Spring Student Symposium 2016: Oral Presenter Guidelines

This handout and other resources are available at [go/presenting](#).

**Presentation Format and Timing**
Presentations are grouped into Oral Sessions according to a common theme. There will be up to ten Oral Sessions in different rooms during the same time slot. Each 75-minute Oral Session is scheduled to accommodate four individual presentations of 15 minutes each, including Q and A, with five minutes of transition between presenters. This means your presentation should last for no more than 10-12 minutes at the very longest to allow for one or two audience questions. Be sure to practice your timing carefully and adhere to this schedule; your facilitator will politely, but firmly, interrupt when your time is up. Exceeding your allotted time is not an option. For class presentations with more than four presenters, you will have a shorter amount of time. The total session length will not exceed 75 minutes.

**Moderator and Facilitator**
Each session will be introduced and moderated by a member of the faculty or staff. He or she will introduce the session topic at the beginning and will introduce each presenter. The facilitator will ensure that each presenter adheres to the time schedule.

**Audience**
Your audience will include students, faculty and staff members as well as any special guests you and your fellow presenters may have invited. We do encourage you to invite guests. Structure your presentation to make it accessible to a general audience, not experts in the field. Subject-specific vocabulary that is necessary to understand the topic area must be clarified early in your presentation. Be careful not to use unexplained jargon, abbreviations, etc., and be sure to provide a context for your topic so your audience can understand why it is important in your field.

**Media**
Most presenters use PowerPoint or similar media programs to supplement their presentation. You will need to upload your presentation to Ex Ordo ([sym2015.exordo.com](#)) or bring a copy to the CTLR in Davis Library to upload by midnight on Monday 4/11. *You will not be able to revise your presentation after this point.* If you need assistance with uploading files—particularly those with video content—please see the media tutor in Wilson Media Lab in the Davis Family Library.

Your presentation will be downloaded in advance to the computers in the room in which you are presenting (both Mac and PC will be available), and will be ready for your use on the day of the Symposium. If you have any specialized presentation/technical needs please contact Shel Sax at [sax@middlebury.edu](mailto:sax@middlebury.edu).

Rehearsal sessions will be offered in Davis Library 230 on 4/12 from 4:30 to 7:00 pm and 4/13 from 7:00 to 10:00 pm, so that presenters can run through their presentations in a smart room, with the support of a media tutor and Oratory Now coach. (Schedule available at [go/sym](#)).
Visual Aids and Power Point
Visual aids, including photos, charts, graphs, film clips, and other media, can be very useful and enhance your presentation. To be effective, your visual aids must be designed and used properly. Have a specific reason for using each visual aid. A well-designed diagram, film clip, representative pie chart or bar graph can often help you make your point more clearly. The purpose of using Power Point or other visual aids is to reinforce and clarify the main points for the audience, supporting and adding to your presentation.

Remember when using visual aids, you must cite sources. The College librarians have created an information sheet to assist you with correct citation formats for slides and visual aids materials. Please see the separate handout or go to the Presenters info at go/sym for specific information.

If you are using Power Point, you are limited to a maximum of 12 Power Point slides. We recommend you use fewer slides if possible. Remember that Power Point is a visual aid used to support your presentation; it is not your whole presentation. Consider the following:

- **Font choice**: Select fonts that are commonly used, so that they will display properly on another computer.
- **Font size**: 18-36 point fonts are usually recommended; use different sizes for each level (Title, Heading, etc.).
- **Amount of text**: Minimal. Use key words and phrases rather than full sentences.
- **Color**: Use tastefully, and be consistent; your slides should be simple and clear, not distracting and flashy.
- **Visuals**: When inserting photos, charts, graphs, websites, other media, keep simplicity and clarity in mind. Make sure to embed all media, so that it displays correctly. (Media tutors can assist with this).

For support on using visual aids in your presentation, contact Digital Media Lab tutors in Davis Library or URO.

Arts Presentations Support
If your presentation is artistic in nature, URO will work with you to address any specific resources or space needs you may have. You will need to contact Cathy Ekstrom, the BiHall coordinator, by 3/24 to discuss your display needs. The Johnson Gallery will be open during the symposium on Friday 4/15, but presentations will take place in BiHall on Friday.

Non-English Presentations and Language Support
If some or all of your presentation will be conducted in a language other than English, please contact URO and your sponsor to explore the best way to ensure comprehension by English-speaking audience members. If you are a non-native English speaker, and need support in putting together your presentation, please contact URO and we will connect you with assistance. Peer Tutors are also available to support students, particularly those presenting in foreign languages; contact CTLR (x3131).
Public Speaking Support
Director of Learning Resources Yonna McShane will offer Public Speaking workshops in early April. Last year’s presenters found these sessions very useful and strongly recommended that all students attend one. Each session will focus on delivery, structure and content, your conclusion, and responding to questions. You will have a chance to work on your delivery and reduce your anxiety in each workshop. This year’s sessions will be offered at the following times and locations:

- Wed 4/6 – 4:30-6:00 pm Library room 201
- Thurs 4/7 – 7:30-9:00 pm Library room 201
- Tues 4/12 – 4:30-6:00 pm Library room 201.

