RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

PRESENTING TO LEARN

In general, presenting is about having something to say and saying it in a form and style appropriate to your audience and purpose. In this course, presenting is about developing something to say about the process, findings, and conclusions of your research. You will present to show me, your peers, and our clients what you are thinking and learning, finding and recommending. You will also present vital information and report on how you are progressing to other members of the larger research team we will constitute as a whole in this class.

The Final Presentation is a substantial piece of research work – one that may look daunting in terms of both content and form. The presentations and supporting documentation assignments are designed to help you clarify your thoughts, organize your responses, ask questions, recognize points of confusion and contradiction, summarize and compare ideas, build a sustained argument, apply concepts and frameworks to unfamiliar data, marshal and evaluate evidence, draw convincing conclusions, and make persuasive recommendations.

LEARNING TO PRESENT

The presentation-intensive aspects of this course are intended to support the learning goals by teaching you the means and methods of presentation in the social sciences in general and in sociological research in particular. You will contribute to and present reports on background, progress, findings, and conclusions and recommendations. These presentations will require you to: review theories and methods; formulate and explain hypotheses, research questions, and analytic strategies; collect and prepare data, conduct analyses, summarize findings, draw conclusions, and debate recommendations.

The skills of research presentation are just that – skills. Good instruction and practice are the keys. I will do my best to provide you with good instruction, including clear expectations and constructive feedback. Remember, though, that the key elements you can control are your seriousness of purpose and your dedication to practice.
PRESENTATION ASSIGNMENTS

You will prepare and present reports from all stages of the research. Remember, we are building collectively toward a final report and presentation(s) to our client(s), and these interim presentations are intended to show what you are learning, share it with the rest of our research team, and contribute to the final product.

BACKGROUND PRESENTATIONS

In your background report presentation, you will frame the research problem and process. Present the results of your review of the research literature on theories and methods relevant to the research project. Articulate criteria for, making, and justifying informed theoretical and methodological choices. Formulate and explain theoretical concepts and frameworks, hypotheses, research questions, and analytic strategies.

PROGRESS PRESENTATIONS

Progress presentations share information across research teams about the process, procedures, and progress of collecting and preparing data and conducting analyses. Feel free to raise questions for collective consideration, and be prepared to contribute to and share your strategies for solving problems, making decisions, and working effectively to conduct the research.

FINDINGS PRESENTATIONS

Findings presentations summarize your empirical findings, often using data arrays (tables, graphs, etc.). Findings presentations also account for trends, counter-trends, and outliers, and assess and report on the degree to which the findings of different data analysts are consistent and reliable.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REPORTS

In presentations on your conclusions and recommendations, explain the extent to which findings from your team or individual analyses fulfill predictions or hypotheses developed from the literature review. Formulate and explain the conclusions you draw from your analysis. Debate and present recommendations based on empirical findings and analysis.
Presentation hints

PREPARATION
• Know your material and goals. Consider carefully what you need to convey about your topic.
• Give concrete examples when possible.
• Don't refer to anything that doesn't contribute directly to your argument.
• Communicate your main idea and essential information clearly.

ORGANIZATION
• Use classic form: Introduce message, convey message, repeat message.
• Ask and answer the 'burning question' at the center of your project.
• Prepare an outline. Identify no more than 3 linked themes. Summarize each theme, and add material in note form.
• Respect time limits.
• Use a logical, interesting sequence to develop and present your argument and evidence.
• Coordinate and practice with other members of your team. Do not over-specialize.

DELIVERY
• Practice and time yourself in order to identify places to cut. And cut. And cut.
• Use descriptive titles for slides. Use graphs rather than tables when presenting data.
• Don't read your text unless you have specifically prepared a script written in a colloquial style which you can deliver almost by heart.
• Don't wear anything that may distract audience. Keep your hands out of your pockets.
• Speak clearly and not too fast. If there is a microphone, adjust it so you can speak into it.
• Pronounce words carefully, define new terms, and provide spelling for unfamiliar vocabulary if appropriate.
• Stand (or sit) straight and face your audience. Use open-palm gestures for emphasis.

INTERACTION
• Address answers to the whole audience, not just the questioner. Repeat any questions from the audience. This will help you to be sure everyone heard the question, reassure the questioner that you understand the question, and also give you time to think.
• Handle hostile questions by maintaining a neutral affect and taking the question seriously so the person will feel understood and respected.
• Ask questions of the audience if it is slow to ask questions of you. Prepare one or two questions for this purpose.

Lisa D. Brush with some material drawn from Heller & Hindle (1998) and significant help from Pete Simonson. To learn more, try the self-teaching documents in the student section at www.cxc.pitt.edu.
Please highlight the evaluation criteria that apply within the expectation categories for each area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Excellent (exceeds expectations)</th>
<th>Good (meets high expectations)</th>
<th>Needs improvement (meets minimal expectations)</th>
<th>Poor (fails to meet expectations)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>Presenter demonstrates full grasp of the material. Uses his or her own words. Makes connections and uses examples. Answers substantive questions. Audience confident we have learned what we need to know from presentation.</td>
<td>Presenter demonstrates a good grasp of the material. Answers questions or honestly responds “don’t know”. Audience learns what we need to know from presentation.</td>
<td>Presenter is uncomfortable with information and is able to answer only rudimentary questions. Audience doesn’t learn anything new.</td>
<td>Presenter does not appear to grasp information, did not convey necessary information, or cannot answer questions about the subject.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Presenter uses logical, interesting sequence which audience can follow. Not just a beginning, middle, and end but genuine development of argument.</td>
<td>Presenter gives information in logical sequence which audience can follow.</td>
<td>Audience has difficulty following presentation because presenter jumps around.</td>
<td>Audience cannot understand presentation because there is no sequence of information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery</td>
<td>Presenter only occasionally looks at notes, makes eye contact with various members of audience, and speaks in a clear voice at appropriate volume. Precise pronunciation. Presentation flows without use of jargon. Presenter uses well-designed graphics, props, and gestures to enhance presentation.</td>
<td>Student maintains eye contact most of the time, speaks at appropriate volume; most words pronounced correctly. Presenter uses physical props and gestures to good effect.</td>
<td>Presenter occasionally uses eye contact, but still reads most of report. Some pronunciation trouble with vocabulary. Presenter uses physical props and gestures appropriately.</td>
<td>Presenter reads prepared text. No eye contact. Presenter mumbles or speaks too quietly for entire audience to hear. Presenter pronounces terms incorrectly. Presenter uses lots of “fillers” or verbal tics. Distracting physical behaviors (hands in pockets; inappropriate gestures; hiding behind podium).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work</td>
<td>Smooth, coordinated presentation denotes group work. Everybody knows everything and not only their own little parts. Presenters can help each other and answer questions on materials other than what they have presented.</td>
<td>Presentation flowed with smooth hand-offs between presenters. Excessive specialization. Did not exceed time limit.</td>
<td>The presentation is choppy. Presentation went over time because of lack of practice or coordination.</td>
<td>No coordination/overlapping/no logic. Presentation went grossly over or under time. Clearly, they didn’t meet.</td>
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Was this presentation helpful? Yes/no Comments:

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