

How to Sit in the Back of the Class  
Or, How A Control Freak Ceded Some Control Over His Classroom

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19th Biennial AAPT Workshop-Conference  
St. Edwards University, Austin TX  
July 27, 2012

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Who Controls the Classroom?  
Adapted from Doyle 79

Classroom Decisions	Teacher	Students	Together	NA
What are the learning outcomes for the course?				
Which texts will be used?				
How will students' learning be assessed?				
When will exams be given?				
What are the formats and topics covered on the exams?				
When are papers due?				
What are the topics for the papers?				
Will rewrites be allowed?				
How will classes be taught?				
How will groups (if any) be formed?				
What kind of grading scale will be used?				
Attendance policy				
Late work policy				
Tardiness policy				
Classroom deportment policy				

### **Presentation Assignment**

During this semester, you will choose an article from the syllabus to present to the class. You should plan to present for approximately ten to fifteen minutes, though the ensuing discussion may prolong your presentation.

Your presentation should demonstrate your attempts to grapple with some portion of the chosen reading. The central goal of your presentation is clarity. The presentation should summarize central theses, focus on arguments, and raise questions for discussion. In contrast to a standard, rhetorical philosophy paper, but like your first two paper assignments, your presentations may be mainly exegetical. Connect the various assertions in your presentations; avoid mere lists. I welcome some critical examination of the readings, though the criticism need not be fully developed.

Your presentation should include some questions intended to generate class discussion. These questions may be spread through the presentation or placed at the end. Make sure to summarize your work toward the end of the presentation.

Here are some general questions you might raise and try to answer in your presentation:

What is the big picture? What questions is the author attempting to answer?

What is the central claim you are examining?

Is the central claim epistemological, metaphysical, or methodological?

How does that claim differ from related claims we have already studied?

What is the philosopher's argument for the central claim?

With what premises would philosophers whose work we have already studied disagree? Why?

Is the central claim you are examining true?

Visual aids can enhance clarity. You may use presentation software like PowerPoint or Prezi.com. You may prepare a handout containing an outline of your talk. You may write a short paper on which you base your talk, and hand out that short paper. You may combine these aids. You might generate discussion by presenting a controversial position. You might ask interesting questions. Your presentation may be as creative or ambitious as you wish, as long as it fits reasonably within the time guidelines. You may act out a dialogue of your own design. You could have us break into groups for a short debate. If you want to do something inventive, I would be happy to help you think out the plan. I can facilitate the distribution of materials before class, if desired.

### **Resources:**

Please feel free to meet with me before your presentations. Many students find the oral communications lab, 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](mailto:oralcomm@hamilton.edu). Their website offers valuable resources: <http://www.hamilton.edu/OralCommunication>

### **Seminar Paper/Presentation Assignment**

During this semester, you will write and present two seminar papers, one in the first half of the course, and one in the second half. Many classes will run as discussions of the seminar paper for that day. Seminar papers should summarize important arguments and raise questions for discussion. In contrast to a standard, rhetorical philosophy paper, seminar papers may be mainly exegetical. You need not defend a thesis in a seminar paper, though some theme will be welcome. I expect some critical examination of the readings, though it need not be fully developed. Here are some general questions you might try to answer in your seminar papers.

- What is the big picture? What questions is the author attempting to answer?
- What thought experiments are relevant to the author's thesis?
- What experiments, or scientific research, if any, are relevant to the author's thesis?
- Is the author defending or criticizing the use of intuitions in philosophy? How?
- How does this philosopher's approach to a particular question relate to or differ from others we have already seen?
- Is the argument in the article convincing?
- Would further analysis or experimental research support or refute the author's thesis?

Your seminar papers must demonstrate attempts to grapple with the primary reading for class. You may also consider secondary readings, or background readings. You are stimulating class discussion, focusing our thoughts on the central theses, and raising questions. It is good practice to end seminar papers with a few questions you believe will be useful for the class to discuss.

You will lead the class on the day we discuss your seminar paper. You may be creative with your presentation. You may focus on the content of your paper. You may also discuss any particular difficulties in the material or topics that you were unable to cover in the paper. Your grade for the seminar paper will depend on both the paper and your presentation of it.

Each seminar paper is due at noon the day before the class in which it will be discussed (i.e. Monday or Wednesday). This deadline is necessary for all participants in the seminar to be able to read the paper and prepare comments and questions for class. You may email the paper to me first, or you may email the paper to all the members of the class directly.