Please sign up for your session as soon as possible by emailing mcshane@middlebury.edu with the workshop date you wish to attend. Plan to bring the first four sentences of your presentation with you to a workshop. If you have not written the first four sentences yet, come anyway and you will still have a chance to work on your delivery.

Oratory Now coaches will also be available for additional feedback. Coaches are students who are trained in public speaking. They will be available at the Presenter Rehearsals on 4/12 and 4/13 and also available to work with students individually. Contact wknox@middlebury.edu for more information.

See the presentation tips in Excelling at Oral Presentations at the bottom of this page.

Online Resources and Support for Presenters
Please visit the URO Web site to access a wide range of resources designed specifically to support Symposium presenters. These include PowerPoint support, Public Speaking tips and practice services, designing effective maps and posters, and more.

Final Notes
For many presenters, your project is still a work in progress; you may not yet have reached firm conclusions or created a final product. Remember that this symposium is a celebration of the process of inquiry and creativity rather than the final product. It is perfectly acceptable to adjust your focus on your goals (what you set out to do and why), your methods (what you did or are doing), the results (what you found or are finding), and the implications (why this is important) according to where you are in your process.

For advice from last year’s presenters, please visit the URO website; many of them have offered incredibly useful feedback on what they learned about how best to prepare for a successful presentation.

Questions
Please direct any additional questions about the symposium in general, or your particular needs, to uro@middlebury.edu. We look forward to working with you!
The following information was developed by Yonna McShane who teaches the Public Speaking Workshops:

**Excelling at Oral Presentations**
The speaking skills of the presenter (delivery), as well as the structure and content of the presentation are all important to the overall quality and impact of the presentation. The following are all important aspects of an excellent presentation.

**Delivery**

- The speaker approaches the podium with an air of confidence without rushing, sets position, makes eye contact with audience, and pauses appropriately before beginning to speak. The speaker’s posture is both professional and relaxed. The speaker settles in and gives the audience time to settle down and focus their attention. The speaker greets the audience with his/her eyes and a smile.

- The speaker should make as much natural eye contact with the audience as he/she can. For some speakers this will mean almost continuous eye contact and for some it will mean looking up frequently enough to stay in contact with the audience. As a general rule, periods of eye contact should last for at least two to three seconds.

- The speaker must keep in mind that with an oral presentation the listener has no text to refer back to for clarification of points. Use of simple and clear language is always preferable in an oral presentation. If the speaker uses “lofty” words and “talks over their audience’s head” the speaker will have failed in his/her effort.

- The speaker uses appropriate rate of speech and volume. Speaking at a rate that is a bit slower than that of a normal conversational rate is a good general rule. Be sure to practice at this slower rate when preparing for your presentation to ensure that you will not exceed your time. Also, the volume must be loud enough for the audience to easily hear, but not so loud that the audience experiences the speaker as shouting. One of the most common mistakes in oral presentations is for the speaker’s rate of speech to be too rapid.

- The speaker’s words flow with few verbal distractions. This includes a presentation with few “ahs” and “ums” and little or no jargon. In addition, clear enunciation and correct word pronunciation are fundamental.

- The speaker uses gestures and non-verbal behavior appropriate for the presentation and conveys enthusiasm, and uses body language that supports the content of the presentation, and gestures that emphasize main points. The body language is congruent with what is being said. In addition, the presentation is absent of unconscious movements including touching one’s face, scratching one’s head, leaning on the podium, swaying, bouncing or standing on one leg.
The speaker does not run too long or too short with the presentation given the assignment and allotted time. The speaker devotes enough time to each key point and section throughout the entire presentation. The end of the presentation is not rushed due to poor time management.

Structure and Content

Introduction
The beginning of the presentation is engaging and clearly signals the start of the presentation. The theme, thesis, purpose or central question of the talk is clearly stated. Necessary background or other information, including special vocabulary specific to the subject matter and necessary to understand the topic area, must be clarified during the introduction. The introduction gives the audience an adequate sense of what to expect and where the presentation is going.

The Body of the Presentation
The two most important aspects of the body of a presentation are the content, and the organization of that content. The content material must be relevant, clear, up-to-date, varied and sufficient to support the thesis. Sources must be correctly cited. The resource materials used are credible, current, and sufficient in number for the scope of the presentation. The resource materials are incorporated in a creative and logical way in order to make the material that supports the thesis clear and accessible to the audience. Specific examples are used to clarify points and to support the thesis. The key points are well supported by the resources used and there is a logical progression in the building of the argument. The organization of the presentation signals clear and smooth transitions between key points. The speaker must keep in mind that with an oral presentation the listener has no text to refer back to for clarification of points. The listener must be able to follow the logic and the points easily as the presentation progresses.

Conclusion
The conclusion provides a clear summary of the key content points and reinforces the thesis or main purpose of the presentation. The speaker restates and reinforces the position he/she has taken. The audience experiences a sense of closure and (if appropriate) a call to action.

Questions
Speaker demonstrates sufficient knowledge of the material and answers audience questions directly.