

Research Presentation Seminar Management 791

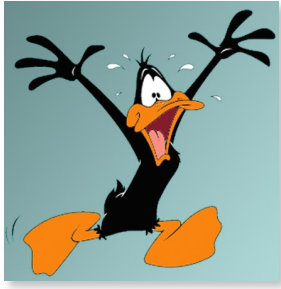
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Edition 4

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Wednesday, 1:30 -3:00

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Motivation, philosophy and purpose



MANY OF US RESPOND LIKE Daffy in this picture when we think of public speaking. But, presenting our work is critical to being a successful management scholar. We can learn a lot by watching good presenters, but we learn more by presenting ourselves and getting honest, constructive feedback. So, this seminar is about *learning by doing*.

This seminar will provide a safe, structured environment in which you can hone your ideas and your ability to present them. We'll also practice the craft of scholarly critique. The class requires serious engagement, but is structured so that the time commitment is largely limited to our class time.

The anticipated outcomes include better research more effectively presented, more publications and better career prospects. Many of the skills also translate directly to the classroom, which should make teaching easier and more rewarding.

Learning goals

The W.P. Carey School of Business has established the following learning goals for its PhD students: critical thinking, communication, discipline specific knowledge, and research methods. While our activities will touch on all four goals, we will most directly practice *communication* and *critical thinking*.

Well-tested, but still evolving

After a long and successful history at Berkeley, Illinois and Maryland, this will be the third edition of the seminar at ASU. We will build on the successes and lessons of the first two editions. An interesting challenge will be taking advantage of the more experienced students' expertise, while keeping the class interesting and beneficial for everyone. I have some ideas in that direction and will be turning to you for thoughts.

Structure of the typical class session

The structure of the class period maximizes the "practice of presenting".

1. Depending on the type of talk being practiced, there will be one or two presenters per session. Presenting when your turn comes up is mandatory, but we'll schedule collaboratively to match everyone's preferences as best we can. The presenter clearly states at the beginning of the presentation what they want most out of the presentation—whether help in theory, in methods, brainstorming, R&R input, etc. Presentations can range from brainstorming about ideas/data, to pre-job market polished papers, to practicing presentations for conferences or other classes (with that professor's okay, of course). They needn't be

prepared specifically for the seminar — indeed, it's more useful if they aren't. Any management topic is fair game.

2. The first block of time is a regular presentation, with comments/questions from students. I usually won't speak up unless it is to ask for clarifications, or to step in on something that people are stuck on. I will take notes on my computer, which I will send to the presenter.
3. The next block of time is followed a “sandwich” of positive, critical, and positive comments. These can discuss content, format, style, demeanor, you name it. I will usually take about 5-10 minutes then shaping up the take-aways, providing them input based on the main points in my written notes, and tying comments together from the students.



The length of each block of time will depend on the type of presentation the presenter is practicing. For a job talk, the first block will be about 60 minutes and the second block the remaining 30 minutes. We'll discuss other types of talks as needed.

At a minimum, the presenter should provide a one paragraph abstract and the specifics of what they most want out of the presentation to the class at least two days in advance. When the presenter is far enough along to provide a paper in advance, he or she is encouraged to do so. Non-presenters are expected to have read the material provided before class and have some questions and/or feedback in mind.

Exceptions to the regular class schedule

There will be a few exceptions to the regular class schedule.

- The first class period. No one will be expected to present. We'll discuss class logistics and explore why we present, what makes a “good” presentation, the elements of useful feedback, etc. Expect to be active and have fun.
- The second class period. No meeting, in order to give the first speaker time to prepare.
- In *most* weeks in which we have an external speaker, the post-presentation debrief led by Don Lange will take the place of our class meeting. I won't attend the debrief—that's your time to learn with Don—so it is your responsibility to help bridge the lessons from the two activities. Note that this will require some flexibility, as the schedule for external speakers can change on short notice. Give how many speakers we'll have, we may have to meet some weeks we have a speaker.
- As part of the evolutionary process, we may decide to devote a session to a related activity. If there is something you'd like us to address, please just tell me.

Expectations, grading, auditing and why the class is pass/fail

I've made the class pass/fail in order to relieve performance anxiety. I want you to feel that you can do, fail, and learn with minimal consequence. Please don't mistake that for low expectations. In order to pass the class, you must:

- *Present when it is your turn to do so.* Even though, by design, you may be presenting something that isn't quite "ready for prime time", ten-plus busy people are devoting time to help you improve. Your level of preparation needs to demonstrate respect for their commitment.
- *Prepare when you are not presenting.* While no written material is required as part of regular class participation, you are expected to have thoughtfully reviewed the material provided in advance by the presenter and to have questions &/or feedback in mind.
- *Participate as a non-presenter.* Like presenting, being a productive member of a scholarly audience is a craft best learned by doing. While I hope you provide feedback to the presenter outside of class, doing so isn't a substitute for being an active participant *during* class.
- *Attend consistently.* Obviously, you can't do any of the above if you aren't present. Equally importantly, the routines, comfort and trust that make this seminar work develop best if we are consistently together over time. I recognize that, from time to time, you'll have unavoidable conflicts. To the degree possible, please let me know about them in advance. If you miss too many sessions, I will ask you to excuse yourself from the class until a semester in which you can attend regularly. **Students on the job market have more flexibility because there is tremendous value to having them involved, but we want them to be absent giving job talks as often as possible.**
- *Written assignments.* There will be several short reflection papers.

