

Guidelines for Group Presentations

[Updated 11/14/2019]

What? Why?

In groups of approximately four, students will give a 30-minute in-class presentation. The purpose of the presentation is to reflect on the contemporary world using the democratic theories we learn this semester. The focus of the presentation should be a thoughtful and critical analysis of contemporary problems in democracy. Each presentation should include the following three elements:

-Theoretical Analysis: Each presentation should offer a thoughtful and critical analysis of a contemporary issue in democracy, using at least one concept or theory from the material we have covered in the course. Be sure to provide a clear and concise explanation of the concept or principle you are using, citing relevant passages from the primary text(s). There are various ways in which you might examine or reflect upon your contemporary problem in democracy. You might want to exemplify an important theoretical concept. You might use the democratic theory to critically analyze or otherwise take a stance on government or political practices. You might use a contemporary problem in democracy to demonstrate the limits of the democratic theory or theories we have discussed. These are just some of the ways you might use to frame your analysis. See suggested topics below.

-Contemporary Issue: Again, the focus of the presentation should be the analysis of the research, not the research itself. Each presentation should provide all of the relevant information on the topic you have chosen and researched. The issue you choose should be motivated by what you consider important in thinking about democracy in contemporary life. What are some of the most pressing issues confronting democracy today? Have you learned about a topic in another class that you would like to research further? Are you or have you been involved in political struggles or other modes of democratic practice in the world? Would you like to research and analyze something in the news more rigorously? Be sure to choose an issue that can be presented and analyzed within the time allotted. In addition to the presentation, you will be submitting an annotated bibliography for the research itself. Please see Rubric for Self-Evaluation for the criteria by which the annotated bibliography will be evaluated.

-Class Discussion: In keeping with many of the democratic theorists we have studied, you are not expected to simply present an analysis of a contemporary problem in democracy to your peers, but you also need to foster class discussion with and amongst your peers. In addition to formulating insightful questions about your issue, you are also responsible for moderating a fruitful discussion of these questions.

How?

The form of the presentation is entirely up to you. Although you are required to satisfy the three elements outlined above, you can organize a formal debate, make use of diagrams, screen movie clips, lead group activities, and more. You may use technology

like Prezi or PowerPoint, but do not let the technology do the presentation for you. The form of your presentation should be what you believe will be most informative, engaging, and thought-provoking for your classmates.

Some broad themes as suggestions for possible topics:

- "The people" – citizen and non-citizen
- "The people" – racialized realities in the U.S.
- Should democracy be conceived nationally or internationally?
- Managed Democracy: The two party system and the Electoral College in the U.S.
- Democracy or plutocracy (or as some have recently termed it “dollarocracy”)? Citizens United, Lobbying
- The closure of the common good: Is there a public sphere? revolving doors, media monopolies
- The vote: disenfranchisement in the era of mass incarceration in world's largest jailer; voter suppression; gerrymandering;
- Superpower and Empire: can democracy be exported? The invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan
- Demotic Moments, e.g. in the ongoing democratic revolts in Hong Kong, the Yellow Vests, Chile, Ecuador, Haiti, Sudan, Lebanon, etc.

Requirements and Submission Process:

On the day of the presentation, you are responsible for two things.

- (1) First, you must give a **Presentation of your Research** for 30-35 mins;
- (2) You must **Curate a 15 min discussion** with the rest of the class. For the latter to be successful, I recommend you leave a minute or two at the end of your presentation to pose questions likely to provoke discussion and debate. (50 points)

Then, two classes later (if you present Monday, this would be Friday; if you present Wednesday, then the next Monday, etc.) you'll turn in paper copies of two things:

- (1) Your **Annotated Bibliography**, which you will prepare as a group. Please use Chicago format (see [here](#) for more info). This must include *at least* 5 reliable sources, a *minimum* of two of which must be scholarly. For each source listed, you need to indicate in a couple sentences the contribution it made to the research (this is the 'annotated' part). E.g., which concepts or claims did you take from it, and/or which examples did you draw from it, etc. (25 points).
- (2) Your **Self-Evaluation Form**, filled out individually, graded, and signed by each member of your group. Stapled to the self-evaluation should be a **Research Summary**, typed-out in full sentences, which gives an account of research you contributed to the presentation. You don't need to restate every single detail of the work you did. The point is rather for you to tell me—in front of your group—which aspects of the overall project you contributed. Did you research certain sources, prepare this or that slide, offer summaries and condensed accounts of key concepts in this or that thinker? This should probably be more than one page, but needn't exceed three pages double-spaced. It should follow the formatting guidelines on the syllabus (Times New Roman, 1" Margins, 12 point font, etc.) (25 points). See the *Rubric for Self-Evaluations* form for more details about what to mention in your Summary.