

Student Presentations – Outline

In this seminar, student presentations are a substantial component and learning device. They are supposed to demonstrate students' skills in research a topic and presenting a succinct academic account which answers an academically relevant (research) question.

They should NOT be a summary of the session readings but, based on the session reading, should focus on a significant aspect (e.g. checks and balances in the German political system; or the role of monarchy in the British political system; or changing levels of democratic support in Eastern Europe and its determinants etc.) and be based on further reading of academic and serious texts (no presentation of Wikipedia or other unidentifiable Internet texts!)

The presentation should last about 30 mins (needs to be clarified with instructor) and be accompanied by a handout (1-2 pages) to be distributed in class to all students (Guidelines for handouts are given separately).

The general structure of the student presentation:

Part I:

Presenting the topic: why relevant?

A sketch of the line of argument developed in the presentation

Key terms and concepts: presentation, clarification, justification

Which analytic models, if any, are used to explain the topic?

Which relevant authors/scholarly texts have been used (and why)?

Part II:

Developing of the focus based on the session reading

What does the session reading say about the chosen topic? Where are gaps?

How is the concept (see part I) applied in the session reading?

Part III:

Deepening of topic and focusing based on own research/reading

Application of concept/analytic model etc.

Presentation of cases which support the basic ideas?

Illustration, data (OECD statistics, survey data, other data from all kinds of credible sources), different viewpoints in the scholarly literature, if applicable

Concluding remarks:

To what extent has the research question be answered?

What conclusions can we draw?

Open issues: which aspects/puzzle(s) could not be resolved but is interesting and relevant?

Discussion points/questions for the entire seminar.

For practical advice, see also:

Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997)