By Graduate College policy, you can repeat this class *for credit* up to four times. The class works best when we have students at all stages of their doctoral career, so I hope you'll participate beyond that. Please register for the class if you are able, as it documents that the seminar attracts enough students to merit continuation. However, you are welcome to audit the class if you are not registered. A few things to know about auditing.

- Auditing is a commitment. The expectations for auditors are *exactly* the same as for students taking the class for credit. There is no option for "tourists" who pass through the class on occasion. If you don't think you can fulfill those expectations, please wait for a semester in which you can. If you are not fulfilling those expectations, I will ask you to excuse yourself from the class until a semester in which you can. That said, I hope to involve as many students as possible, so please talk with me if you have concerns and we'll try to make it work!
- Please let me know if you want to audit, so I can give you access to the course site.

Incorporating faculty in a student-centered learning activity

Part of what makes this seminar a safe place to practice is the absence of faculty other than myself. It means you are free to do new things and make mistakes without worrying about what your advisor will think. It also frees us to be more rigorous in our feedback to each other, since we don't have to worry about making a fellow student "look bad" in front of other faculty. Also, frankly, it frees up time for your feedback that faculty would otherwise be likely to fill. Faculty feedback is very useful, but there are other opportunities to get it.



As the slogan to the left suggests, our mistakes and successes should stay in the confines of the seminar room. No one should ever hear from one of us that "So-and-so did a great/horrible job on his/her presentation." Continue the discussion with the speaker after the seminar—that's a big part of the learning process—but it's no one else's business how things went. I will respect this principal absolutely.

That said, your chair and committee know your work better than any of us will and are whom you ultimately need to satisfy. So, you should view our feedback through the lens of their guidance. It is your decision whether or not to share with other faculty the written feedback I'll provide after your presentation, but in most cases, I'd encourage you to do so.

When you are presenting, you may invite another faculty member to attend if there is a particular reason to, but I generally discourage it. Again, faculty feedback is great, but this is a unique opportunity to focus on student-to-student feedback. I will explicitly remind any faculty who attend that they cannot dominate the discussion. Please give me advanced notice if you wish to do so.

Academic integrity

I have been involved in expelling students from graduate programs for violations of academic integrity and will do so again without hesitation. So, you should carefully review the Provost's webpage on academic integrity (<http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity>). Also, you *really* should take Joan Brett's class on research ethics. She brings years of experience navigating these issues and could save you and those with whom you work a huge amount of pain.

While the principals of academic integrity are inviolate, their enactment will be a little different in this class for two reasons. First, we are deliberately presenting work in progress. Second, you are not being evaluated on the detailed content of your presentations and associated documents. So, it might be appropriate *in our setting* to present what you know to be the

most favorable of a set of unstable regression results—something that would *not* be appropriate in almost any other setting. Presenting slides that your co-author made, so you can practice for a conference presentation, would be perfectly appropriate *in our setting*, so long as you provide an attribution to the co-author and that you are using their slides. Even if you made the slides, any presentation of work conducted with another (or with the data that another collected) needs to provide appropriate attribution to your collaborators. *In our setting*, you should be fine if you are honest, give credit where credit is due and ask if you have any questions.

Individual and group comfort level

A certain degree of discomfort is probably a good sign that you are taking things seriously and are taking sufficient risks to stretch yourself. With repetition and practice, it will fade (some).

I promise you that at some point someone (quite possibly me) will say something that comes across more pointedly than it was intended. There's a silver lining to that happening, because it suggests we're comfortable enough with each other to move beyond the generic (and useless), "That was good." Try to avoid crossing the line (we'll discuss where that "line" is often), apologize if you notice that you have, and try not to take it personally if you are the recipient of such a comment. It probably wasn't meant to be as negative as you perceived it.



So, a little discomfort is good, but a lot of discomfort is not. If you find yourself paralyzed with fear or really uncomfortable with some aspect of the class, please talk with me. We can probably resolve it and others probably feel the same way.

The class wiki as exchange and repository

This semester, we'll use the wiki located at [rps.wikispaces.asu.edu](https://wikispaces.asu.edu). This should work easily for sharing information about schedule and distributing materials for upcoming talks. I hope it will develop into a repository for model presentations, lessons learned ("The graphic on slide 5 worked *really* well."), and even pointers to valuable resources you've discovered. Exactly what develops, however, will depend largely on your preferences and on what's already happening (I don't want to usurp any ongoing activities).

Questions, worries, concerns, feedback?

You are critical to adapting this proven model to the WPC environment. I hope you'll share your suggestions. I don't promise to adopt every suggestion, but I do promise to carefully consider every one. Of course, please ask if you have any questions.

Acknowledgements

Steve Jobs¹ once said that “Good artists copy; great artists steal.” With no claim of goodness, much less greatness, I want to acknowledge the colleagues from whom I “borrowed” many of the foundational ideas for this seminar. Janet Bercovitz brought the practice from Berkeley to Illinois. Deepak Somaya helped adapt it to Illinois, with the help of our fantastic students, who were willing test subjects. Rajshree Agarwal continued its evolution, diffused it to Maryland, and provided most of the text in “The typical class”.

You’ll also benefit from lessons about effective presentation that I’ve learned from Julia Pangrac (high school speech communications teacher extraordinaire), Sears Eldridge (my collegiate drama director), Wm. James Hoetker (aka “Dad”, author of *Theater Games*), and Julie Hoetker (aka “Mom”, fantastic writing instructor).



¹ Yes, I know he was misquoting Picasso. You pick your heroes; I’ll pick mine...