

COMMS 301: Digital Communication & Practice

Slideshow & Presentation Assignment



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w/ Dr. Plaut



The words you're reading now were composed and formatted with slideshow software, saved as a PDF, and distributed as a document to be read. But the prototypical slideshow is a **digital object that supports a performance** where the creator(s) and audience come together in a specific physical space and moment.

That's what we're doing with this assignment

Like the bot project, this presentation emphasizes open creativity, is worth 15 points, and is a bit more work than the 10-pt assignments. In part, this project is an opportunity to resituate our digital work in a physical space, at a particular time, with a live audience.

Unlike most class presentations, the point here is NOT to present the material covered in class. The point is the presentation ITSELF showing your work toward mastery of the digital medium of the slideshow as performed live. As such, **you are free to present on ANY topic** as long as it doesn't contain hate speech or other wildly objectionable material.

Random examples of possible topics:

- History of colonial railway systems? **GREAT!**
- Instructions on how to make an origami platypus? **GREAT!**
- Argument for/against capital gains tax? **GREAT!**
- Racist/sexist/ableist bullshit? **FAIL.**
- Aesthetic beauty of spiderwebs? **GREAT!**

The project has 4 related components:

- **Create & upload a presentation slide deck**
 - due Sunday 5pm
- **Deliver an eloquent 2-minute presentation**
 - 3x possible dates (in tutorial)
- **Paragraph of eloquent, insightful reflection**
 - due 72 hours after you present
- **Give kind, insightful feedback to classmates**
 - all 3x presentation days (in tutorial)

Slides

You don't need to purchase anything for this assignment, but you will need to decide what software you want to use. Please think through your subject matter in the context of the assigned readings and lecture material to help guide your design decisions. These various slide platforms have different benefits, drawbacks, and aesthetics that might suit some presentations better than others:

Slide Software / Platform Options

- There are free, open-source options, like LibreOffice Impress (available for MS Windows, macOS, or Linux), which is essentially a clone of Microsoft's (industry-dominating) PowerPoint:
 - <https://www.libreoffice.org/discover/impress/>
- I believe students should have free access to MS PowerPoint through the university's "MS Office 365" subscription. Campus computers also typically have PowerPoint installed:
 - <https://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/services/it-essentials/computer-facilities/software-purchase-or-download/office-365>

(continued below...)

Slide Software / Platform Options (continued)

- Google Slides allows you to work entirely in the browser, save your presentation online, and open it later by clicking a link

- <https://www.google.com/slides/about/>

- Mac users might have Apple's version, Keynote
- Please be CAREFUL if you use free versions of commercial services that have peculiar rules and limitations — Prezi's free version for example has no privacy controls (see appendix) so your work would be publicly available and searchable!

- <https://prezi.com/signup/basic/>

(continued below...)

Slide Software / Platform Options (continued)

There are also *programmable* slideshows, e.g., the open-source Reveal.js and its commercial cousin slides.com use HTML to great effect:

- <https://revealjs.com/>
- <https://slides.com/>

Much more technical are Beamer, which formats text using LaTeX, and R Markdown for data analysis, etc:

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beamer_\(LaTeX\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beamer_(LaTeX))
- <https://rmarkdown.rstudio.com>

...but for the purposes of this assignment I assume *most* people will prefer more "user-friendly" tools like those listed above.

Slides

One of the most important things is that your presentation WORK, without major technical difficulties, on the day you present. This sometimes means balancing the desire to do something elaborate against the need to make sure it works smoothly. If you want to run it from your own computer, you'll need to make sure you have the appropriate dongles or other relevant equipment to get plugged into the projector in the room.

Slides

If you want to save a file and then open it on somebody else's computer, or you plan to use a browser-based service like Google Slides, please attend to any possible compatibility issues. These may include a range of things like what fonts are on a given machine, how video and other media files are stored and played, etc. (If you plan to use a remote control to advance the slides so you don't have to stand at the keyboard, that should also be tested to make sure it works).

Slides

Two Solid Tips For Success:

- 1. Practice** running through the slide show ahead of time approximating as **EXACTLY** as possible how it will happen (ideally in the same room where you are scheduled to present, on the same machines).
- 2. Save a backup** PDF of still slides and email that to yourself in case of tech meltdown.

Slides

Most people advise a minimal aesthetic, and you can find recommendations on the number of slides per minute, all kinds of things. Those rules of thumb might be useful but (cliche alert!) rules are made to be broken. There are a lot of different ways to give great presentations, and a lot of ways slides can support those presentations. You will not receive a grade on the slides per se; rather you will receive an evaluation of your presentation, of which the slideshow will be a central part.

Presentation

This presentation is very short: Only two minutes! You can run a **little** long, but please do not run over 2:15! (If you run over 2:30 it will cost a couple points). On the upside, this means you don't have to prepare something longer. However, we expect **TWO *highly refined* minutes!**

Presentation

Some aspects to consider:

- Clarity / Projection / Variety of Voice(s)
- Pace / Use of Time
- Gestures
- Eye Contact
- Slide Design & Aesthetics
- Integration of Slides with Oral Delivery
- Uses of Silence
- Uses of Blank Space
- Creativity!

Presentation

Presentations will happen during tutorial in weeks 9, 10, and 11. You have been randomly assigned a day to present (this has been emailed to you!) The *only* way to change the date of your presentation is to find a classmate who is willing to switch. If you have made such an arrangement to switch, please email Simon so he can change the schedule.

Reflection

This is similar to the paragraph of eloquent, insightful reflection we do with all projects in this class with one exception: **it will be due within 72 hours *after* you present** so that you are able to write about the experience of the presentation.

Feedback

Giving kind, insightful feedback to classmates on all three presentation days is a graded part of this assignment. Throughout this term, we haven't normally taken attendance in tutorials, but to fulfill this part of the assignment, you have to be in the room!

Endnote:

This PDF, which was created in PowerPoint, is *OK* to read but would be an **AWFUL** presentation slideshow — think about why that might be!

Appendix: Excerpt of the Prezi TOS: <https://prezi.com/terms-of-use/>



Prezi Public (free) Accounts. If you have a Prezi Public (free) account, all of the content you create, including all of the information within your presentations, and your user name will be available to anyone who has access to the internet ("Public User Content"). Public presentations can be viewed by other Prezi users, will appear in the searchable Prezi database, and will be available for others to access and view online. Accordingly, you hereby do and shall grant to each User and to the public a worldwide, non-exclusive, revocable license to access, view and publicly perform your Public User Content. This license ends when you delete the presentation or your account is closed (either by you or by us), except to the extent that the content has been shared with others and they have not deleted it.