

Paper Presentations

Instructions

1. Assignment: You will deliver to the class a 15 minute presentation of a published, academic journal article written by a professional philosopher.

2. Format: You will sign up for one of the 15 assigned articles. Each of these has a designated presentation time slot. During that time slot, you will deliver a 15 minute presentation of your assigned paper to the class. You should plan to spend 8-10 minutes presenting the paper—the general topic, the author’s central thesis or argument, and some of the primary objections, or solutions, etc. The remaining 5-7 minutes will then be devoted to audience Q&A.

3. Rubric: This presentation will constitute 8% of your final grade. I will base my assessment on the following things:

- Clarity

Your presentation should be as clear and organized as possible. Your audience should be left with a clear understanding of what the article is about—e.g., what its central thesis or argument is, and what some of the major objections or solutions presented in it are, etc.

- Preparedness

It should be apparent that you have given considerable thought and devoted much careful study to the paper that you are presenting. There should be strong evidence that you have taken the time to fully understand the author’s central line of reasoning, and any major objections, solutions, etc., such that you have become so immersed in this topic that you can now easily respond to questions from the audience, and so on.

Note 1: You should present your paper’s content in a charitable way, with some optimism about the success of the author’s argument—even if you ultimately disagree with the author. If you *do* disagree with your author’s conclusion, you *may* devote a short amount of time at the end of your presentation to your own criticisms of his/her argument, if you’d like—but, this is not required, and it should not be the focus of your presentation. The focus of your presentation should be to give the audience a good idea of what the *author* says. Criticisms of your author’s thesis will undoubtedly arise during the Q&A. (Though, even then, if one of your classmates raises an objection, and your own view differs from that of the author, you should first make some attempt to explain how you think the *author* would respond to that objection *before* offering your own evaluation of it.)

Note 2: As a word of advice, I *strongly* encourage you to **practice your talk out loud, in advance**. Ten minutes is NOT a lot of time. In the past, I have found that the most common mistake is that students try to cram WAY too much material into their talks, and end up only getting through about one tenth of what they had planned to talk about in the allotted time—resulting in an unsuccessful presentation, and a very poor grade. I suggest that you begin by boiling down the author’s central thesis and its defense to only the most essential, easily-digestible elements, and practice just presenting those. (Be sure to time yourself during practice.) Then, based on your time, add or subtract material as needed. Be careful to avoid getting bogged down in details that are not essential to the paper’s central thesis.

In short, for 15 minutes, *you’re* the expert, *you’re* the teacher. For those 15 minutes, think of yourself as doing what I do for a living. If *you* were a professor, trying to quickly summarize someone else’s work for your students in a clear and interesting way, how would you do it? As always, feel free to drop by office hours if you have any questions.