Oral Presentation Evaluation Guidelines

Purpose:
To give your audience, in the space of a **5 – 7 minute talk**, an effective but condensed version of your Writing Project 4 argument and findings.

Each presenter will be evaluated by the entire class (myself included) according to the following categories:

- **Delivery & Persona**: Did the presenter come across in a composed, professional way? Alternately, did the speaker talk with a charisma or wit that you found engaging? Was the presentation weakened by an overly casual manner, or was the speaker unable to articulately make their points? Did the speaker convey a knowledgeable persona and thereby generate a sense of ethos, of authority or credibility, or did they instead seem like a student who was merely going through the motions? Anything involving the <u>performative aspect</u> of the talk falls under this category.

- **Organization**: Was the presentation well-organized and easy to follow? Or, did the speech seem too disorganized and "off-the-cuff"? For those who chose to use them, did the presenter aid in viewers' understanding through the use of handouts, bullet points, or visual aids, or did they appear distracting or unnecessary? Anything involving the <u>presentation's structure</u>—including the talk's ability to hit the required 5-7 minute time window—falls under this category.

- **Dramatic Interest**: How interesting and/or entertaining was the presentation? Did the speaker do an effective job in maintaining your interest and attention through strong points and compelling examples? Was this an engaging argument? Anything involving the <u>interest generated by the content of the speech</u> (rather than the presenter) falls under this category.

- **Insight / Depth**: Did you learn something from the presentation? Was the presentation informative and intellectually stimulating? Or, did the information seem too basic and simplistic? Do you feel the speaker presented an insightful diagnosis of his or her sustainability issue and its factor(s), and did the course of action proposed seem realistic and well designed? Anything involving the <u>sophistication and complexity of the argument made</u> falls into this category.

While my evaluation of each presentation will have greater weight, the evaluations made by your peers will have some bearing on the final grade of your talk. This is nothing to be concerned about; your classmates will see and recognize the quality of your talk, and historically have been very generous and supportive in their evaluations.

Remember: Anyone who fails to deliver an oral presentation will receive a zero for the assignment. Furthermore, your participation as an audience member will have some bearing on your presentation grade: absences during the final week and a half, or inattention due to completing work for other classes, will bring down your presentation grade.

Depending on the nature of your talk, visual aids may be a good idea—Prezi or PowerPoint or Keynote presentations—as audiences tend to respond well to them and they can make presentations more dynamic. This is not to say that visuals are mandatory, only that they tend to help, and since most people tend to use them, your presentation may look simpler or less impressive by comparison. Beware of using film clips to eat up time, though; the presentations should clearly be *yours*. **If you choose to use audio or visuals of any sort, please send them to me ahead of time** and I will have it ready on the day of your presentation (this is a requirement to save time between presentations).

Oral Presentations: A Few Pointers

The Opening:
Much as you would in the opening lines of an essay, try beginning your talk by first getting your audience's attention—ideally in a fashion that will segue smoothly into your topic. You might begin with…
- ✓ an anecdote
- ✓ a joke
- ✓ a surprising fact, statistic, claim, remark, or image
- ✓ a rhetorical question
- ✓ a brief demonstration, or a brief activity for the audience

From the start, you will also want to convey a confident and knowledgeable persona to your audience. While you may not necessarily feel confident speaking in front of your peers, remember two things: you're the only person who made this specific argument, and thus you are the most knowledgeable person on this issue in the room. You're simply sharing information with your peers, then. Furthermore, you don't have time to include every detail from your paper in your talk, and thus you have backup points already prepared should you need to fill more time.

The Body of your Talk:
Oral presentations are typically more difficult to follow than a written argument, if only because your audience doesn't have the luxury of rereading a line they missed. To that end, be mindful of offering **sound bytes** and **signposts**.

> Overly long and convoluted sentences will be difficult to follow (and difficult to say), and so at least for the purpose of emphasizing your key points, consider boiling it down to a simple and memorable sound byte, a condensed version of the idea that a listener can easily grasp.
> Since listeners will be unable to instinctually tell where you are in your presentation, it's fine to be a bit more up front about that structure, signposting key movements as you go: "the second essential point to remember is…" "finally" or "in conclusion," "As evidence, look at…" Whatever overall structure you employ—chronological, cause / effect, specific to general, etc.—will determine what kind of signposts you'll use.

Similarly, it's perfectly fine being a bit more explicit in your opening about what your talk will entail: "The purpose of my research presentation is to argue that the theory and practice of procedure (x) is effective in dealing with individuals who display behavior (y)." or "The intent of this presentation is to argue that the controversial work of company (x) represents a powerful countercultural response to…"

Five minutes is only enough time to do justice to a few claims and their supporting points. In other words, you won't be able to fit every element from Writing Project 4 in, so stick to the strongest and most engaging insights: the main contributing factor to your sustainability issue and how your course of action will address it.

The End of your Talk:
Remember to summarize your overall argument again, pulling it all back together for the listener.
Relate the specific argument to some larger context—perhaps what kind of shift in policy, thinking, or action your solution represents—as you would in a conclusion paragraph.
Thank your audience once you're done—it's a better signal than saying "I'm done" or simply trailing off into awkward silence.

Finally: Have fun with this! Use it as a form of practice in preparation for presentations you will likely have to give later in your academic careers (including Writing 340) and in your professional lives. Do a good job on your talk, and offer genuine feedback for your classmates, and you'll have nothing to worry about.