

Class Presentation

PSCI 221

Spring 2015

Instructions

Each student will give a presentation in class on one of the supplemental readings assigned in the syllabus. We will make the presentation schedule in the second week of class. Take some time before then to figure out which topics and readings interest you most—you will get the most out of the presentation if you pick a reading that you find intellectually stimulating. You will probably find it convenient to write a critical response paper on the same reading that you present, though you are not required to do so.

Your presentation should be 10–12 minutes long, leaving 3–5 minutes for questions from the class. You may use slides or other visual accompaniment, but you are not required to. If you do use slides, you should consult the Center for Teaching's guide to "Making Better PowerPoint Presentations" (<http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/making-better-powerpoint-presentations/>). The key to any good presentation is *practice*.

The presentation should answer the following questions:

1. Most importantly: What is the central argument of the reading?
 - Try to summarize the paper in a single clear sentence.
 - What does the paper tell us about the causes of war that we wouldn't have known otherwise?
2. How is this argument supported? What evidence does the reading provide?
 - The form of evidence varies across readings. Historical readings, naturally, rely mainly on the historical record, including primary sources. Political science papers may use case studies, statistical models, or sheer logical reasoning (e.g., a formal model).
 - Some of the readings, particularly those in political science and economics journals, present the gory mathematical details of formal models or statistical analyses. Needless to say, you are not expected to present technical or mathematical material—just the substantive argument and the reasoning behind it. That said, if you are especially "math-phobic," be careful about which reading you choose to present.

3. What are some counterpoints to the main argument? How does (or would) the paper address them?
 - Some authors explicitly consider competing explanations. Others do not. Either way, don't limit yourself to the objections raised in the paper.
4. How does the paper connect to the main course readings?
 - Does it enrich what we've read in class? Argue against it? Provide a new perspective?

Your presentation will be graded on how clearly and deeply it answers these four questions.