

11.471– Local Economic Development in Developing Countries (Spring 2010)
Final Assignment (oral presentation), last two days of class

On the last day of class, each person will speak for up to eight minutes about a few observations elicited from the readings. By the end of the semester, you will already have experience with the two papers you will have written with these kinds of observations on the reading assignments; and you will have received written feedback (and in class) on Assignment 1 about how to improve.

Prepare for the last day by standing back and thinking about what stands out for you from this whole body of required course readings—including the readings covered in the reading assignments subsequent to those for Assignment 2. Think about things that struck you and why, what illuminated matters for you in a new way—basically, what you learned that you didn't know or understand before. As before, although you won't be able to speak about the readings one by one (there won't be time for that), you can bunch certain readings which lend themselves to this.

In order for everyone to have a chance to speak, your time will be short, as noted above, so it won't be possible to exceed the allotted time. (This is a good exercise for presentations you will often have to make in your future professional work, where time will be limited and people listening will want to engage with what you are saying). It would probably be best to prepare a brief outline with the points you want to make, and the concrete details or examples you want to mention; at the same time, you should not read from a prepared paper or outline. An important objective of these two sessions is for all of us to hear about each other.

In your presentations, as usual, avoid common mistakes like being too vague, abstract, and/or too sweeping in your statements. Cram your presentation full of concreteness and specifics. Avoid using adjectives that focus on how you felt about a reading, such as: I was intrigued by, it was fascinating, I was struck by, I really liked this particular part. The listener (or reader) wants to learn what you learned, not to know how you felt—wants to come to this understanding along the concrete path(s) that you did. So draw the listener himself into the world of facts and findings that struck you.

Also, avoid focusing on what a reading or set of readings “left out.” Avoid reporting that you were “surprised” that something was left out. The point of the exercise is for you to convey what you learned, not what the author did not do and what you wished would have done. Convey this in concrete terms, and stay away from big generalizations, including not coming down on one side of a broad yes-no question.

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11.471 Targeting the Poor: Local Economic Development in Developing Countries
Fall 2009

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