All students are expected to come to class having read the seminar paper or papers for that day. Every one should be prepared to ask questions, or make comments, on the paper for that day. Comments on the paper should be constructive.

#### **Presentation Resources:**

Please feel free to meet with me before your presentations. I will try to have notes for each class available in time for you to use them in your preparation.

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](mailto:oralcomm@hamilton.edu).

### **Thematic Panel Presentation 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 content goal of the panel presentations is to review a single theme in 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.

The presentation should demonstrate your panel'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 presentation may be as ambitious as you wish, as long as it is reasonably within the time guidelines. You may use presentation software like PowerPoint or Prezi.com. You may be creative about how to interact with the class. You may act out a dialogue or debate. Presentations should begin with an overview of the theme at hand and conclude with a brief 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 17, April 19, or April 24, 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, Emir Ildiz, 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.

#### **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](mailto:oralcomm@hamilton.edu). Their website offers valuable resources.

### Presentation Grading Rubric

I will mark each of the following criteria with a grade, from 1 (best) to 5 (least best). It is not that case that each of the criteria will be weighted equally.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Introduction is clear, goals are clearly stated.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Major points are emphasized.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Careful reading of the text is evident.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The reading is put into context, against earlier or other readings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Key terms and technical vocabulary are defined or characterized.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The presentation is reasonably organized.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. A summary with conclusions is clearly stated.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Grammar and syntax are appropriate (few uhs and ums).
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Voice and eye contact are appropriate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. There is evidence of critical analysis.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. The handout/slides (if used) is/are helpful.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. The presentation is creative.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Responses to questions are effective.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Interesting questions for summary and further research are proposed.

Oral Presentation Evaluation Form  
Adapted from the Hamilton College Oral Communications Center

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Introduction

- \_\_\_ Speaker engages audience attention and interest (relevance, importance, timeliness, etc.).
- \_\_\_ Speaker clearly identifies thesis, purpose, or central question (focus).
- \_\_\_ Speaker clearly previews presentation's structure or content (scope and sequence). (If thesis or preview is withheld, is this appropriate and effective?)

Comments:

Development

- \_\_\_ Points are clear and arranged in logical order.
- \_\_\_ Speaker provides appropriate transitions between points.
- \_\_\_ Speaker adequately clarifies terms and concepts.
- \_\_\_ Speaker adequately explains points and supports arguments.
- \_\_\_ Speaker restates or summarizes points as needed.
- \_\_\_ Speaker cites sources appropriately (orally or on visuals).

Comments:

Audiovisual Media

- \_\_\_ Media make sense and enhance the presentation.
- \_\_\_ Speaker effectively integrates media with what is being said.
- \_\_\_ Speaker provides appropriate transitions between media clips or PP slides.
- \_\_\_ PP slides are effectively designed (clear, uncluttered, adequate size, good contrast, consistent).
- \_\_\_ PP slides are correct in terms of spelling, grammar, citations, etc.

Comments:

Conclusion

- \_\_\_ Speaker summarizes as needed.
- \_\_\_ Speaker reinforces or re-establishes the thesis, purpose, or central question.
- \_\_\_ Speaker closes appropriately.

Comments:

Delivery

- \_\_\_ Speaker uses clear, appropriate language.
- \_\_\_ Speaker uses appropriate rate and volume.
- \_\_\_ Speaker uses few "uhs" and "ums."
- \_\_\_ Speaker uses voice expressively.
- \_\_\_ Speaker makes sufficient eye contact.
- \_\_\_ Speaker uses nonverbal behavior that supports the message.

Comments:

## A Few References

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- Finkel, Donald. 2000. *Teaching with Your Mouth Shut*. Boynton/Cook Publishers.
- Freire, Paulo. 1005 (orig. 1973). *Education for Critical Consciousness*. Continuum.
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- Gannod, Gerald, Janet Burge, and Michael Helmick. 2008. "Using the Inverted Classroom to Teach Software Engineering." *ICSE*
- Lage, Maureen, Glenn Platt and Michael Treglia. 2000. "Inverting the Classroom: A Gateway to Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment." *The Journal of Economic Education* 31.1: 30-43.
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- Voss, J.L., Gonsalves, Federmeier, Tranel, and Cohen. 2011. "Hippocampal Brain-Network Coordination During Volitional Exploratory Behavior Enhances Learning." *Nature Neuroscience* 14.1: 115-120.