata, R, CSPro, ArcGIS, Scientific Workplace, LATEX, Advanced Excel

Because the bullet points describing experiences are most relevant in communicating transferable skills, we will focus on writing these

Accomplishment Statements: Formula

Action + Task = Result

Action: start with a past or present tense action verb (examples: developed, delivered, designed, reviewed, etc.)

Task: next, describe what was done (example: performed an experiment)

Result: finally, state what was accomplished due to successful completion of the task (examples: discovered novel pharmacological treatment, published papers, etc.)

Accomplishment Statements: Examples

Behavioral Interventionist/Tutor, 2011-2012, Autism Centre of BC, ABA Program, Vancouver, BC

- Implemented an Applied Behavioral Analysis program for two children with autism, aged 3 and 6, to improve social functioning and speech capabilities
- Created fun and engaging rewards embedded within therapy in order to motivate clients to stay focused and increase learning
- Collaborated with a team of 4 once a week to problem-solve issues and improve therapy
- Collected and recorded data to document the progress of clients
- Built trust and strong relationships with the clients and their families

Accomplishment Statements: Examples

Research Assistant, 2010-2011, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC

- Successfully recruited over 75 participants to volunteer for a project that examined parental and adolescent responses to infant crying
- Initiated the scheduling and planning of participant testing sessions to ensure data collection ran smoothly and efficiently
- Facilitated a comfortable lab experience for participants while preserving the preciseness required by the project to maintain research integrity

Exercise 3: Writing Accomplishment Statements

- Now, write your own accomplishment statements (3-5 bullet points) for an academic position that you have held, communicating skills transferable to a professional position
- After around 10 minutes of writing, you will be paired up with a partner, and you will each give each other 5 minutes of feedback
- We will then discuss writing these statements as a large group

Exercise 3: Debrief

- Does anyone want to share one of his/her or his/her partner's statements?
- What do you think was straightforward in writing these statements? What was difficult?

Any Questions?

Thank You!