Preparing for the academic job market

Scope of the course
The course is directed at (relatively) senior postdocs who will pursue group leader positions in the near future. It is meant to provide postdoctoral researchers who are looking for academic jobs with practical training and prepare them for the challenging and sometimes opaque academic job market. The entire application process will be simulated, from preparing competitive application documents to actual interview situations. You will receive feedback from a panel of group leaders on each step. *If you secure a slot, make sure that your application documents are proofread & you've received feedback from your peers and your group leader. Practice your job talk & chalk talk* – this is meant to polish your skills and put you in a competitive position rather than teaching the basics.

Preparation for the course – what happens after signing up?
 (A) First, we would like to know (1) what kind of position you will be applying for and (2) how you would estimate your chances are to obtain such position. Please send us a short "self-evaluation" by email (nadler@mpi-cbg.de); this will be treated confidentially and will not be distributed to other participants. This information will help us to give you feedback tailored to your particular situation.
 (B) Next, you should prepare a complete set of application documents including:
> A cover letter (one page)
> A statement detailing you scientific achievements (one page)
> A research proposal (maximum three pages)
> Your CV (maximum two pages) and publication list
> A teaching statement (maximum one page)

Preparation for the course – How to optimize your application documents
> Do not simply sit down and start writing. Seek out information; there are some great tutorials available. A number of useful links are provided with this information, take your time to read everything available.
> Get feedback. Talk with your group leader about your proposal – this provides you with a valuable opportunity to hash out what you will be taking with you and which projects will stay in your current lab.
> Different parts of your application serve different purposes. Your cover letter is your sales pitch – and the most difficult part to get right. You need to clearly state who you are as a scientist, your motivation to join this particular institute, highlight your biggest achievements & give good reasons why it would be a good idea to have you there. In essence you need to suggest a motivation for hiring you. This should be not more than one page.

What happens to your documents?
Your self–evaluation and application documents will be read and discussed by the group leader panel and you will receive suggestion for improving your documents. After the course, this material will serve as a useful starting point for preparing documents for actual applications. This material will of course be treated confidentially and not distributed.

The interview day
Morning session:
You will be asked to give a 25 min presentation (+ 10 minutes discussion) detailing your current research and scientific background. You may choose to end with a teaser of your planned research. You will receive feedback immediately that you can take into account for the second session.

Afternoon session:
The second session will be a chalk talk session (30 min + 10 min discussion/feedback). You will be asked to elaborate on your scientific plans for the future and your overarching scientific vision. This session will also potentially include typical "hot chair" elements, so expect questions about required equipment, funding, personnel, etc. Questions will start 10 min into your chalk talk. Again, you will receive feedback immediately after the talk.

Useful links
Here are a few useful resources to help you get started and better understand the application and interview processes.

Cover Letter:
http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2014_08_06/caredit.a1400199

Writing a research plan:
http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2002_07_26/nodoi.4611149009600202486

Job Talk:
https://drugmonkey.wordpress.com/2007/11/04/job-talk-juju/

Chalk Talk:
http://vosshall.rockefeller.edu/assets/file/ChalkTalk.pdf
http://www.myscizzle.com/blog/unraveling-mystery-tips-giving-effective-chalk-talk/
https://drugmonkey.wordpress.com/2008/01/05/chalk-talk-cha-cha-cha/
http://www.labspaces.net/blog/1038/The_chalk_talk

Job interview one-on-ones:
https://drugmonkey.wordpress.com/2008/01/15/job-interview-one-on-ones/

Lots of great advice in one place:
• Multiple posts on the whole process:
https://bluelabcoats.wordpress.com/2008/09/12/its-the-seasonacademic-job-search-reposts/
• Job Tips: applying for research jobs in academia and the private sector
https://bcmp.med.harvard.edu/node/17
• UCSF resources **including sample application materials**:
http://career.ucsf.edu/academic-careers
http://career.ucsf.edu/grad-students-postdocs/career-planning/academic-jobs/applying/academic-samples
• Academic Job Search Handbook: http://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/14469.html