UNIVERSITY OF
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URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Guidelines for Leading a Paper Discussion

Once in the semester, you will be asked to lead a paper discussion. You will **work together with your assigned partners**, and come up with **a set of slides** to help structure the discussion. You are expected to **share all responsibilities equally**, including putting the slides together and presenting on the day of the discussion. However, you are free to choose what that distribution looks like.

A few pointers regarding submissions:
- **Sunday before your scheduled discussion, by 11:59 PM:** Email Saugata (ghose@illinois.edu) with an initial draft of your slides. This should be close to complete, but does not need to be a final version. Note that I will be posting this version online (as a password-protected PDF) before class.
- **Day of discussion (Tuesday):** On Gradescope, upload a PDF of your final presentation slides to the assignment labeled **Paper Discussion Presentation**. *Only one partner needs to upload to Gradescope, but they **must** add the other team members to the submission (there is an option for this).*
- **You do NOT need to do a separate paper review for the week of your discussion.**

Below is a rough breakdown of points, and what I expect for a discussion that would get full points.

1. Basic Structure & Slide Format (20 points)
- Two summaries, 10 minutes each – one for each paper assigned for the discussion
- A comparison & perspective of the two papers, 6–8 minutes
- A list of discussion points to start the conversation, which you will lead for the remaining time
- Slides are not just a wall of text, but include diagrams (note that it's okay to use figures from the papers or from other sources, as long as you include written attribution on your slides)
- Title slide includes discussion topic name (see schedule on webpage) and both presenters' names
- *Note: animations are helpful in certain cases, but they are certainly not required for full credit*

2. Speaking Skills (10 points, *graded individually*)
- You talk for roughly an equal amount of time as your partners
- No rambling statements – what you say should be concise and precise (practice it beforehand!)
- You aren't just reading text off of the slides
- You make good eye contact with the audience

3. Paper Summary (20 points per paper)
- Covers the key points of the paper
- Easy to understand for someone who has *not* read the paper
- Does not include irrelevant details
- Does not go significantly over or under time
- Highlights the key insights and/or key ideas of the paper

4. Comparison & Perspective (15 points)

- Start with strengths/weaknesses of each paper (and you can include ones that you did not agree with your partners on)
- Highlight whether the papers are working on the same or highly-related topics
- Identify important methodology differences
- Discuss your **opinions** on which of the two papers tackles the more important problem (it's okay if you believe that both are equally important, but you need to **justify** why you feel that way)

5. Discussion (15 points)

- Include a list of questions to discuss with the audience
- Initiate the discussion for each question – say what you think about a particular point (and, if your partners disagree, they should say their view as well), and then ask what others think
- *Note: don't be afraid to make controversial claims, but make sure that they aren't factually incorrect*