One of our goals for this class is not only to teach you how to present good talks, but also how to listen to them.

[A good communicator recognizes the three major constraints on speakers and plans his talk with them in mind:
1. Who is the audience? What is their level of expertise? How motivated are they to listen? What is likely to confuse or bore them?
2. What is the purpose of the talk? To present new results? To inform? To solicit feedback on a new idea? To entertain? To get a job?
3. How much time has been allotted? It takes about 5–7 minutes to adequately motivate, explain, and summarize one main point in an oral talk. A speaker cannot cover six main points in a 10-min. APS-style presentation, no matter how fast he talks.]

As you listen to a talk, ask yourself how well the speaker planned for these three constraints.
What makes a good talk?

PHYS 496, Vidya Madhavan

Your Name

Date of Colloquium/Seminar:

Title/Speaker: 

Write a synopsis report, do not simply fill one sentence answers to the suggested outline shown below. To receive full credit for the report, evaluate all three elements of the talk—the title and abstract, the scientific content, and the presentation style.

Evaluate the Title and Abstract:

- Did the title attract your attention and interest you in the talk?
- Did the abstract adequately prepare you for the talk? Did it preview the main ideas?
- Was the abstract written at an appropriate level for the audience?
- Did the abstract use excessive jargon or undefined terms?
- Did the abstract engage your interest?

Discuss the Content:

- What was the main scientific goal of the research being described?
- Summarize the main activities or methods reported in the talk.
- Summarize the results or significant conclusions.
- Was the information presented at an appropriate level for the audience? Could you follow the flow of information? What were any “speed bumps” where the speaker tripped up?
- How well did the speaker answer audience questions? Did he or she interrupt the question so everyone could hear it? Did the speaker treat questions courteously and respectfully?

Assess the Presentation:

- Comment on the quality of the slides. Did they enhance or distract from the presentation? (Readable, right size, fonts, endnotes, visually interesting, distracting effects, tapes, awesome architecture)
- Comment on the speaker’s pace and vocal delivery. (too fast, too slow, hard to understand, mumbled)
- Did the speaker have any distracting mannerisms? Did they maintain eye contact with the audience, avoid reading off the slides, hide behind things?
- How could the speaker improve his or her presentation?

Due Dates:

- Colloquium Report 1—Due by Friday, 11:59 p.m., February 25; return due by March 19.
- Colloquium Report 2—Due by 11:59 p.m., Friday, March 26; return due by April 2.

No colloquium reports will be accepted for grading (either initial or revised) after April 30.

Submit your colloquium report to the [http://example.com portal]. Reports must be submitted by the established deadlines to receive full credit.
IN THIS LECTURE WE WILL

Learn to evaluate talks analytically and critically—think about the delivery as well as the scientific content

Giving good talks is a skill. And like every skill, you improve by practicing and learning from others.
Why?

Listening to talks and evaluating them critically will make you a better speaker

Learning the art of listening and evaluating talks will allow you to get more information from talks and allow you to learn more effectively

Excellent advice from Professor DeMarco:
“Few people take the time to evaluate a talk that they have heard. Doing so is really the key to learning how to give a better talk.
[“If you want to become a better speaker, after giving or listening to a talk *every time*:]
**Think:** What was ineffective about the talk? What are a few things that could be improved? Be specific. Try to identify details and larger issues.
**Think:** What was effective? Find three things. Be specific. Try to identify details and larger issues.”]
Some practical tips for understanding content

- All talks have an **abstract** — so read it before you go
- **Take notes** — preferably on paper/tablet
- **Listen** critically
  - **DO** try to understand what the speaker is trying to convey
  - **DON’T** get hung up on a detail, instead try to stay with the speaker
  - **DO** try to get the big picture: Why? How? Results
- **Watch** critically
  - Evaluate the quality of the presentation
- **Pay close attention** in the first 15-20 minutes for big picture motivation and ideas
To evaluate the presentation you should know:

What makes a good talk?

If you didn’t like a talk, don’t assume it’s “your problem.” There is a surprising universality to good or bad talks. There are very few boring topics. I’ve seen great talks on the smallest results. And terrible talks on really exciting research.
1) Did you learn something interesting? Were you engaged?

