"Best Practices" for Class Presentations

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Elements of a good presentation:
- Clear description of the **question or puzzle** that you are answering.
- Clear summary of your argument (you must pick a side!).
- Demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical terrain/debates:
    o i.e. what are the main disagreements and which side do you fall on.
    o BUT don't show us all the arguments. Focus on just one!
- Clear explication of the theory or model that you think best solves puzzle.
- Give evidence to back up your argument:
    o Clear summary of findings (from many studies or if the topic is under-studied, from a few key texts);
    o Demonstrate understanding of empirical analyses.
- Takeaways and implications should be clear.

Slides:
- Slides are meant to help audience clarify issues, they are NOT a script for the presenter.
- Slides should not be over-crowded.
- Pictures are worth a thousand words, but they must be legible. ALL tables and graphs should be blown up or zoomed in on.
- ALL figures and tables should be described in detail:
    o Walk audience through the axes, or through the columns and rows of the chart. What is the DV? What are the EVs?
    o Explain the finding (size) as well as magnitude relative to an important baseline (i.e. infant mortality fell by 2 percent in the president's district, but relative to what? 50 percent? 4 percent? This matters!!)

Presentation:
- Audience should focus on YOU and what you are saying. You should be front and center, standing tall, full body facing the audience, not fidgeting.
- Some people can speak extemporaneously, some need notes or to read. It is OK to read notes but you are presenting the thoughts (the thoughts aren't presenting you) so keep audience's eyes on you.
- Make sure you understand your takeaway and re-iterate it in different ways throughout the presentation. Your argument should be a tune we hum on our way out.

An excellent presentation does all of the above, AND demonstrates some originality. Taking the question further, suggesting ways to improve the current empirical or theoretical terrain, making specific policy implications. Note that trying to do all these things would be BAD, so focus on one or two.

Making a strong argument requires Simplicity, Clarity, and Depth.