COMP495:
Academic Presentation and Writing Skills
Tips for Presentation and Writing

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Today’s Agenda

• Deadlines, Class Scheduling and Assignments
• Tips for Presentations
• Tips for Writing
## Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1, Thursday 1st March: Intro, class logistics, questionnaire</td>
<td>Project selection: Friday 2nd March 2007</td>
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<td>#2, Thursday 8th March: Videoing of Practice Presentations</td>
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<td>#3, Thursday 15th March: Writing a Thesis: Micro Issues</td>
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<td>#4, Thursday 22nd March: Reviewing of Presentations</td>
<td>Initial presentation: Friday 23rd March 2007</td>
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<td>#6, Thursday 5th April: Time Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>#7, Thursday 12th April: Getting a PhD [Optional for honours students]</td>
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Assessment Summary

• This unit is compulsory for all honours students
• Comp495 is worth 5% of the total honours mark
• Performance in the unit will be assessed by means of
  – one oral presentation [50 marks]
  – two pieces of written work [for a total of 50 marks]
• To pass the unit, a total of more than 50 marks must be achieved for the unit as a whole
Assessment: Written Work

• a one page summary of your thesis project [5 marks]
• a bibliography for your thesis project [5 marks]
• a 4–5 page paper describing your project [20 marks]
• a 2–3 page summary of a seminar you have attended [20 marks]
Assignments

• For Class #2 [Thursday 8th March]: Prepare a five minute presentation on your project
• For Class #3 [Thursday 15th March]: Write a one page summary of your thesis project
• For Class #4 [Thursday 22nd March]: Produce a bibliography for your thesis project
• For Class #6 [Thursday 5th April]: Write a 4–5 page paper describing your project
• For Week 12: Write a 2–3 page summary of a seminar you have attended
Today’s Agenda

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• Tips for Writing
Tips for Presentations

• The Structure of Your Presentation
• The Visible Content of Your Presentation
• Using Tools
• Your Speaking
• Your Interaction with the Audience
• Your Physical Presence
The Structure of Your Presentation

- Always have a separate title slide
- Make the aims of your talk clear at the outset
- Always have a concluding slide
- Repeat slides rather than navigating backwards and forwards
The Visible Content of Your Presentation #1

• Make sure you know what you are talking about!
• Make a story out of what you have to tell
• Use graphics and illustrations
• Use statistics and numbers
• Make your slides attractive
• Don't clutter your slides with too much information
• Always number your slides
The Visible Content of Your Presentation #2

- Think about the role of each of your slides in the presentation
- Don't use colours which are hard to see
- Choose your slide titles with careful thought
- Explain terms that might be unfamiliar to the audience
- Use examples
- Make sure your grammar and spelling are correct
- Check the syntax and punctuation of bulleted lists of items
- back up your claims by referring to the literature
Using Tools

• Make sure you are familiar with all the basic machinery in the presentation tool you use
• Explore all the functionalities that your presentation tool provides
• Make sure you are aware of all the different ways of advancing slides
Your Speaking #1

• Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse
• Make sure that your talk will not run over the allotted time
• Don't just read off the slides
• Make clear the relationship between what you say and what is on the slide
• Speak clearly and not too fast
Your Speaking #2

• Avoid speaking in a monotone
• Make sure that you are speaking at an appropriate volume
• Recap at the end of each major segment of your talk
• Watch out for distracting verbal behaviours
Your Interaction with the Audience

- Don't start your talk by apologizing for feeling nervous
- Always look at the audience
- Try to avoid using notes
- Try to develop a relaxed style
- Engage the audience by asking them a relevant question at the beginning
- Only use humour if you are confident it will work
Your Physical Presence

- Watch out for physical behaviours that the audience may find distracting
- Use your hands to add expression to your talk
- Point to things on the screen
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Document Mechanics

• Use LaTeX rather than Word for your thesis
• If you must use Word, learn to use Word styles properly
• Give your documents sensible file names
• Include the date in the filename of a document
• Make sure your document has a cover page
Document Mechanics

• Make it easy for the reader to navigate your document
  – Always provide page numbers
  – Use numbered section headings
  – Number all your examples, tables and figures
  – For long documents (say, more than 20 pages), use a table of contents

• Care about presentation
Document Macrostructure

• Make sure your title identifies the key elements or aspects of your work
• Make it clear at the very outset of the document what it is that you are doing
• Make sure that your document has a well thought out story behind it, and a clear and logical argument structure
• Motivate what you have to say with examples
Microstructure

• Make sure you write in sentences, not in fragments
• Use itemized and enumerated lists -- but make sure you use appropriate list syntax
• Use typographic conventions consistently
• Do not misuse scare quotes
• Learn how to use colons and semi-colons to provide more structure to your sentences
• Make sure you format citations and bibliographic references properly
What’s Next

• Class #2, Thursday 8th March: Videoing of Practice Presentations
• Class #3, Thursday 15th March: Writing a Thesis: Micro Issues
• Class #4, Thursday 22nd March: Reviewing of Presentations
• Class #5, Thursday 29th March: Writing a Thesis: Macro Issues
• Class #6, Thursday 5th April: Time Management
• Class #7, Thursday 12th April: Getting a PhD [Optional for honours students]
Homework for Next Week

• Prepare a 5 minute presentation about your project in PowerPoint
• No more than 4 or 5 slides:
  – A title slide
  – A slide that states the problem you are intending to solve
  – A slide that gives an example to make the problem clear
  – A slide that summarises the way you will approach the outcome
  – A slide that indicates how you will evaluate the work or demonstrate that you have achieved the goal