

SOC 23200 – Methods and Techniques of Sociological Research

Classroom Presentation

Dates: May 5, May 7, and May 12

Length: Maximum of 10 minutes

Grade: 10% of Final Grade (see attached rubric)

A recently published study showed that 90% of surveyed business executives and hiring managers listed effective oral communication as a critical skill they consider when hiring.¹ Although many fear public speaking, luckily, effective oral communication is an art that can be honed and polished through repeated exposure and practice. To that end, the objective of the classroom presentation is to familiarize students with the art of public speaking and provide them with the opportunity to articulate their positions in a professional manner.

As part of the final collaborative project, students are expected to conduct a sociological analysis on a topic of interest and present their findings to their peers. The hallmark of a strong classroom presentation is adequate preparation, effective organization, and confident delivery. *The presentations will be delivered in random order, so timely attendance on presentation days is incredibly important. Makeup presentations are not offered.*

Important Guidelines:

- **Structure:** As the often-iterated adage advises, "Tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, and tell them what you told them." Each classroom presentation should include a strong introduction, main points supported by evidence, and a summative conclusion.
- **Visual Aids:** From PowerPoint presentations to static posters, visual aids can be a useful component of some presentations. However, the key to the successful use of visual aids is that they should simply support the presentation, rather than detracting from the content. Because the focus is on effective oral communication, visual aids are not permitted.
- **Vocal Variation:** An effective presentation requires variation in pitch, rate, and volume. It is important to avoid sounding monotonous, incorporate pauses appropriately, and speak at an appropriate volume. Presenters should pay careful attention to vocalized fillers such as "ummm" or "like".

Providing the grading rubric in advance allows students to know precisely how they will be graded so that they can focus on these key elements in their preparation.

When will I ever use this? I find that providing evidence-based explanations that are directly linked to the objective help students understand the importance of the classroom presentation.

The classroom presentations are based on their final papers. Therefore, there is continuity with other assignments and students are more comfortable with the topic by the time they present in class.

Volunteering to present is permitted. However, if there are volunteers, then student names are written on slips of paper and drawn, in random order, from a pouch.

Each of the listed guidelines are cross-walked with the presentation rubric that is used when determining student grades. These guidelines provide students with established promising practices of effective public speaking.

The choice to not permit the use of visual aids forces students to focus on the content and the delivery of their presentations, rather than showcasing their digital skills.

Colloquial language frequently imbeds "like" and "ummm" throughout statements. Listing this as a guideline draws student attention to how often they utter these vocalized fillers, often to their own surprise and amazement.

¹ Hart Research Associates. 2018. *Fulfilling the American Dream: Liberal Education and the Future of Work*. Association of American Colleges and Universities: Washington DC.

- **Non-Verbal Cues:** Non-Verbal cues such as posture, facial expressions, eye contact, and gestures are integral components of strong oral communication. Some movement and gestures might be helpful to emphasize certain key points, but presenters should avoid distractions such as pacing, rocking, or inversely being too rigid.
- **Delivery:** Classroom presentations should be delivered extemporaneously, meaning that presenters can use an outline with few notes. Presenters should avoid reading from a manuscript because this practice limits eye contact and one's ability to develop rapport with the audience.

Which is more important: is it what you say or how you say it? Turns out both are equally important, particularly when giving a strong presentation. It is vital to stress the importance of adequate preparation, particularly, the type of preparation that requires lots of practice in front of a mirror or recorded rehearsals.
