Criteria for the Chem 790 presentations

- The topic of this talk cannot be directly related to your research project. Those talks are reserved for Chem 791.
- You should base your presentation on at least 4 papers, articles, or communications with at least one of them being a full paper. The majority of these publications should be from high-quality journals, such as the ACS or AIP journals, and should have appeared within the past 5 years. Older publications should be restricted to background information.
- Your topic cannot have appeared in a review article such as Accounts of Chemical Research or Chemistry Reviews, within the last 5 years.
- Prepare a one-page handout on your presentation, giving (1) the title of your talk, (2) your name and date of talk, (3) a short abstract of your talk, no more than 1/2 page in length, (4) any chemical structures, reactions, or tabulated data that your listeners may wish to refer to during the talk and Q&A, and (5) a list the references used to prepare this talk. This handout must be submitted to me two days before your talk. I will distribute copies before the seminar.

Finding a suitable topic can be challenging. A good place to start may be a short note in C&E News or Science on a recent discovery or application that gets your interest. You may wish to consider several potential topics for your presentation. Run a literature search on SciFinder, PubMed, Article First or Google Scholar to find additional references, using author names or keywords. You may wish to discuss this with your research advisor, other graduate students or with me. Then carefully reread the main articles and be sure that you understand related background information. You should have a good understanding of the results of your topic(s) and its implications. In short, you want the listener to be able to understand the authors’ rationale, what lessons they learned, and where they may be headed. I recommend that you have an almost completed talk one week before your presentation date. The graphics of your talks can take considerable time, so be sure to start early. Anticipate the questions that you may be asked. Finally, practice, practice, practice, and help others prepare their talks as well.

You will be expected to provide me with your written comments on each talk, and to participate in the Q&A for at least three of the talks. I will provide a form for you to fill out on each presentation, for you to make suggestions to be provided along with my written comments to the speaker. I will not attach student names to the comments delivered to the speakers. It will be in everyone’s interest for your comments to be constructive but accurate. To save us all superfluous writing, I will not convey unsubstantive comments like ‘Good job!’ or ‘I hate spectroscopy talks!’ to the speaker. Instead, make comments that identify what the speaker should or should not do in future presentations, such as ‘I especially liked the way you used Haiku to explain Suzuki couplings.’ or ‘Only show the numbers in the table that you actually need for your talk, instead of a hundred rows of transition frequencies. That’s why I hate spectroscopy talks!’.
Grading

Your grade will be based on your own presentation (70%), your written comments on other presentations (20%), and your participation in Q&A (10%). I will assign numerical values to these based on rubrics that I will distribute later.

Suggestions for a Successful Seminar

- Consider this a professional presentation, so dress and act accordingly.
- Your presentation should be 35-45 minutes in length, excluding the 10-15 minutes for the questions and answers portion.
- In general, plan on spending 1-2 minutes per transparency or slide. Thus, you will probably need 20-35 slides for your talk. The slides must be readable, not too cluttered, effectively expressing only a couple of ideas each.
- Check the quality of your graphics when displayed on a big screen, especially any that you capture from PDFs. If necessary, redraw them. You don't have to present exactly what appears in the paper: customize as appropriate to simplify or emphasize points specifically for your talk. Carefully check for typos.
- Practice your presentation in front of your fellow students and members of your research group (say at a group meeting), using the same slides that you will use. Be careful of specialized terminology. Always know your audience and their level of familiarity with your topic. Don't speak down to them, or over their heads. Because we will have students from several subdisciplines of chemistry (as well as an instructor who hasn't studied organic chemistry since the last century), you may need to give a longer introduction than you would for a talk at a meeting to a very targeted audience. Be sure to check operation of the computer and quality of images in the room before your presentation.
- Be prepared to answer questions regarding the main topic of your presentation. If you cite information using another paper, such as a synthesis route, be prepared to explain the central methodologies used in each of your citations. Study the experimental sections and make appropriate notes.
- Lastly, I strongly recommend that you begin preparing for your talk earlier than you might think: at least 3-4 weeks before your presentation. Do not procrastinate.

Student learning objectives:

At the conclusion of the course, the student should be able to:

- Research the chemical literature on a topic of current and significant interest.
- Deliver a clear and concise presentation on a such topic.
- Articulate suggestions for improvements to presentations given by others.

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.