

**Research Design in Political Science
POL4011/POL48058**

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WEEKS 11 & 12: FINAL PRESENTATIONS

Overview

Weeks 11 and 12 are the capstone of this seminar. Across the two weeks, each honours and PhD student will deliver an eight to ten-minute research design presentation drawing on the work they have developed across the semester, and that will form the backbone of their research design paper due at the end of the examination period. Each presentation will be followed by a brief set of discussant remarks delivered by a designated MA student, after which the floor will open for questions and discussion from the rest of class.

The format is designed to model the rhythm of an academic workshop or conference. Workshops, as discussed in the accompanying presenting guide, compress months of informal feedback into a single sitting, and the discussant role exists because peers who have engaged carefully with a written draft can often identify design weaknesses. Each of the eight MA students in our class will serve as discussant for one paper, which means that eight of the thirteen honours presentations will receive an oral discussant response, four per week. Discussants are also welcome to share their notes with their assigned presenter. The allocation of MA discussants and the order of honours presenters will occur in Week 8. The process will involve random selection for the honours students. The PhD students will go first.

Timing and structure

As with the rest of the semester, we have 110 minutes to play with each week. We have thirteen honours students and two PhD students who need to present. Week 11 will include two PhD presentations and six honours students. Week 12 will have the remaining seven honours students.

Each presenter will have a hard limit of ten minutes for their presentation. This is going to be tight, so I would ask that you arrive a bit early each week, so we can hopefully get started a bit early.

Discussant will have three minutes for their prepared remarks.

I will hold the clock (i.e. iPhone timer app) strictly; a ten-minute talk that actually lasts fourteen minutes is unfair both to the presenter who follows and to the audience that loses its Q&A time to your overrun.

Expectations for presenters

Your talk should be treated as a distinct object, not a truncated reading of your paper. It should state your research question clearly, place it briefly in the relevant literature, articulate your theoretical argument and observable implications, describe your research design and data, present your descriptive findings (or anticipated findings, for students still in progress), and close on implications. The suggested structure laid out in my presenting guide applies: roughly one slide per minute, a strong opening, a clear takeaway stated early and reinforced at the close,

and ruthless cutting of everything that does not directly serve the headline result. I would suggest rehearsing with a timer, twice, out loud, on your feet.

Presenters should circulate a one-page research design summary to the class at least 48 hours before their session. This document should include the research question, the argument, the empirical strategy, and two or three questions on which the presenter most wants feedback. The summary is not marked separately, but it is what the discussant and the audience will use to prepare, and the quality of the feedback you receive will depend heavily on it.

Presenters should email me their presentation before class, ideally at least an hour before!

Expectations for discussants

The expectations for discussants draw directly on the critical review assignment earlier in the semester. A good discussant response is constructive and specific. It begins by acknowledging, briefly but genuinely, what the paper does well. It identifies one or two of the most consequential design weaknesses, explains their likely direction of bias and magnitude, and proposes feasible suggestions for addressing them. It does not include a laundry list of every possible concern, and it resists the temptation to demonstrate the discussant's own cleverness at the presenter's expense. The useful discussant is the one whose comments the author returns to when revising the paper.

Each discussant should circulate a short written version of their comments, to the presenter (and me) within 48 hours after the class. The written comments extend the oral remarks and become a document the presenter can work from while revising their final research design paper. The oral remarks in the session itself should be no longer than three minutes and should concentrate on the two or three issues that matter most.

Expectations for the audience

The quality of these two weeks will not fall on the presenters or the discussants alone. Every member of the class is expected to come prepared. This means reading each presenter's research design summary in advance and arriving with at least one substantive question per paper. Questions should be brief, should open space for discussion rather than close it down, and should be directed at helping the presenter strengthen the work. The audience, in other words, is part of the process, not a silent Stadler and Waldorf (Google/YouTube them). Class participation during Weeks 11 and 12 counts in your final participation mark.

Assessment

The research design presentation is worth 10% of your final mark, assessed on the clarity of the research question and design, the quality of the slide and verbal delivery, the handling of Q&A, and the ability to respond productively to discussant and audience feedback. The discussant role and general audience participation contribute to the class participation component of the course.