

Essay Presentations: Guide

Spring 2019

You will be required to present an assigned essay over the course of the term. You can choose either a required essay or one of the essays listed as optional. The week you present an essay you do not need to submit a reading response. (However, you should upload your handout to the portal for that week's reading response. I will post the handouts in a special folder on Canvas.)

Your presentation should aim to be about 10-15 minutes in length, and it should do the following things.

1. Summarize the main argument made in the article.
 - the thesis or the main argument the author makes. (What is it that the author is arguing for?)
 - the main reasons the author gives in support of this thesis. (On what basis should we accept the thesis, according to the author?)

In this sense it should perform the same function as the reading responses.

2. Present some kind of critical engagement with the article. This can be done in any of the following ways.
 - **Evaluate** the thesis and argument the author makes. Is the point a good/ useful/ misguided one? Why? Is the author's argument convincing? Does it fail to appreciate any important facts?
 - **Connect** the arguments in this essay to another essay we've read in the course. Do the arguments you considered in this essay
 - **Apply** the argument or theory presented in the essay to something from outside this class. It could be a work of art, a scene in a movie, an advertisement or bit of media you've encountered, an item of news, or an experience of yours. You should be prepared to show the outside item to the class in some form, and make it clear how the essay applies to or illuminates this for you.
3. Based on your reading and presentation of the essay, raise several questions to present to your classmates.
4. Make a handout that (i) outlines your summary (for item 1), (ii) summarizes the points you bring up in your engagement (item 2), and (iii) lists some of your discussion questions (item 3). Make enough copies of your handout for every member of the class (aim for 23). If you ask me by Monday night, I can make the copies for you.

The way to think about this presentation assignment is that you are leading discussion on the essay for about 10-15 minutes.¹ Your summary of the article will serve to make sure we're all on the same page and can help focus our discussion. From our perspective, the most important part of your presentation will be your critical engagement and the questions you raise. But in order to do this well, you have to get the summary right as well.

¹Or a bit longer, depending on discussion. You should have at least 10 minutes worth of material.