
Guidelines for Oral Presentations

How to Choose Your Topic: In choosing a subject for your presentation keep in mind that they are meant to 1) highlight some recent development in astrophysics and/or 2) to give you an opportunity to study a topic of your choice in some depth. For inspiration check out the recent astronomy news, the course outline and list of presentation topics from last year available on the course web page. I would like you to choose a subject that really interests you.

Your Grade: It will be based on the content of your presentation, effectiveness of your slides and your delivery. All your fellow classmates will fill out the feedback form and your final grade will be a combination of student and instructor evaluations. In most cases, both partners will receive the same grade.

Presentation Format: Unless you tell me otherwise, I will assume that all your presentations will be in PowerPoint format. Occasionally, there might still be problems moving between Macs, Windows and Linux platforms (especially if you have equations), so it might be helpful to have your presentation as a PDF file as well.

Plan for a 12 minute talk with about 5 minutes of questions and discussion following it. This might seem like quite a bit of time, but in reality introducing a new topic in 12 minutes is actually a difficult thing. Practice giving your talk ahead of time and make sure to time yourself. I will also be happy to go over your presentation with you ahead of time and give you feedback.

Presentation Content: This is a physics class, so ideally your talk would contain a mixture of qualitative and quantitative material. Try to use the physics tools you learned in this course (or other physics courses) to illustrate new concepts. The degree to which this will be possible will obviously depend on your choice of topic, but the presentation containing only pictures will not earn a very high grade.

Preparation Timeline: Your talks will be organized into two two-hour sessions scheduled sometime during the Presentation Days (April 30 - May 2).

The deadline for choosing a presentation topic is Monday, April 8. It will be best if you run your idea by me ahead of time, to ensure that there is no conflict with anyone else. I would be happy to discuss with you the general content of your talk at any time.

By 5pm on Sunday, April 29, you need to email me your talk title and summary (in simple text or LaTeX format). The summary should be no longer than one single-spaced page, and might be as short as half a page. I will put these together into a program and distribute it during the talks. If you give me a draft earlier, I will be happy to give you comments. Shortly after, I will produce and email you the schedule of talks. Keep in mind that you have to attend all the talks, not just those sharing a session with you. I will try to schedule the sessions so as to avoid conflicts with any non-HMC courses you are attending.

Sources and References: Most of you will probably be using the Internet as a major source of material for your presentation. While this might a good strategy to get some initial ideas about the subject you are researching, you need to keep this in mind:

- 1) You may not use *only* purely Internet sources (by this I mean personal web pages; electronic versions of papers or textbooks are OK). Keep in mind that personal pages can give you a skewed or one-sided view.
- 2) You have to include references for all the material you use, independent of whether you got it from textbooks, Internet or scientific papers.
- 3) It is not acceptable to make a statement and refer to some obscure web site for confirmation without understanding the logical reasoning leading to this statement. You should also be careful where you get your information from, to make sure it is reliable, and check the calculations yourself, whenever possible. If the result is too complicated to be reproduced by you, you should reference a reliable source, e.g. a textbook or a paper in a scientific journal, rather than a web site.