1. Graduate Student Symposium: April 6, 2016
   - Registration open till **February 12, 2016**.
   - Poster presentations, oral presentations, and creative performances.
   - Monetary prizes will be awarded! Additional information at [http://www.grad.uni.edu/graduate-student-symposium](http://www.grad.uni.edu/graduate-student-symposium).

2. Ask your advisor and/or Graduate Coordinator about discipline-specific conferences
Overview of this Presentation

1. Writing an abstract for a conference
2. Preparing your oral presentation/paper for a conference
3. Presenting your work at a conference

Note: specifics often vary by discipline - always check with your advisor about the details of conference presentations in your discipline.
Abstracts

- Abstract should provide a very short summary of your research paper or project: it asks and answers your research question.
- It must follow all specific guidelines in the call for papers.
- Abstracts are usually 250-300 words. If the length is not specified in the call for papers keep it between 200-300 words. (Grad symposium limit is 250 words).
Components of an Abstract

1. **Problem or question** you are investigating: Why does it matter? How does it fit into your field of study?

2. **Method**: What was your research material and how did you analyze it? Did you read historical documents in an archive? Create a survey? Collect water samples from a river? How did you determine what evidence to use? How did you analyze this evidence or data?

3. **Results**: What did you find?

4. **Conclusions**: Highlight what is original about your findings/approach/argument & explain how your work relates to the current scholarship in the field.
The Conference Paper v. Oral Presentation

• Name Reflects Disciplinary Differences – some call them conference papers, others oral presentations.

• In some disciplines it is common to read from a script, in others it is not - know your discipline!
General Tips for Papers/Oral Presentations

- Consider your Audience:
  - Write/speak differently for a multi-disciplinary conference (such as the Graduate Symposium) than for a disciplinary-specific conference.
  - Judges at Graduate Symposium will not be in your specific field.

- Follow all Conference Guidelines (start times, time limit, due dates, word limits, etc.)
Writing your Paper or Presentation

• Pay attention to your writing - make it interesting to the reader!
• Revise it several times. Show a draft to your advisor for comments.
• Come up with an interesting title that also illuminates your topic:
  - A "Bovine Glamour Girl": Borden Milk, Elsie the Cow, and the Convergence of Technology, Animals, and Gender at the 1939 New York World's Fair
  - The Amazon and the Anthropocene: 13,000 years of human influence in a tropical rainforest
  - That "Every Man for Himself" Thing: The Rationales of Individualism Among the Urban Poor
Structuring your Paper

• Tell a story with your paper/presentation

   1. **Introduction/Beginning** - start the presentation with a “hook” (specific example/story) from your evidence to draw the reader in. This story should lead to your research question and why it was needed.

   2. **Body/Middle** – Discuss methods and make argument. Explain what evidence you used, why you used it, how you analyzed it and what you discovered in your study.

   3. **Conclusion/End** - sum up what you found and how it makes a contribution in your field. Say why it matters.
How Long Should My Paper Be? Or Less is More

- If you read your paper: 2-2.5 pages per minute. (Grad Symposium limit is 13 minutes; papers should be no longer than 6 pages).

- If you speak from an outline: time yourself before the conference to make sure you are under the limit.

- NEVER go over the limit. In many conferences they will cut you off (including the Grad Symposium).

- NEVER rush through to finish on time – no one will understand what you are saying.
It depends. Ask your advisor what is preferable in your discipline.

Pros and Cons:

- **Reading a paper** allows you to cover more material, say precisely what you mean and ensures that you won’t forget anything.

- **Speaking** is more interesting, much more engaging for the audience.
You tell me the presentation can’t be too long, but how am I supposed to cut my 20 page paper down to a 13 minute presentation? Help!

1. It’s not easy – that is why you spend a lot of time revising.
2. When you revise, look for places you say the same thing, or a similar thing, more than once and condense.
3. If you have more than one example making the same point, cut one.
4. If you made more than one argument in your research project, consider focusing on just one for the presentation.
5. Show a draft to your advisor – ask for feedback.
6. Remember - there are questions and answers – you can talk about things you left out then.
Using Images, Sound, Technology

- Use pictures/graphs relevant to your presentation, when possible. People like pictures!
- Provide captions for all pictures/graphs.
- Powerpoint & Prezi are great, but beware...
  - DO NOT put too much text on a page – if you think it might be too much text, it IS too much text.
  - Do not use fonts too small for people to read to save space. As we get older, so do our eyes...
  - Do not use special effects that distract from the presentation.
  - Use video/audio clips only when they add something important. Make them short. Presentations are not long – most of the time you should be speaking.
A Distracting Slide...

- Here is an example
- of animation
- effects
- **AND FONTS**
- that are too busy
- and distracting
- What am I discussing here?
- Anybody paying attention to what I am saying?
A Powerpoint Slide with Picture that anyone could make...

- Have outline on this side with your key points on this part of the topic
- If possible, use pictures that are likely to grab the attention of the audience
- But make sure the picture is relevant

from: National Tobacco Festival, South Boston, Virginia, circa 1937. Courtesy of South Boston-Halifax County Museum
Giving your Presentation

- Practice your presentation in front of family, friends or mirror several times.
- DON’T RUSH. Slow down so people have a chance to process what you say.
- Time your presentation and if you are above the limit, cut material, don’t speed up.
- Proofread your powerpoint, handouts etc. ahead of time
- Even if you are reading your paper, make sure you look up frequently and make eye contact with the audience.
- Dress professionally - whatever that means in your discipline - it is not always the same.
Handling the Question & Answer Session

- The question and answer period after your presentation is part of your presentation.
- Questions are a way to get feedback on your project - use them to think about revisions and future directions for your research.
- Admit when you don’t know the answer to something - no one can know everything about their topic – don’t pretend you do.
- NEVER make something up.
Handling Questions and Answers

Handy phrases to keep in mind for questions that you are not sure how to handle/have not yet looked into:

- “That’s a really interesting question …” (buys you time)
- “Could you clarify____ a bit?” (this may help you better understand what is being asked and buys you time)
- “That’s an interesting idea. I haven’t looked into it yet, but …”
- “Do you have any suggestions for how I could … ?”
- “It may be because _____, but I am still looking into that.”
General Conference Advice

- Go to other presentations to see how other people present their work.
- Ask questions about their work during the Q&A session.
- Feel free to go up to presenter afterwards and introduce yourself and talk with them - especially if they are doing very similar work or you really liked their presentation.
Other Questions You Asked

- Can I give the same paper at 2 different conferences? In general you can give a paper on the same topic twice, but you should revise the paper for the second presentation based on feedback at the first. Also, check with your advisor about whether this is appropriate at a specific conference. (it’s ok for the Grad Symposium)

- What if I am not done with my project? Can I still present? Yes! Just structure your abstract and presentation in a more open-ended fashion. Talk about what you have found so far, what you think it may mean, how it could contribute to your field.

- Anything else?