Practicum on Public Speaking

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Outline of Today’s Session

Topic: How to prepare and deliver effective presentations

• Part 1: A public speaking primer
• Part 2: Michael Alley’s “assertion-evidence” approach to PowerPoint
• Part 3: Critique and improvement of slides

Where will this apply?
All future oral presentations
First Rule of Public Speaking!

• Audience, audience, audience
  – Who are they? What are their priorities? How is your work relevant to them? What assumptions are they operating with?
• Listening is hard work; your job is to make it easier
Three Major Components of Public Speaking

- What you say
- How you organize what you say
- How you deliver what you say
What You Say

- What is your purpose?
- What were your methods?
- What are your most important claims/findings?
- What is the best evidence for your claims/findings?
- What do you recommend?
- How do all these connect with your audience?
How You Organize What You Say

• Tightly connected to what you say
• Logical beginning, middle, and end (think funnels)
• Explicit roadmap
• Clear transitions and signposts throughout (think bridges and freeway exits)

“If the audience doesn’t know where they are, they become tired much more easily.”

Alley 2003
Be Repetitive - Strategically

• Use your conclusion to summarize and emphasize key points
• Reinforce importance and relevance of your message
How You Deliver What You Say

Brainstorm…
How You Deliver What You Say

• Style of language
• Style of presentation
• Body language
• Voice
Language

• Use everyday language
• Avoid jargon – or, if necessary, define terms
• Add life with language, such as metaphor/analogy, but don’t overdo it
Presentation Style

• Extemporaneous – not the same as impromptu!
• With visual aids
Body Language: Posture

- Posture
  - Attentive
  - Professional
  - Avoid slouching
Body Language: Movement

• Movement and gestures
  – Keep under control
  – Avoid pacing
  – Avoid fidgeting, playing with pens, hair, etc
Body Language: Eye Contact

• Eye contact
  – Make it
  – Vary it
  – Avoid scanning and too much focus on one or two people
Body Language: Facial Expression

- Facial expression
  - Positive
  - Animated, as appropriate
  - Show your enthusiasm
Body Language: Dress

- “Business Casual”
  - Clean, neat, professional
  - Less formal than a suit; more formal than jeans
  - Today’s models
Voice

- Clearly – be loud enough
- Slowly – enunciate
- Pauses sound longer to you than to audience
- Watch out for verbal fillers – um, ah, so, you know…
Part 2: Alley’s “Assertion-Evidence” Approach
Benefits of Presentation Slides

• More than doubles recall…
  – Hear: 10%; See: 20%
  – Hear and See: 50%
• …when effective!
• Serves as record and reference after the presentation
Design Basics 1

• Use sans serif font (i.e. arial)
• Avoid serif font (i.e. times new roman)

• Less is more – for words and images (white space is your friend)
Design Basics 2

• Use color judiciously
• Ensure strong contrast between type and background - black on yellow is the quickest combination to read
• Avoid combining red, green, and brown; avoid “hot” backgrounds
Assertion-Evidence Design

- Audience reads from top left toward bottom right
- Use headline to state a claim
- Use rest of slide to illustrate claim with clear, concise images and words
- Adds approximately 10 percentage points to scores on recall tests (Alley 2005)
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Impact of Assertion-Evidence Design

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Michael Alley

- Virginia Tech
- *The Craft of Scientific Presentations* 2003
- [http://www.writing.eng.vt.edu/](http://www.writing.eng.vt.edu/)
- Examples, templates, guidance on scientific posters as well as slide presentations, references and resources
Part 3: Critique
Three (Somewhat Random) Examples

• How would you improve the slides?
• How would you advise the presenter?
A (Few Words) of Caution

“PowerPoint is a competent slide manager and projector. But rather than supplementing a presentation, it has become a substitute for it. Such misuse ignores the most important rule of speaking: Respect your audience.”

Edward Tufte 2003