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How to create a paper presentation and lead discussion

Here are some suggestions for creating a presentation of a paper that will be useful in guiding discussion and helping us to understand the paper. The 13 points below are not intended to be a list of things to include in this particular order, although I do have some suggestions for ordering things. Remember that I have office hours on Wednesdays and Fridays 10:00am in Weiser 916 if you want to discuss your presentation in advance.

1. Start with a **very brief** (only one slide) **overview of your own presentation** (not an overview of the paper).
2. Identify **the main point or contribution** of the paper: What are the key ideas and results?
3. Select **key figures from the paper and include them in your presentation**, and be prepared to explain the figure. Indeed, a good way to think about structuring your presentation is around a small set of key figures.
4. For overview papers that make contact with many phenomena or empirical tasks, select 2 or 3 of them to explain (again, ideally with figures). Select the two or three that you think are the most important in that they provide the most compelling evidence for the theoretical idea or are interesting in some other way.
5. When there are empirical tasks:
 - a. **First describe the task in its own terms** ... not in terms of the results.
 - b. **Then describe the results in their own terms** ... not in terms of the theory.
 - c. **Only then relate the results to theory/model.**
6. For examples that connect theory to experiment/phenomena:
 - a. **Explain how the theory generates the predictions...** in intuitive terms if

possible.

b. Ask whether the authors **considered other plausible models/explanations**.

7. **Identify weaknesses:** in the experimental paradigm or limitations of the theory or arguments or methodology.

8. You may find it useful to summarize on one slide the structure of the paper, but do not structure your presentation as a walk-through of each section of the paper. ("Then the authors said this, then they said this .. etc.")

9. Consider **adding discussion questions in your presentation at key points**.

For example, if you think you have identified a weakness in the empirical design or theory or methodology etc., ask the class what they think the weaknesses might be, before presenting your own. (Don't asked "closed" questions that are just factual questions about the paper content.. just not an interesting way to spur discussion).

10. If you have your own **questions of clarification**, include them in the presentation.

11. Do not feel compelled to mention everything in the paper. Especially for longer papers, you must be selective.

12. If you have your own ideas about **follow-up work**, include them in the presentation.

13. Your target presentation length is about **15 minutes**. About **8-10 slides is probably enough**. Papers vary widely in length, number of figures and results etc. ... there is no way around that fact, so we all understand that there will be variation in the presentations due to this fact.

14. **Relax--** our goal is not to critique your presentation but to **work together to understand the paper**. So your presentation helps us structure our discussion.