CIS 872 - Spring 2005
University of Delaware

Instructions for Class Teaching/Discussion Leadership

1 Format of a Class Meeting

In each class meeting, we will cover either one or two papers. The time will be divided as follows:

1. Collection of PDP forms for the day's paper(s).

2. Presentation of the paper(s) with interruption for clarification questions as needed. This should take about 60 minutes.

3. Questions, discussion points etc. which should last the remainder of the class meeting (15 minutes). It is expected that each student will ask at least one question or raise a point for discussion. Your participation in this discussion will be used for your class participation portion of the grade.

2 The Process

The class period for a given topic will be led by a group of two students. The two students should decide how to divide up the responsibility of the presentation and discussion leadership evenly.

1. Read through the material to be presented several times, taking notes on the following aspects:

   - What problem did the researchers investigate?
   - What was their motivation?
   - What approach did they take?
   - What are the important concepts for researchers to learn about this work?
   - How does their contribution compare with the related work?
   - How did they evaluate their efforts?
   - What conclusions did they make based on their evaluation?
   - What limitations do they admit their approach has?
   - Any other limitations that you can see?
   - What do the authors see as future directions based on their work?
   - Any other future directions that you can see?

2. Create an outline for a 60 minute talk on the material, focusing on the items above. Each person is in charge of 30 minutes.

3. Create overheads in the final form, but printed on paper, rather than transparencies. See the instructions for slide formatting below for more details.

4. AT LEAST 1 WEEK BEFORE CLASS MEETING: Meet with the professor to discuss your plans for the class meeting, and review your slides. Plan 45 minutes to a whole hour to review the slides with the professor.

5. Make the suggested changes to your slides.

6. Practice your talk aloud at least twice before presenting it on your scheduled presentation date.

7. If possible, spend an hour going over your talk to yourself as close to your presentation time as possible to refamiliarize yourself with what you want to say. I always go over my talks and lectures within the hour of when I am going to do the presentation. It makes a world of difference.

8. Print out adequate copies of your slides, 6 to a page, for each person in the course. Be sure to staple together your handouts and xerox double-sided to save on trees. Bring your handouts to class the day of your presentation to hand out at the start of class.

9. Present your paper and lead the discussion.

3   Presentation Content

The presentation should be 60 minutes with 15 additional minutes for questions and discussion. The presentation should be conducted much like the model used at a conference. If you follow the guidelines in slide formatting, you should use no more than 30 slides for the presentation. Over 30 is too many slides. A typical organization of a conference talk, and your presentation is:

1. Motivation of the general problem with an example or description of the current way things are done and the limitations/problems with the current situation. This often requires some background information to set the context. (The general problem and motivation) This is typically 1-2 slides.

2. Clear statement of the particular problem addressed by the authors. (The problem statement) This is typically 1-2 slides.

3. The current state of the art in addressing this particular problem: what have other researchers done toward solving this problem? What limitations and drawbacks do their techniques have? (Related Work - Note: This could come later before conclusions.) This should be no more than 2 slides.

4. A description of the approach taken by this paper. This can often be done by going through an example to show the techniques developed. This should take the most slides. (Approach)

5. A description of the experimental setup and results, if they did experimental work. This can be 2-5 slides depending on how much experimental work they did. (Evaluation)

6. Conclusions based on the results, limitations of the work. Typically, this is 1-2 slides. (Discussion)

7. Future research directions. Typically, this is 1 slide.

8. Discussion Questions - You should also make up one slide with discussion questions and/or class activity to prompt discussion after the talk. This is one slide.

9. Short Informal Quiz - You should also make up one slide that is a quiz-like format for the group to take as a whole, to review the key algorithm/important points. This is one slide.

10. Summary of important concepts to remember. This is one slide.

4   Formatting of Slides

Powerpoint slides should be prepared, and available online in a form that can be viewed through a web browser (e.g., pdf, postscript, html). As a rule, the font size should not be smaller than 18 point.

Begin each slide with a centered title that states in 1-4 words the contents of that slide. Different font sizes, boldness, italics, and underlining should be used to demonstrate the relative importance of different points. The formatting of different slides should be consistent in terms of fontsize, capitalization, italics, bold, color (if you use color), and grammar.

For a text slide, use outline style with short phrases as opposed to paragraphs of full sentences. Use keywords and short phrases. Put no more than 4-5 main points (bullets) on a single slide. Your slides should contain a significant amount of white space. If you are worried that you might forget to say something if you do not have it written on a slide, write it on a separate sheet of paper that you can use as backup. When I first started giving talks, I used the sheets of paper separating the slides for this purpose. It is comforting to know that it is written down somewhere in front of you, but the audience does not have to see all of that writing. DO NOT PUT WHOLE PARAGRAPHS ON A SLIDE.

Break up your talk with pictures and color whenever possible. If you need to use a figure from the paper, scan it in using the machine available in the CIS library, and enlarge it to make it readable on an overhead.

5 Presentation Style

The most enjoyable presentations are those in which the speaker appears to be confident and have a casual, conversation-like style, as opposed to a speaker who is reading from the slides, screen, or notes. This comes with practice!! If you only put phrases on the slides, and practice what you want to say about each phrase or figure, your presentation is most likely to be in this style. If you put full sentences on the slides, and do not practice, it is only natural to read from the slide, and lead the audience into naptime!

Take on the challenge of capturing the audience's attention with your introduction, keeping them interested through your slides and possibly some light humor, avoiding burial in a pile of details, and teaching them the most important points/issues about your topic. You can do this by examples and thoughtful planning to make your talk flow nicely from slide to slide and keep the audience always wondering what is coming next.

1. Eye contact: You should glance around the room, making eye contact with various people. The talk should not be directed to the ceiling, floor, the slide projector, or only a small portion of the class. If you do not want to look at anyone, just look over their heads.

2. Voice: Be sure to talk at a pace that the audience can follow. Most of us tend to talk very quickly when we are nervous. You need to consciously be aware of how fast you are talking. Be sure to talk loud and clear enough that people in the back of the room can hear and understand you. If you think people are going to have trouble understanding your English, talk slower than normal.

6 Evaluation of Presentations

Each student in the class will fill out an evaluation form for each presentation. These evaluations will be anonymous, and summarized and given to the students as feedback. The professor will independently grade each oral presentation. Both the student evaluation and the grade will be based on: the speaker's perceived understanding of the topic, organization of the material, presentation of the material, quality of visual aids, treatment of questions, enjoyment level of talk, and overall effectiveness of the presentation.