

Students should prepare a 10 minute presentation of their work for the honors symposium. For those writing a critical thesis, this presentation should cover the students' research and argument. For a creative thesis, the student should introduce their work and then do a reading from the thesis. Students should prepare their presentation for an audience who will not be familiar with the students' work and will thus need a clear overview and introduction to the topic and the significance of the project.

## **I – Preparing your Honors Symposium presentation**

Because you will be using a piece of writing to inform your talk, symposium essays present unusual problems for the writer. When we are only writing an essay or a creative piece, the concerns we have are different – sometimes in kind, sometimes in degree – from when we write pieces that will be read aloud. Suddenly, we must be concerned with pacing, with rhythm, with vocabulary, with breath...in other words, with a whole host of things we don't normally have to worry about when we're just composing texts that will never be read aloud.

As you prepare your presentation, try to keep in mind that while you will be summing up and reading from your honors project, you will also be talking to a group of people who are interested and invested in your project but who may not know much if anything about the topic and will need for you to explain, guide them, and give them insight into your work.

Remember that everyone reads at a different pace, but generally speaking, it takes about 2 minutes to read one double-spaced page in Times 12 pt. font. The text you read from should be no more than 4-5 pages in length, and even shorter if you wish to go “off script” at all.

### Academic thesis or digital project:

#### Introductions

The most important thing to remember about introductions is that they introduce the topic. When you are composing a presentation, this is to some extent more important than it would be otherwise, since your audience can't stop listening to you and go and look something up. It's up to you to set up the context, parameters and facts of your discussion.

If there has been a great deal of scholarship on the text you are discussing, you will likely need to acknowledge this. This is important for a number of reasons. First, it suggests to your audience that you know what you're talking about and you're not just shooting off about something without having done any research on it. Second, it helps

orient your audience into the broader discussion of the text. They know, then, that this isn't some random book off the shelves that no one has ever taken seriously. Third, and finally, it locates what you have to say within the context of the larger discussion about the text.

But remember: you have a limited amount of space, and so you don't want to waste it discussing context that is not of use to you or your audience.

## Main Claim

The most important thing about your thesis statement is that it should be clear and explicit. This is the crucial point where you let your audience know precisely what you're going to be talking about. You might even consider giving them a sense of what the structure of your paper will be.

## Evidence

As you write, you will need to be concerned with how you present your evidence. Remember, your audience does not have access to your paper, and so it is important for you to help the audience along.

## Conclusions

Your conclusion is, of course, a critical part of your paper, for it is here that you get to have the last word. It is here that you tell your audience what it is that they should come away with.

The most important thing to keep in mind as you write your conclusion is that you should make sure you treat both your individual reading – that is, that you explain clearly and concisely how you read the text(s) – and the "so what" factor: why is your reading important? How does it affect the way we might interpret the topic as a whole? Finally, and crucially, why is this important?

## Creative Thesis or digital project:

### Selection

Choosing which parts of your creative project to read or show the audience is perhaps the most challenging part of the process. The goal is to give the audience a sense of what your purpose is with your project and to allow your audience access to the world you create in your piece.

Another consideration: think through which parts of your thesis or digital project represent your best work. In a sense, this is your opportunity to "show off" your creative work, so consider which pieces, passages, poems, or scenes allow your audience insight into your most effective writing.

## Introductions

You might want to begin your reading with some background on your process, your topic, or your experience writing your piece. This will help to situate your reader in your creative sphere so that they will better appreciate the text you are reading.

## Presentation:

As you read your selection(s) you are welcome to pause and discuss what you have just read to the audience before going on. The overall goal here is to give the audience a sense of your work. If you would like to discuss the process or the text itself as you read from it, that will be fine as long as you have practiced.

## II – Giving the presentation

- Read relatively slowly and deliberately. Your audience does not have your full project in front of them, so you will need to read slowly enough that they can follow along without getting lost.
- Be prepared to be nervous. This means you will read more quickly than you would normally. Practice your reading and time yourself.
- You are not completely limited to the script. You can, if you need to, go "off script."
- Feel free to make notations on your copy. If you want to emphasize something, underline it or make a note.
- Use clear, precise language and articulate your words clearly. Do not, however, over-articulate your words. This will sound strange.

**Finally, remember that this is a celebration of your hard work and successful completion of an extended piece of reading and writing. Your audience is there to learn from you and to engage with you but not to judge or critique you. The excellent work you've done writing the thesis or crafting the digital project is what everyone is at the symposium to celebrate.**