

15.289

Oral Presentation Assignment

The major oral assignment in this course is to give a 15-20 minute presentation, with visual aids, on some piece of your research. You may conceive of the talk as a conference talk (this is the easiest assumption, since 15-20 minutes is a typical length for such presentations) or an abbreviated version of a job talk or long seminar. Ideally, you will choose the same topic you will be working on for your written assignment. In any case, please discuss your topic and audience with me before the presentations begin. After the presentation, which will be videotaped, you will view your videotape and write a self-analysis of it for me. You will then have the option to give your presentation a second time. The parts of the assignment are described below, along with due dates.

Lecture 4 Topic and target audience

We will have discussed topics and audiences for the presentation in class before this time, but by Mar. 6 you need to commit to a specific topic and audience for your presentation, and to communicate it to me via e-mail.

Lecture 7, 8, or 9 Presentation

You will be assigned to give your presentation in class on one of these three dates. You will have 15-20 minutes for the talk, with time fairly strictly enforced. Depending on the genre you have chosen, you may defer questions until after the talk is over (e.g., a conference talk) or take them during the presentation (e.g., a job talk).

You may use overhead transparencies or computer projection for your talk, but if you choose computer projection, please let me know so I can order appropriate equipment. You should also have overheads as back-up, as you should in a real situation. At the time of the presentation, please hand me a paper copy of your visual aids so I can write comments and suggestions on them.

April 8, 9, or 10 Self-Evaluation

View the videotape of your presentation twice, and based on that plus the feedback you received after it, write a one- to two-page memo to me, analyzing your presentation and suggesting changes that might improve it. Feel free to focus on those issues that seem most relevant to your presentation, but here are some issues to consider.

Strategy and structure: Did you choose an appropriate strategy for the topic and situation? Did you organize it in a way that worked for the audience? What would you do differently next time, based on the audience's reaction and your viewing of the videotape?

Delivery: Did you feel confident when you gave your presentation? Do you look confident in the videotape? Based on the reaction of the audience, did you connect with them? Assess your strengths and weaknesses in verbal and nonverbal aspects of delivery (e.g., voice tone, gestures, eye contact, etc.). What would you do differently next time?

Visual aids: Evaluate your visual aids. Did you use a reasonable number for the time, or did you seem to be racing through too many of them? Were they appropriate and effectively designed? How would you change them (if at all)?

Handling of questions: Analyze how well you answered questions. Did you anticipate most of the questions in advance, or did some take you by surprise? Did your answers seem responsive to the questions? Or defensive? Did they seem knowledgeable? What would you do differently next time, based on the audience's reaction and your viewing of the videotape?

Lecture 11 or 12 Optional revision of presentation

If you would like to give your presentation a second time in order to fix some of the problems you identified in your self analysis, you will have an opportunity to do so during the last two classes. Depending on the number of students who would like to use this opportunity, we may need to schedule additional time.