ORAL PRESENTATION

The purpose of this assignment is to evaluate your progress toward achieving this course's second goal:

> **The second goal** of this course is to help you get better at interpreting and evaluating the justifications that others give for *their* beliefs about how people should use computers.

1 Administrative Guidelines

- I have divided you into two presentation groups: "Group Gates" and "Group Jobs." These groups correspond to whether your last name appears toward the beginning or the end of the English alphabet. (Splitting you up into smaller groups makes it less likely that your presentation topic will overlap with those of your classmates.)

- You must attend all of the presentation days for your group; you may attend the presentation days for the other group, if you want more practice, but this is entirely optional.

- I assigned each of you, using a random sequence generator, a presentation day. You can find the presentation day that you were randomly assigned on Carmen.

- You must present on your assigned day unless you can find a classmate who is willing to switch with you. You can switch only with someone who is in your same group, since it makes my bookkeeping easier.

- On your presentation day, you need to present in the order indicated unless you all agree to present in a different order of your choosing.

2 Assignment Guidelines

On your assigned day, you need to give a 10-minute oral presentation followed immediately by a five-minute discussion. Your presentation needs to include either (a) presentation slides that you prepare in advance, (b) a printed handout that you prepare in advance, or (c) both.

> [**Hint**]: Presentation slides are nice, since they are dynamic and let you better direct the focus of your audience. Handouts are nice, since they make it possible for your audience

to refer back to earlier material if they get lost. Combining them give you the best of both worlds, but it can be overwhelming. Whatever option you pick, you **do not** want to simply read your slides or handout to the audience. The slides and handouts should aid your presentation, not replace it.

In your presentation, you will need to do the following three things:

- **Extract** an argument from an assigned reading, displaying it in explicit premise-conclusion form. This includes making explicit any suppressed premises. You don't need to pick the main argument of the assigned reading. In many cases, a reading's main argument will be too complicated to cover adequately in a 10-minute presentation. In those cases, you might focus, instead on a smaller piece of the argument, e.g. the justification of one of the argument's premises.

  ○ The reading you pick can be from any point in the semester; it does not need to be from a reading we cover the week of your presentation.

  ○ Since you are picking the argument, you should pick one that interests you or that you have something to say about. If you want help picking an appropriate argument, then let me know.

- **Justify** the premises of that argument by giving reasons for thinking that each main premise is true or—in the case of a moral theory—reasons for thinking that it is an appropriate theory to use in this context.

  ○ In most cases, the author will give reasons for thinking the premises are true. In the rare case that an author gives no justification for one of their premises, you will need to supply some plausible reasons on your author's behalf.

  ○ If you need to remind yourself how to extract an argument from a passage and justify its premises, then refer to the guidelines for the interpretive paper.

- **Evaluate** the argument by giving your audience reasons to think that the argument is (or is not) recognizably sound.

  ○ If you think that the argument **is not recognizably sound**, then you need to give your audience reasons for thinking either (a) that the argument is invalid or (b) that at least one of the premises is false.

  ○ If you think that the argument **is recognizably sound**, then you need to give your audience reasons for thinking that at least one initially plausible objection to the argument fails. This objection should not be one that your author has already replied to unless you think their reply is weak and you can offer a better one.

[**Hint**]: Your presentation needs more dialectical depth than our previous discussions. In other

words, you can't merely repackage what the author says about your argument or what we said about it in class, on the discussion board, or during an earlier presentation. Your evaluation needs to break some new ground and do something—even if it's only a small thing—to advance our understanding of the underlying issues.

3 Time Management Tips

Ten minutes might seem like a long time, but it can go by surprisingly quickly. Here are some hints for how to make the best use of your allotted time:

- Start by introducing yourself by name.

- Since your presentation will be from a paper that we have already discussed as a class, you will need to give only minimal background context to help reorient us. I suggest using **no more than a minute** of your time to remind us of any background information that we need to understand the argument and situate it within the wider moral landscape. You should remind us of any relevant stipulative definitions.

- You should tell the audience what your evaluation is going to be **within the first minute or so**. You obviously cannot give us all of the required detail so soon, but the earlier we know what your evaluation will be, the easier it will be for us to follow your chain of reasoning and, therefore, to follow your presentation.

- You should *definitely* display the extracted argument in explicit premise-conclusion form. You will be talking about it a lot, so you should display it somewhere that you (and the audience) can easily refer back to it. I suggest devoting **no more than a minute or two** to presenting the argument.

- You should spend some time, **maybe two or three minutes**, explaining why someone might reasonably think that each premise of the argument is true. You will want to spend more time on this, presumably, if you are going to argue that one of the premises is false; you will want to spend less time on this, presumably, if you are going to defend those premises against initially plausible-seeming objections.

- You should spend by far the most time on your evaluation. If the evaluation is not the main focus of your presentation, then you have seriously messed up. It is hard to imagine someone giving a good, thorough evaluation of an interesting argument in fewer than five minutes. So you should devote **at least five minutes** to your evaluation.

- To fit all of the student presentations in this semester, we will need to run on a pretty tight schedule. This means that I will need to cut your presentation off at exactly ten minutes to start the discussion period on time, so I *strongly* advise that you practice giving your presentation in its entirety while timing yourself. It is hard to imagine someone giving a good presentation who has not practiced giving it, start to finish, multiple times.

4 Discussion Period

Following your presentation, you will need to lead a five minute discussion of it. Every discussion is different, so it is hard to give general advice about what to expect. But here are some things to be prepared for:

- Not everyone will have fully understood your presentation, so you should be prepared to answer audience members' clarifying questions.

- Not everyone will agree with your evaluation, so you should be prepared to consider and reply to audience members' objections.

- Audiences sometimes need time to process things, so sometimes there will not be a lot of questions (especially at first, when people are still trying to figure out what they think). You might want to prepare a few additional comments to help spark new conversation, or help audience members draw inferences between your presentation and other things they know, to help start conversation (or help restart it if it lags).

- I will need to cut discussion off after exactly five minutes to start the next presentation on time. But you can always continue it on the discussion board!

[**Hint**]: There will be a five-minute discussion following your presentation. This means that your presentation needs to be interesting enough to *sustain* a five-minute conversation. If your presentation is too dull, then the discussion will be painful for everyone, but it will be especially painful for you. This means that you should be careful when picking an argument to discuss. You should avoid arguments too ambitious to make progress discussing in ten minutes, but you should also avoid giving an evaluation that is so obvious nobody will have anything to say about it during discussion. Your evaluation needs to be ambitious enough to make it worth discussing but not so ambitious that you cannot present it clearly in ten minutes. Again, let me know if you need help finding something appropriate.