

# PhD Seminar

## Choosing an Advisor

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# The Advisor-Student Relationship

- The choice of your advisor is one of the most important decisions of your life
- The advisor-student relationship is lifetime
- You must be mutually respectful, professional, and be comfortable with each other
- You have a two-variable optimization problem:
  1. Advisor
  2. Thesis topic

**Both variables are equally important**

# Student Motivation and Management

Advisors have different ways to motivate students:

- Fear
- Caresses
- Carrots
- By example

What works best for you?

What is most comfortable for you?

# Publishing Issues

- How good is your advisor at writing?
  - Can your advisor complement your writing?
  - Can your advisor teach you what you do not know?
- Does your advisor publish much with students?
- Who does most of the writing?
- Where does your advisor publish?
- What order of authors does your advisor use?

# Practical Concerns

- Is your advisor “research active” (publishing)?
- How many students has your advisor graduated?
- Will your advisor be here until you finish?
- Does your advisor have funding?
- How responsive is your advisor?
- How long do your advisor’s students take to finish?
- Where do your advisor’s students work now?

# Junior vs Senior Faculty

- **Junior faculty** typically:
  - Work harder on research
  - Are more anxious to publish
  - Have more time for students
  - Need to graduate students
- **Senior faculty** typically:
  - Get more done with less effort
  - Have more funding
  - Have more experience advising students
  - Have a track record that can be evaluated
  - Expect more independence

# Standing in the Field

- Is your advisor known in his or her field ?
  - Do you want to work within your advisor's core area of competence ?
  - If not, how far away ?
- Does your advisor
  - Serve on conference program committees ?
    - Program chair?
  - Journal editorial boards ?
    - Editor-in-chief?
  - Regularly review papers ?
- Does your advisor have contacts that can help you in your future career ?

# Advisor's Responsibilities

- Technical issues
- How to write papers
- How to make presentations
- How to interact with other members of the profession
- How to write proposals

University faculty are measured by the quality of their students' work



# The Role of the Committee

- Form the committee for the research, not the comps
- The committee should be people who:
  - Can contribute technically to your thesis
  - Will proactively read your thesis and offer helpful advice
  - Won't give you too much of a hard time (ie, won't fight with your advisor)
  - Will be able to help your future career (ie, with reference letters, etc)
  - You can talk to comfortably (perhaps regarding complaints about your advisor)