

Presentations: Some General Rules

- **Preparation**

See me at least a week before your presentation. You should have some ideas about your presentation by that point, preferably also an outline or a handout. Do not come in with the question, "What would you like me to do?"

- **Time**

Make sure you know how long the presentation is expected to be. If you exceed your time limit, I will cut you off. Staying within the time limit requires that you

- (a) practice your presentation;
- (b) structure your material and select only essential points;
- (c) begin your research well in advance so that you have time for (b).

- **Delivery**

- (a) You will have a tendency to speak too fast because you are nervous. Master this tendency. Speak slowly and clearly.
- (b) Make eye contact with the other students (not just with your lecturer).
- (c) Do not read your presentation.
- (d) Do not turn around to read from overhead/PowerPoint projections behind you; read from the screen/transparency in front of you.

- **Handouts, Transparencies, PowerPoint**

- (a) Put as little as possible on your visual aids. Otherwise you will distract from your talk instead of supporting it. Less is more!
- (b) Everything on your visual aid should be read, explained or mentioned by you.
- (c) Font size for overheads: at least 18 pt; for PowerPoint: at least 20 pt.

- **Aim of the Presentation**

Make sure you know what the overall aim of your presentation is and how it fits into the seminar session. Is it meant to provide factual knowledge? To help the other students understand a text by explaining allusions, backgrounds, contexts? To put forward an argument that will then be discussed by the other students? To explain a theory that will then be applied to a text by the other students? ...

- **Miscellaneous**

(a) Only present things you have thoroughly understood.

(b) Know your sources; if, after the presentation, a fellow student asks you, “Where did this idea/quote/argument come from?”, your answer should not be, “I read this somewhere.”

(c) Provide a bibliography of your sources.

- **Feedback**

See me after your presentation to get some feedback on it; this is essential for improving your presentation skills.