



White Board

Become An Effective Teacher & Save Your Valuable Teaching Time and Energy

Center for Effective Undergraduate Teaching (864) 388-8426

Less Stress, More Success: The End of Semester Student Presentation

AS FACULTY DESIGN their syllabi for the upcoming semester, they consider how to have students demonstrate the vast knowledge they acquire throughout the semester. Enter the end of the semester student presentation! While some students are comfortable with speaking, many are less enthusiastic. How can we make the end of semester student presentation less stressful for our students?

Here are five tips for making end of semester presentations successful:

1. **Explain to students that, "This is important for your development as a professional."** It is true and is a critical aspect of creating an understanding of why the class will require an oral presentation. Without explaining why presentations are expected, students may not buy into the experience and their value. Every single career requires the ability to explain, inform, and persuade other people.

To assure buy in, provide specific examples to students as it relates to their future intended careers. For example, if a student aspires to be a nurse, share how their job will require providing oral discharge instructions to groups of people. They may need to demonstrate how to execute a certain medical procedure at a department meeting or present at a conference. In general, convey the message that being a clear communicator whose message is easily understood by varying audiences is important in different career fields.

2. **Everyone needs to talk.** On the first day of class, get students up and speaking. The key to doing this well is to either have them speak in pairs or groups in front of the classroom. There is "safety in numbers" for students, and it is less scary for students to be in front of the classroom with another person (or two

or three) than to be up there alone. Plus, this is a small step towards being in front of the classroom alone, if the plan is to have individual rather than group presentations at the end of the semester. When the initial anxiety of speaking is broken in class early on in the semester, and is set as an expectation, there is a momentum that takes hold. Students are then more likely to continue to engage and develop comfort with their classmates.

3. **Provide a structure.** If a structure is not provided to students for the end of the semester presentation, it allows students to get off topic easily, which results in impeding the flow of the presentation and causes confusion among listeners. In general, presentations are structured with an introduction, three main points, and a conclusion. For the end of the semester presentation, it may be helpful to ask students to choose three aspects of "X" topic to present to the class, or three ways that "X" applies to "Y" concept. It's important to keep the presentation at three clear, distinct points, as more than that is too much for an audience to mentally digest.

4. **Be clear about delivery expectations.** Although much of the end of semester presentation grade is likely to be weighted heavily on discipline-specific content, be clear on the delivery expectations and how much of the grade is associated with it. It should constitute enough of a percentage to motivate students to practice.

It has been my experience that maintaining consistent eye contact with the audience is the most difficult aspect of delivery for students. A presentation requires connection with the audience, which is partially achieved through eye contact. Practice is the easiest way to overcome the eye contact issue. One solution is to require students to practice

in front of the instructor before the actual presentation date during office hours or class time. This gives the instructor a chance to provide feedback, have students incorporate and make any changes, and also motivates students to plan, organize, and practice what they plan to say.

5. **Finally, provide opportunities.** One of the most effective techniques in overcoming speaking anxiety is consistent and frequent exposure to speaking. Consider integrating several no or low stakes assignments throughout the semester that lead up to the final presentation. Here are some ideas for no or low stakes-speaking assignments:

- Ask one student to prepare to summarize the readings due for a specific day
- Have students draw how a process occurs, and then explain the process and their visual to the class
- Assign each student a day to prepare

see Less Stress, Page 2

Summer 2 Grades Due - Aug 1
Graduation Day - Aug 2

WHITE BOARD

2018-2019 Publication Dates
First Monday of the Month

| | |
|-------------|----------|
| September 3 | March 4 |
| October 1 | April 1 |
| November 5 | May 6 |
| December 3 | June 3 |
| January 7 | July 1 |
| February 4 | August 5 |

[Newsletters Archive HERE](#)

Center for Effective
Undergraduate Teaching
Carnel Learning Center, Suite 106.
Phone: 388-8426

Making Radio: Using Audio for Student Assignments

ELVIS (THE OTHER ONE ... COSTELLO) was right, “Radio, it’s a sound salvation. Radio, it’s cleaning up the nation.” Radio didn’t die, it was just sleeping. Podcasting and ubiquitous audio tools have brought radio back to life and into the classroom in a new and powerful way.