- Be targeted to specific audience
- Have good presentation and delivery

If you didn’t like a talk, don’t assume it’s “your problem.” There is a surprising universality to good or bad talks. There are very few boring topics. I’ve seen great talks on the smallest results. And terrible talks on really exciting research.
1) Did you learn something interesting? Were you engaged?

- Be targeted to specific audience
- Have good presentation and delivery
- Tell a STORY
- Be structured well/pedagogical

If you didn’t like a talk, don’t assume it’s “your problem.” There is a surprising universality to good or bad talks. There are very few boring topics. I’ve seen great talks on the smallest results. And terrible talks on really exciting research.
2) The talk should tell a story

A good talk tells a story:

There should be a beginning middle and end.

The way to tell a story is to identify the most important points you want the audience to take away from the talk

Then weave your story around it
3) Structure: the talk should be well structured

- **Background and Motivation**: Why should you care? How well does the speaker convey the importance of the results and the bigger picture they fit into?
- **Clearly explain the methods used**: How was the work (theory or experiment) done? What cool new tools did they develop or use?
- **What did they find?** What was the primary discovery?
- **Circle back to the motivation?** How did their discovery move the field forward?
Evaluate the Title and Abstract
- Did the title attract your attention and interest you in the talk?
- Did the abstract adequately prepare you for the talk? Did it preview the main ideas?
- Was the abstract written at an appropriate level for the audience?
- Did the abstract use excessive jargon or undefined terms?
- Did the abstract engage your interest?

Discuss the Content
- What was the main scientific goal of the research being described?
- Summarize the main activities or methods reported in the talk.
- Summarize the results or significant conclusions.
Assess the Presentation

- Comment on the quality of the slides. Did they enhance or detract from the presentation? (readable, right mix of text and graphics, visually interesting, distracting effects, typos, poor slide aesthetics)
- Comment on the speaker’s pace and vocal delivery. (too fast, too slow, hard to understand, mumbled)
- Did the speaker have any distracting mannerisms? (did not maintain eye contact with the audience, paced, read text off the slides, fiddled with things)
- How could the speaker improve his or her presentation?
- Was the information presented at an appropriate level for the audience? Could you follow the flow of information? Were there any “speed bumps” where the speaker lost you?
- How well did the speaker answer audience questions? Did he or she repeat the question so everyone could hear it? Did the speaker treat questioners courteously and respectfully?
Write a narrative report; do not simply fill in one-sentence answers to the suggested outline shown below. To receive full credit for the report, evaluate all three elements of the talk—the title and abstract, the scientific content, and the presentation style.
What makes a good talk?
PHYS 496, Vidya Madhavan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Semiconductor-Based Hybrid Superconducting Qubits&quot;</td>
<td>Angela Hoa, University of Illinois</td>
<td>1/3/2021</td>
<td>4 p.m.</td>
<td>ZOOM</td>
<td>see description for information</td>
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<td>&quot;Quantum Science With alkaline Earth Atom Arrays&quot;</td>
<td>Jake Casey, University of Illinois</td>
<td>1/29/2021</td>
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<td>&quot;New Tools for the Quantum Many-body Problem&quot;</td>
<td>Dean Lee, North Carolina State University</td>
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<td>&quot;Quantum Computing with Atom&quot;</td>
<td>Vladimir Manucharyan, University of Maryland</td>
<td>3/3/2021</td>
<td>4 p.m.</td>
<td>ZOOM</td>
<td>see description for information</td>
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<td>&quot;Quantum Computing with Atom&quot;</td>
<td>Christopher Monroe, University of Maryland</td>
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<td>4 p.m.</td>
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<td>Sophia Economou, Virginia Tech.</td>
<td>3/31/2021</td>
<td>4 p.m.</td>
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<td>see description for information</td>
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<td>&quot;Quantum Computing with Atom&quot;</td>
<td>Marielena LoVerde, State University of New York</td>
<td>4/7/2021</td>
<td>4 p.m.</td>
<td>ZOOM</td>
<td>see description for information</td>
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