Political Science 17.869
Presentation Guidelines

Your goal for this exercise is to make a clear and concise presentation of your research project.

The presentation should take no more than 8 minutes. Because we have so many students in class, you will not be able to field questions from your classmates during class time (sorry!). Instead, your classmates will ask question and discuss your work during the section time. These comments can be very helpful as you prepare your final papers.

As a presenter your responsibility is to prepare and practice your talk (emphasis on “practice” as well as “prepare” [see below]). You may use overheads or handouts if you wish. **But be sure that you do not go over the time limit.**

As a member of the class, your responsibility is to prepare questions to ask the presenter during section. Your presentation grade will be determined, in part, by the quality of the feedback you provide to your fellow students in section, so please come prepared with good questions (you might want to make notes of your questions during class time, and then bring those notes to section).

While there is no “correct” presentation style, you might find the following guidelines useful as you prepare your talk:

1. It is important to balance your presentation appropriately so that you can cover all of the following within the time limit:
   - Provide a solid background or foundation for your principal ideas/propositions
   - State clearly the explanation of the problem/point of your research and the motivation for your project
   - Talk about previous research in your topic area and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of that research.
   - Give a concise explication of your *preliminary* research design. Though you have not yet written your research design, by now you should have some ideas about the shape of your design. Please lay out your strategy, including a discussion of case selection and measurement issues.
   - Summarize your conclusions clearly

2. Organization is extremely important, as is flow of ideas. While it’s important to add depth to your presentation, straying too far or saying too much might confuse your listeners and make them lose the main points.

3. Please practice your talk several times, preferably aloud in front of your friends (or at least a mirror). **Do not try to “wing it.”** You will be surprised how little information you can clearly convey in an 8 minute talk. If you run over your time limit, I will cut you off. In addition, I know that public speaking can be a difficult task. The more you practice your talk, the comfortable you will be when you present in front of the class.

Good Luck!