Some Guideline for Presenting a Seminar

Introduction

Graduate seminars are an important part of any academic program. They provide an opportunity for a group of students to discuss important concepts or new material related to a topic and/or practical applications of this knowledge. The purpose of this seminar is to give you an opportunity to explore and examine a theme or topic in physical/biological anthropology in reasonable depth and then to give a presentation (using PowerPoint) on it to the group. In this course you will be encouraged to 'lead' two such seminars. Following your formal seminar, a discussion will take place allowing you to practice your critical, creative, organizational and managerial skills.

Within the week following your seminar, please arrange to meet with the instructor, who will assess your presentation.

Time Limit: 40 minutes (maximum) for presentation and 10-15 minutes for discussion

Seminar Topics

The topics for the seminar presentations should focus on a specialized topic within the broader topic being addressed that week. Some examples of these topics are provided in the syllabus. At the first meeting, you will select two different topics for your seminar presentations. You should begin preparing for your presentations through consultation with the instructor early in the semester.

Preparing for a seminar/General Guidelines

The key to giving a good seminar is thorough preparation beforehand. The following general guidelines will give you an idea of what is expected.

1. Do the general assigned reading for the week that your seminar will be given. All members of the seminar group must read all the assigned reading.
2. Following this, you should begin to develop a specialized topic that will be the focus of your presentation. The instructor must approve all seminar topics.
3. Generally, select a focused (specialized) rather than generalized topic. A general (textbook) survey that covers a great deal of information but does not allow an in-depth focused consideration of your topic is not acceptable.
4. There is a strict time limit so it is advised that you rehearse your presentation (i.e. practice with fellow students including slide changes, use of visuals etc.) and have your presentation (PowerPoint or equivalent) loaded and ready to go at the start of your presentation.
5. The style of your presentation should be smooth and flow without sounding as though you are reading it word for word. Don’t use too many images or tables of information and make sure all in attendance can see everything. Avoid distracting
mannerisms (e.g., random gesticulations with pointers, use of “ums”, “uhs” etc.). Speak clearly and audibly.

6. Your effectiveness in explaining the material in an easy to follow (minimal jargon) manner is also important. Present the relevant information without “snowing” the audience with too much information and data. Avoid presenting intricate details of your library research.

7. ‘Managing’ the discussion is an important part of the evaluation that you receive for your presentation so leave time for the discussion and prepare for it by having the appropriate questions and organization skills ready.

8. The components of a good seminar should follow the general guidelines for presenting scientific work at a conference: abstract, introduction (lead-in that explains the problems that you are interested in and its importance etc.), material and methods, results, and conclusions.