

Thematic Panel Presentation Assignment

The Assignment

During this semester, you will participate in one thematic panel presentation. Panels will be composed of three to five people. Presentations will last approximately twenty minutes in class. The philosophical goal of the presentations is to make connections between various arguments and conclusions on a single theme across the work of two or more philosophers. The pedagogical goal of the presentations is to allow each student a brief opportunity to lead the class.

Your panel presentation should demonstrate your group's attempts to assimilate one of the central themes found in the primary readings for class. You should also consider any assigned secondary readings on the theme by the selected philosophers. The tertiary readings will probably be useful. You need not be limited to discussing the work of the assigned philosophers; if work of other philosophers is relevant or useful, feel free to include it. A presentation should compare and contrast central theses and arguments. Some critical evaluation of any disagreement among the philosophers is desirable. Your goal is assimilation rather than exposition. The weakest presentations repeat what I've already said in class. Your goal is to bring themes together.

Your presentation may be as ambitious as you wish, as long as it is reasonably within the time guidelines. You may be creative about how to interact with the class. You may act out a dialogue or debate. Feel free to try some role playing or a panel discussion; you might consider a set of central questions or vignettes which the panelists can discuss. You may use presentation software like PowerPoint or Prezi.com.

Presentations should begin with an overview of the theme at hand. During the presentation, be sure to stop for questions if and when appropriate. Conclude with a summary.

Panels will be chosen during the second week of class. The themes, with their presentation dates, are listed below. You may gather peers to sign up together or you may sign up on your own. Most presentations will occur on April 22, April 24, or April 29, though there are two before the midterm exam and another one the week we return from spring break.

I expect that you will communicate with your co-panelists before the in-class discussion. I urge you to meet at least twice: once well in advance of the presentation date to discuss the distribution of work and once closer to the presentation date to rehearse your presentation. There is one required pre-presentation practice session for each panel, as noted on the reverse of this page. You should be prepared with a rough draft of your presentation before the required practice session. The hour-long sessions will be observed by our TA who will make suggestions for improvement.

Your presentation time is very short. Be efficient. Avoid irrelevant biographical or historical details. Focus on arguments and connections among various views.

Grades and the Post-Presentation Email

After your panel presentation, I will email the group with an evaluation and a grade. I base the grade on both the content and the form of the presentation. Better presentations will be clearer and make connections among the work of various philosophers. Presentations should demonstrate shared work and understanding. I hope that your work, and your grades, will ordinarily be distributed equally.

To assist me with the assignment of a grade, after the panel presentation, each member of the panel should send me a confidential email containing brief details concerning how the preparatory work was distributed and any other information you think I should know about the process. I understand that the person who speaks the most during the presentation may not be the person most responsible for the work. I will ordinarily not assign a grade on the presentation until I receive emails from all members of the panel.

Sign-ups

We will sign up for presentations, by email, after the second day of class. The dates and topics are listed below. Pre-presentation practice sessions are required and will all take place in our classroom, SC G041.

Topic	Presentation Date	Required Practice Session
1. Minds and Bodies I (Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza)	Class 12: February 27 New Date: Class 12: March 4	Monday, February 24, 7:00 pm
2. Arguments for God's Existence (Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz)	Class 14: March 6	Monday, March 3, 7:00 pm
3. Innate Ideas and the <i>Tabula Rasa</i> (Descartes, Locke)	Class 18: April 3	Monday, March 31, 7:00 pm
4. The Primary-Secondary Distinction and the Resemblance Hypothesis (Descartes, Locke, Berkeley)	Class 23: April 22	Saturday, April 19, 1:00 pm
5. Minds and Bodies II (Descartes, Locke, Berkeley)	Class 23: April 22	Saturday, April 19, 2:00 pm
6. Abstract Ideas and Uses of Language (Locke and Berkeley)	Class 23: April 22	Saturday, April 19, 3:00 pm
7. Two Brands of Idealism (Leibniz and Berkeley)	Class 24: April 24	Monday, April 21, 6:00 pm
8. The Existence of the External World (Descartes, Berkeley, Hume)	Class 24: April 24	Monday, April 21. 7:00 pm
9. Free Will and Determinism (Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Hume)	Class 24: April 24	Monday, April 21, 8:00 pm
10. The Self (Descartes, Locke, Leibniz, Hume)	Class 25: April 29	Saturday, April 26, 1:00 pm
11. Laws of Nature (Descartes, Spinoza, Berkeley, Hume)	Class 25: April 29	Saturday, April 26, 2:00 pm

Resources:

Many students find the Oral Communications Center, located in KJ 222, helpful. They have a wealth of resources readily available, and are eager to help. The staff at the lab can assist you both with the content of your presentation, and with determining how best to present your material. When you have prepared a draft of your presentation, they can record you while you practice giving the presentation. You can watch the recording with a tutor, or by yourself. You can sign up for an appointment with a tutor on the door of the lab, or you can email them at: oralcomm@hamilton.edu. Their website offers valuable resources.