The “Academic” Track

• BA/BS —> MA/MS —> PhD (?)

• Typically (in the sciences), most students who get a PhD enter directly from a BA/BS
• So… who gets an MA/MS? Why get an MA/MS?
• Will an MA/MS shorten the time to get a PhD?
• How/where are most MA/MS degrees earned?
Getting a PhD  
Can you afford it?

• Typically (in the sciences), most students will receive a stipend (up to $30,000 in 2010) in addition to all tuition and fees

• Why will “they” pay YOU to do something that will increase your job/pay prospects? [HINT: Think TA or RA]
How Else Are Grad Schools Different?

• Classes typically 1-2 years (maximum)
• No Summer Vacation; this is WORK
• PhD thesis is based on original ideas that are (typically) yours and your PhD supervisor’s; and on YOUR research
• All programs have entrance exams, cumulative exams, qualifying exams, proposals, and/or other hurdles
Preparing for Grad School & Getting Admitted to Grad School

• GPA ≥ 3.0 (esp in UD classes in your major)
• *Successful* UG Research or Internships or related & relevant Experience
• 200-level (graduate level) coursework
• Attend graduate level seminars in your department
• *Excellent* letters of recommendation
• GRE (Graduate Record Exam; equivalent to SAT in purpose/format) with high scores (of course)
Choosing a Grad School

• Discuss with your advisor or other faculty you trust/respect

• Research what your experience will be like:
  – Typical time to degree?
  – Typical % who eventually obtain PhD?
  – Location and other misc. factors

• DEFINITELY visit the school & meet/interview both faculty and students

• Don’t consider a school with fewer than two research groups you would be interested in joining
Completing a PhD

• You MUST complete *Publishable Research* (& then you must publish it!)
• Satisfy your Thesis Committee
• Present a Departmental Seminar
If You Screw Up

• You will not “advance to candidacy”
• You will get an MA/MS as a “consolation prize”
• BUT this will still involve writing a thesis (that is of shorter length and lesser scope than a PhD thesis)
If You Screw Up -- *BIGTIME*

- You won’t even get the MA/MS degree
What your thesis supervisor can do for you

• *Everything* IF you are excellent at research

• Rules will be bent for an excellent researcher who is so-so in course work; a poor research prospect usually won’t advance to candidacy

• Your *thesis supervisor* is the closest you will ever come to having an *additional parent*
Free and Easy?

• Free --> YES
• Easy --> NO; grad school is a BIG psychic and time commitment

• How good will you need to be to get accepted to a PhD program?
• How good will you need to be to complete the PhD?
Is Grad School Right for YOU?

• Perhaps???

• You will only find out by trying research and/or 200-level courses; and investigating the possibilities