Spring Student Symposium 2019: 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 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 (sym2019.exordo.com) or bring a copy to the CTLR in Davis Library to upload by Monday 4/8. 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 URO.

Rehearsal sessions will be offered in Davis Library 230 on 4/9 from 4:30 to 7:00 pm and 4/10 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 PowerPoint 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 presenter’s info at go/sym for specific information.

If you are using PowerPoint, you are limited to a **maximum of 12 slides**. We recommend you use fewer slides if possible. Remember that PowerPoint 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 the 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 Bi Hall coordinator, by 3/15 to discuss your display needs. The Johnson Gallery will be open for viewing during the symposium on Friday 4/12, but all presentations will take place in Bi Hall.

**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**
Oratory Now offers individual appointments, scheduled online at oratorynow.org. Sessions may focus on delivery, structure and content, your conclusion, or response to questions. You will have a chance to work on your delivery and reduce your anxiety. In addition, Oratory Now will offer a workshop on **Tues 4/9 – 4:30-6:00 pm in Davis Family Library 201**. Sign up online at go/presenting. Plan to bring at least the first four sentences of your presentation with you. Contact Ben Powers at bpowers@middlebury.edu for more information. Also 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!

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**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**

- Approach the podium with an air of confidence without rushing, set a position, make eye contact with the audience, and pause appropriately before beginning to speak. Be sure your posture is both professional and relaxed. Settle in and give the audience time to settle down and focus their attention. Greet the audience with eye contact and a smile.

- Make as much natural eye contact with the audience as you 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.

- 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. If a speaker uses language the audience cannot readily comprehend (overly complex or jargon) then they will fail to communicate their message.

- Use appropriate rate of speech and volume. As a good general rule, speak at a rate that is a bit slower than that of a normal conversational rate. Be sure to practice at this slower rate when checking your presentation timing, so you stay within the limit. 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.

- Words need to 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.

- Use gestures and non-verbal behavior (body language) appropriate for the presentation to convey enthusiasm, support the content of the presentation, and emphasize the main points. Body language
needs to be congruent with what is being said. In addition, avoid unconscious movements such as touching one’s face, scratching one’s head, leaning on the podium, swaying, bouncing or standing on one leg.

- Do not run too long or too short with the presentation given the assignment and allotted time. Devote enough time to each key point and section, throughout the entire presentation. Do not rush the end of the presentation due to poor time management.

Structure and Content

Introduction
The beginning of the presentation needs to be engaging and clearly signal the start of the presentation. Clearly state the theme, thesis, purpose or central question of the talk. Provide necessary background or other information and clarify any special vocabulary specific to the subject matter or necessary to understand the topic area. 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. 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. Restate and reinforce the position you have taken so the audience experiences a sense of closure and (if appropriate) a call to action.

Questions
Demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the material and answer audience questions directly.