

Suggestions for Presentations at Professional Conferences

NAISA welcomes presentations from a diverse range of scholars, at all career stages, and in a variety of formats. Our goal is that all participants have an equal opportunity to present their work and to benefit from the comments of discussants and audience members. We offer the following suggestions:

A. Presenters:

- a. Respect for colleagues motivates respect for time constraints. Most sessions limit each paper to 20 minutes, and include multiple presenters. Staying on time allows your colleagues equal time.
- b. It takes two minutes to read a double-spaced page: twenty minute paper = ten pages, no more.
- c. Prepare your paper to be slightly shorter than your time slot to allow time for brief introductory or concluding thoughts. (E.G. “I would like to thank our hosts...”)
- d. Practicing a conversational delivery is well worth the gratefulness of your audience for not having to listen to a monotone “reading.”
- e. A lively delivery should be paired with a full written version, not just ad-libbed, because: (1) you will be able to judge presentation time more exactly (2) Presenters must send papers (or summaries of other kinds of presentations, such as films) to discussants and chairs a month before the meeting, so that ... (3) Chairs can monitor the length of presentations before the session (and avoid possible embarrassment) and (4) MOST IMPORTANT! discussants can thoughtfully read, think, and write useful comments.
- f. Presenters should send copies of their vitae to the chair a month before the session so chairs can prepare introductions. Program organizers do not have the time or staff to do this.
- g. Presenters should make sure any equipment needed for their presentations is in place and works before the session. Because rooms are in constant use during the day, stop by in late afternoon or early morning when no sessions are scheduled. And be prepared for malfunctions—have a backup plan if you can’t show your powerpoint slides.

B. DISCUSSANTS:

- a. Discussants should not simply summarize the papers, but analyze, compare, ask questions, draw insights, and open up important topics. Discussants can and should provide suggestions and critiques useful for further development of the papers, especially those in preparation for submission for publication.
- b. Discussants should write their comments and give copies to presenters; it is difficult for presenters to remember or jot down oral comments.
- c. Discussants should also try to make time during the meeting (perhaps over a cup of coffee after the session) to review their comments with

presenters. This can be most helpful when presenters are at early stages in their careers.

C. SESSION CHAIRS:

- a. Chairs should communicate with session participants 2 or 3 months prior to the meeting to communicate time and date of the session, and necessary contact information.
- b. Chairs should check that equipment requests have been made and that the equipment is in place and works before the session. Because rooms are in constant use during the day, stop by in late afternoon or early morning when no sessions are scheduled. Be prepared for malfunctions. Is there an emergency contact?
- c. Chairs should communicate again with session participants 30 days before the session to insure that papers are being circulated to discussants, CV's have been submitted to facilitate introductions, etc. Chairs should urge anyone who is not able to attend to let everyone know as soon as possible.
- d. If possible, participants might gather 15 minutes prior to the session to meet one another, review the sequence of papers, etc.
- e. Do not change the sequence of papers. Audience members often move between sessions to catch particular presentations, following the program.

IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY OR CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN YOU MUST CANCEL YOUR ATTENDANCE

If presenters are not able to attend the meeting, they should contact the CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS as well as their session chair and discussant as soon as possible. The rate of late cancellations and no-shows has become a rather serious problem at NAISA meetings. In the last week before the annual meeting, panels have been left with as few as one presenter. We all know that emergencies happen, but our rate of cancellation indicates that apparently some members are submitting abstracts with no intention of attending the meeting, or with no clue how they might finance their attendance. Program Committee sympathizes with funding challenges, but please realize that by submitting a proposal, you have made a professional commitment to attend the conference if it is accepted. When participants withdraw from the conference, especially at a late date, for other than emergency reasons, it seriously impacts their colleagues on shared panels and the audience.

Credit for the original version of these suggestions is due to Prof. Theda Perdue (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill) and Prof. Fred Hoxie (University of Illinois, Urbana/Champaign); edited for NAISA website by Tsianina Lomawaima. The NAISA Council thanks Professors Perdue & Hoxie for allowing us to post this version.

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