Section Presentations: What They Are

The U.S. Congress often asks experts to present their views on important public policy matters to hearing conducted in Congressional committees. In our sections you will also be asked to testify. As in a real hearing, you will give a short presentation and then you will be questioned by an opinionated and perhaps skeptical panel.

Your presentation will last five (5) minutes. If you run over you may be cut off. Your presentation should include (1) an argument, and (2) supporting evidence or reasoning. Your TA and your fellow students will then pose questions and ask you to address counter-arguments. Be prepared to defend your argument with deductive or historical evidence.

You choose the topic of your presentation. You can make an argument that reacts to an issue raised in class or in the course readings, or you can address a subject of special concern to you. Your presentation can overlap with your paper topic.

We suggest that you bring an outline of you presentation and either hand it out or put it up on the blackboard, to help your audience follow your argument.

We also suggest that you summarize your argument in a couple of sentences before marching through it. Again, this makes you easier to follow.

We will try to organize presentations so that there are two presenters for each section meeting in which presentations are made, and the two presentations are on the same topic. Things are most exciting if they disagree.

We recommend that you practice your speech a couple of times—to the mirror or, better still, to a friend—before giving it. You can also practice using the facilities of MIT's writing and Communications Center (14N-317, 253-3090, http://web.mit.edu/writing), and can get helpful advice from their staff.