For a number of years I’ve been using radio—live broadcasting as well as podcasting—in undergraduate classes; not radio as an information resource but radio (audio) creation as an assignment. Making radio instead of making essays or making presentations provides students with a unique set of challenges that foster critical thinking and creative construction.

When I am asked, “Why radio?” the question usually means, “Why not video?” The assumption is that video would be more powerful than the restricted nature of audio and more familiar to the students. Perhaps, but sometimes less is more. Kate Lacey (University of Sussex) contrasts video with writing, observing that “we are used to dealing with media forms that are not full of sensory plenitude” and suggests that the power of audio lies in its constraints. Additionally Lacey highlights the difference between “hearing” and “listening” where the latter is a critical activity and decoding process similar to that of close reading. In other words, making radio encompasses the rigorous methods necessary to effectively engage students in thinking.

I teach in a First Year Seminar program where students come from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds. These are not media studies courses. The objective is not to make my students audio experts but to introduce them to a new way of conceptualizing and communicating the ideas they are researching. By having them use a different tool for their assignment (i.e. not an essay or class presentation), the students tend to be more engaged and reflective about the research and creative process.

In one course about the history and nature of the book, student groups appeared on “live radio” to be interviewed by the host

about the book they were investigating. The interview was not scripted so the students had to be prepared to respond, in real-time, to the probing and questioning of the host. I worked with the host prior to the interviews to review possible questions and lines of discussion. As a result the students had to be ready for a variety of questions and be able to explain themselves in clear, concise, and accessible ways.

In other cases I’ve used podcasts as a means for students to explore ideas relevant to the course. In an extreme case—and one that was highly successful—students created one minute podcasts about an aspect of book culture. The sixty second constraint reinforced the need for careful research, clear and creative scripting, effective storytelling, and strong production values. Like an “audio haiku” these podcasts were difficult challenges despite their apparent simplicity.

In most cases the students create at least two podcasts during the semester. The first are typically not well done. Students write scripts that sound like academic papers and produce podcasts that are aurally flat. Those initial experiences allow us to talk in more depth about the components of good radio and good academic work. Their second attempts are always substantially improved.

While you need look no further than your smartphone for the necessary tools to make good radio (e.g. audio capture, editing, and even distribution), there is another more traditional resource that is well worth getting to know: your local community radio station. These non-profit broadcasters are likely located conveniently on your campus and staffed by eager folks ready to help you and your students. They can and provide access to excellent studio facilities—my iPhone’s audio capabilities may be good, but it pales in comparison to a good studio.

I was a neophyte when I first decided to use radio in my classes; I still think of myself as beginner. As a result the students and I are co-learners in using radio. For the students to see me as part of their learning experience added an important element to the courses.

We learned, failed, reflected, and tried again together. We modeled a learning community where the roles of learner and teacher were fluid. Ultimately, this may have been the most profound outcome of the courses.

Making radio is a powerful learning approach that is easily adopted and adapted for diverse subjects and class environments. So as Elvis says, “You better do as you are told. You better listen to the radio.”

Michael Ridley; Making Radio: Using Audio for Student Assignments; Faculty Focus; July 19, 2019; [<https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-and-learning/radio-student-assignments/>] July 30, 2019.

Less Stress

Continued from Page 1

information about a current event to share with the class and connect to course concepts

- When doing group work during class time, have each student report on a certain aspect of whatever they are working on to the class

As faculty members, we strive to prepare our students for their future careers, including teaching how to communicate clearly and effectively. Sometimes this requires pushing students out of their comfort zone with assignments such as an end of the semester presentation. The semester goes by fast for students and faculty alike. Having students engage in opportunities for communicating with and in front of their classmates will result in less anxiety as the end of the semester presentation approaches.

Dr. Kerri Russo Mercer is a faculty member at Wake Technical Community College in Raleigh, North Carolina. She has fifteen years of experience in the field of higher education in faculty, administrative and student affairs roles.

Kerri Russo Mercer, PhD; Less Stress, More Success: The End of Semester Student Presentation; Faculty Focus; July 17, 2019 [<https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/educational-assessment/student-presentation/>] July 30, 2019.