Syllabus for Stat 8913

Requirements

Each third year student must give two 50 minute seminar style talks during the academic year. In the fall semester the talk should be about your summer consulting project. If you had an internship you should can about a problem you worked on there. In addition you must write a paper about your work and hand it in to me. In the spring, the talk is on a paper or subject of your own choosing. Before making your selection you should check with me.

The Friday, the week before you give your talk, you should plan to come to my office and show me your slides. I will reserve Fridays at 2:30 for this meeting. If you cannot come then you need to set up a time to see me. If possible, you should give me a link to a pdf file of the paper you will be discussing. You also need to give me an abstract to send around to the faculty and students.

Before your presentation you must give a practice talk to at least one second year student whom I will randomly assign to you.

I have put links to two tex files for talks on the class web page. They are very basic. You may borrow from them if you wish. There are other links for information on how to prepare and give a good talk.

Each semester all students must attend four departmental seminars. At the end of the semester hand in a list of the four seminars you attended. For each seminar mention one thing you either liked or found annoying about the presentation. Learn from these talks. Borrow things you like and try to avoid making common mistakes.

In the fall semester each second year student will be required to give a 20 to 25 minute classroom presentation talk. In this case you need to announce before you start who is the intended audience, for example Stat 3011 or Stat 4101. For the classroom presentation you can use either slides or the blackboard. In the spring each second year student will be required to give a 20 minute talk about the main idea from a paper that you found interesting.

Finally, attendance is expected in this course and is part of your grade. If you must miss a class please contact me beforehand to explain your reason for missing the class.
Preparing a good talk

Here are some things to remember when giving your talk:

1. Nobody is as interested in what you are talking about as you are.

2. To a first approximation nobody knows anything about what you are talking about.

3. The next day listeners will able to remember at most three points from your talk.

4. Everybody should be able to understand everything in the first half of your talk. You may wish to pitch the second half to the third year students.

You can invite a friend to your practice talk. You will usually find that it is way too long. You will need to decide what is really important and to cut large chunks of material. It is easy for a listener to get hung up on something which you find completely obvious. Although out of fashion a handout is a good way to help the listener stay focused.

The nice thing about giving a technical talk is that you always have a story to tell. Good talks focus on the important stuff and ignore most of the more subtle details. Do not try to cover too much. For a 50 minute talk you should not have more than 20 to 25 slides. With lots of preparation and practice you can learn to be a good speaker.

Common mistakes to avoid

1. Too many slides.

2. Too much on a slide.

3. Too many formulas.

4. Reading the slides.

5. A title that does not describe the talk.

6. A boring introduction.
7. Using unnecessary fritter ware that detracts from your talk.

8. Continually waving a laser pointer so it jumps all over the screen. Use it and then put it down.


10. Not talking loud enough.

11. Not checking before the talk that the equipment is working.