

**Preparing for an Academic Presentation at the  
Undergraduate Scholars Research Conference, sponsored by  
the Western States Communication Association**

**Suggested Presentation Outline  
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A research presentation is a unique opportunity for scholars to present and share findings from a particular study or analysis. For students who completed COMM 402, you might recall that Jim Kuypers (2011) in *Rhetorical Criticism: Perspectives in Action* refers to this phase of the research process as the “counter-communication stage” (p. 19). Essentially, “[t]he idea is to share your [findings] with some segment of the public with the hope that it will provoke some type of feedback; the best [research] attempts just this” (p. 19). Keep in mind that feedback received (e.g., from professors, peer reviews, etc.) is but one form that results from public exchanges about an idea. The point here is simply that, “once released to this public realm, a [researcher’s] work takes on a life of its own. Feedback, positive or negative, should be viewed as what it is: evidence of the critic entering into a larger conversation” (p. 19). Now, in order to feel confident and prepared, you’ve got some work to do!

*What to expect during your panel session* – In previous years, the USRC holds several panel sessions organized thematically with four presenters each. Each paper presentation should last about 10–12 minutes. Each panel session is started and concluded by the chair, who serves a dual role as a respondent. The panel chair is typically a professor of communication and each has their own style. In general, the chair will introduce the panel, the panel theme, and name all of the presenters and their paper titles. Following the order provided by the chair, each paper is delivered from a podium. Panelists typically take 10 seconds to re-introduce themselves and their paper title, and off you go! After all papers have been presented, the chair transitions to the role of respondent and will provide some overall concluding thoughts to wrap up the panel as well as open up the discussion for whatever time is remaining (This is also why you *should not* go over the time allotted to you!). Typically, these open dialogues allow audience members to pose questions, seek points of clarification, and/or offer additional perspectives and interpretations that might assist you (the researcher) in continuing to develop the project—These conversations tend to be very positive, engaging and provide feedback or affirmations of how awesome your project is!

A couple things to keep in mind:

1. To stay within 10–12 minutes, in narrative form, your presentation should be condensed down to about 5 to 6 pages of double spaced text.
2. Don’t be nervous! These presentations can be fun! You all will be positioned as *experts* on your topic and text. This is your opportunity to demonstrate and share that expertise with the WSCA USRC learning community. 😊
3. Don’t forget to practice! While it is common (and perfectly acceptable) to read parts of these academic presentations, the best presenters will also be prepared to engage their audience with off-hand comments, possibly a joke, or anecdote. At times reading a

paper for 10 minutes can seem daunting, hard to follow, and stilted for audience members.

#### 4. PRACTICE!

Suggested presentation outline:

- **Introduction (30 seconds–1 minute):**
  - Use an attention getter to generate interest about your artifact or study;
  - Explicitly identify the artifact, discourse, or social phenomena that you examined and provide some sort of justification for the project (i.e., explicitly state why your research is merited);
  - State your research question(s) and the thesis advanced;
  - Provide a paper preview—tell your audience exactly what you are going to be talking about and how your presentation will unfold;
  
- **Context/Literature Review (2 minutes):** Identify and characterize the scholarly conversation that you are seeking to contribute to. This means:
  - Briefly demonstrate your knowledge about what other scholars have argued/concluded about in similar studies.
  
- **Methodology (30 seconds–1 minute):**
  - Offer a succinct and meaningful discussion of your artifact, discourse, or phenomena, including its occasion and audience(s); related popular/public commentaries; and, if necessary, any additional justification for why your artifact or phenomena merits scholarly attention.
  - Offer a clear and succinct explanation of the method that you used for analysis.
  
- **Analysis (5 minutes):**
  - This section should demonstrate use of the chosen method and reveal findings, arguments, and/or conclusions that are insightful, interesting, and/or a “surprise.”
  - The analysis portion of the presentation may also serve as an alternate place to account for relevant social, political or economic contexts, if this was not already done within the introduction.
  
- **Discussion aka Conclusion (1 minute):**
  - Provide a brief (!!!) recap of main arguments.
  - Clearly state the implications of your analysis. This may include: an elaboration of the political or social implications of your artifact or social phenomena;
  - Provide an elaboration of what your analysis teaches us about rhetoric or rhetorical discourse and how it functions OR what your investigation—particular to a social phenomena or discourse—can teach us.