

Economics 313, Fall 2021, Presentation Assignment

Each pair of students will be assigned one statement. Immediately before class, a coin flip will determine which student goes first. The first student will be provide an presentation arguing that the statement is true. The second students will then provide a presentation arguing that the statement is false.

Note that the nature of the assignment requires that your prepare for both sides. This is intentional. The purpose of this uncertainty is to incentivize you to research both sides' strong points, which I believe is essential to a good presentation.

If final enrollment is an odd number, one student will be asked to take on a modified role.

Here are some guidelines:

1. Plan on speaking for about 15 minutes.
2. Try to identify the core economic issue which causes reasonable and informed people to disagree. Then argue for why your side of the issue is correct. For example, many economic policy debates boil down to one side believing that a market failure exists while the other believes that markets are efficient. In this example, you should identify the market failure, or lack thereof, and explain why your position remedies the problem or why the other side's does not.
3. A good presentation will acknowledge, refute, or mitigate the other side's best arguments.
4. In some cases, we will have already covered the related material in class. In others, we will not have done so. In the latter case, you will want to provide more background than the former.
5. Your goal is to provide reasoned and informed arguments to an audience of people with extensive coursework in economics. Tailor your presentation accordingly.
6. Students who fail to show up for their presentation will receive a zero, and no opportunity for a makeup will be offered. If an unexpected conflict emerges, please contact me immediately. If a student does not show up, I will ask for a volunteer to "wing it." Such a volunteer may receive extra credit at my discretion; their grade cannot be adversely affected by volunteering.
7. In the past, some presentations have led to lengthy further discussion. This is welcomed.

8. I am aware that this assignment may cause some students considerable anxiety, especially among those with little experience public speaking. I think overcoming this anxiety to give an effective presentation is an important skill, which is part of my motivation for including this assignment in the class. Remember that I am happy to meet with you or email with you to discuss your preparation and make sure that you are on the right track.

9. Your grade solely depends on the quality of your arguments, not your position (which is random anyways). Some topics are more difficult than others, I adjust my expectations accordingly.

Here is the list of statements. Depending on enrollment, one may be dropped. If needed, I may provide clarification or refinement of topics in class prior to the presentations.

Tuesday, September 21: U.S. policy promoting home ownership has done more harm than good.

Tuesday, September 28: Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are culpable for the Subprime Mortgage Bubble.

Tuesday, October 5: The Federal Reserve's monetary policy between 2000-2007 ("too low for too long") made the 2008 financial crisis worse.

Tuesday, October 12: The U.S. government should have saved Lehman Brothers.

Tuesday, October 26: Non-conventional monetary policy is effective at mitigating recessions?

Thursday, November 2: CAREs and subsequent fiscal policy has effectively mitigated the economic impact of covid-19.

Tuesday, November 16: Lockdowns were the correct policy to combat covid-19