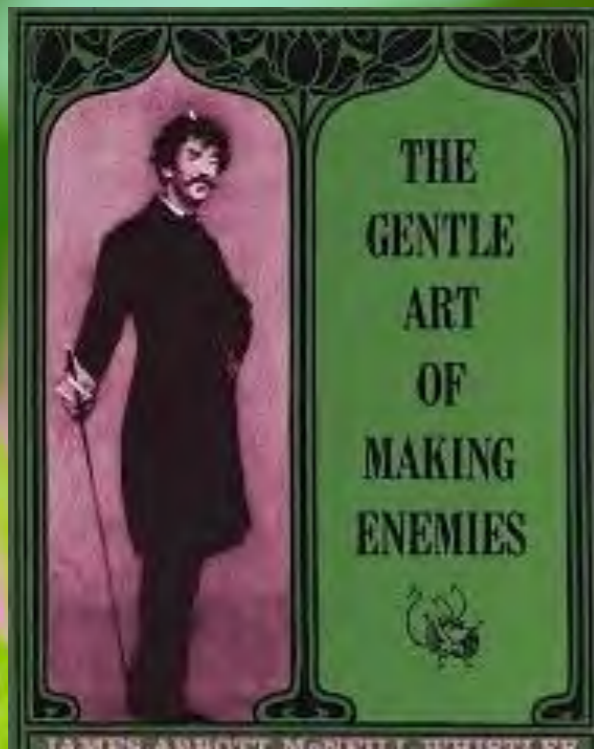


The Gentle Art of Giving a Paper

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH...



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Tools and tips for giving effective talks:

- ✦ **Class presentations**
- ✦ **Conference talks**
- ✦ **Professional talks**

The Audience



Personal History

My public speaking past:

- Docent at Washington arts organization
- Occasional presentations in graduate seminars
- First conference paper: 1995 (Driscoll Hotel, Austin, TX. 5th year of graduate school)



Later...

- Academic conferences, national and international
- Department colloquia



At Helsinki, Finland, 2010



Reykjavik, Iceland, 2009



At Sorbonne, Paris, 2011



Memorial lectures:
Howell Memorial
Lecture
Rhode Island College
2010



Public talks: "Mixed Taste" lecture at Lab at Belmar, 2010

Hints and Tips: Lighting things Up



&

Avoiding Disaster



Give a paper when you
have something to say

Q. When should one give a conference paper?

A. When research and thinking are developed enough for a sustained and coherent presentation and fruitful discussion.

It usually takes more than three weeks to
prepare a good impromptu speech. – Mark Twain

Context: the audience

Who is your audience?

Know the situation:

- Audience background knowledge
- Purpose of conference (academic, public forum, invasion force, etc.)



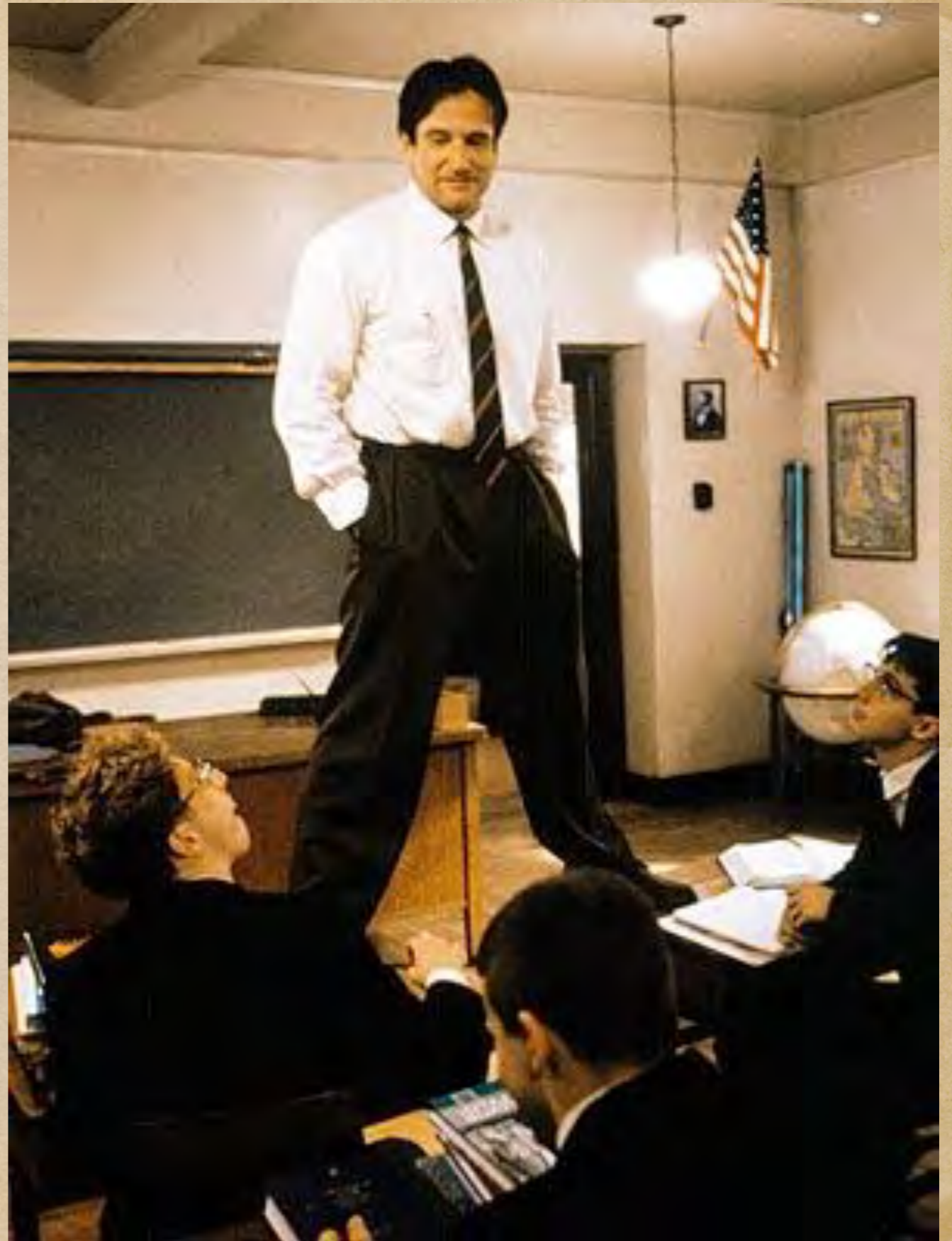
Motivating
Audience is

Important:

Substance

Style

Timing



Substance of Talk

A COHERENT WORK WITH A CLEAR PURPOSE

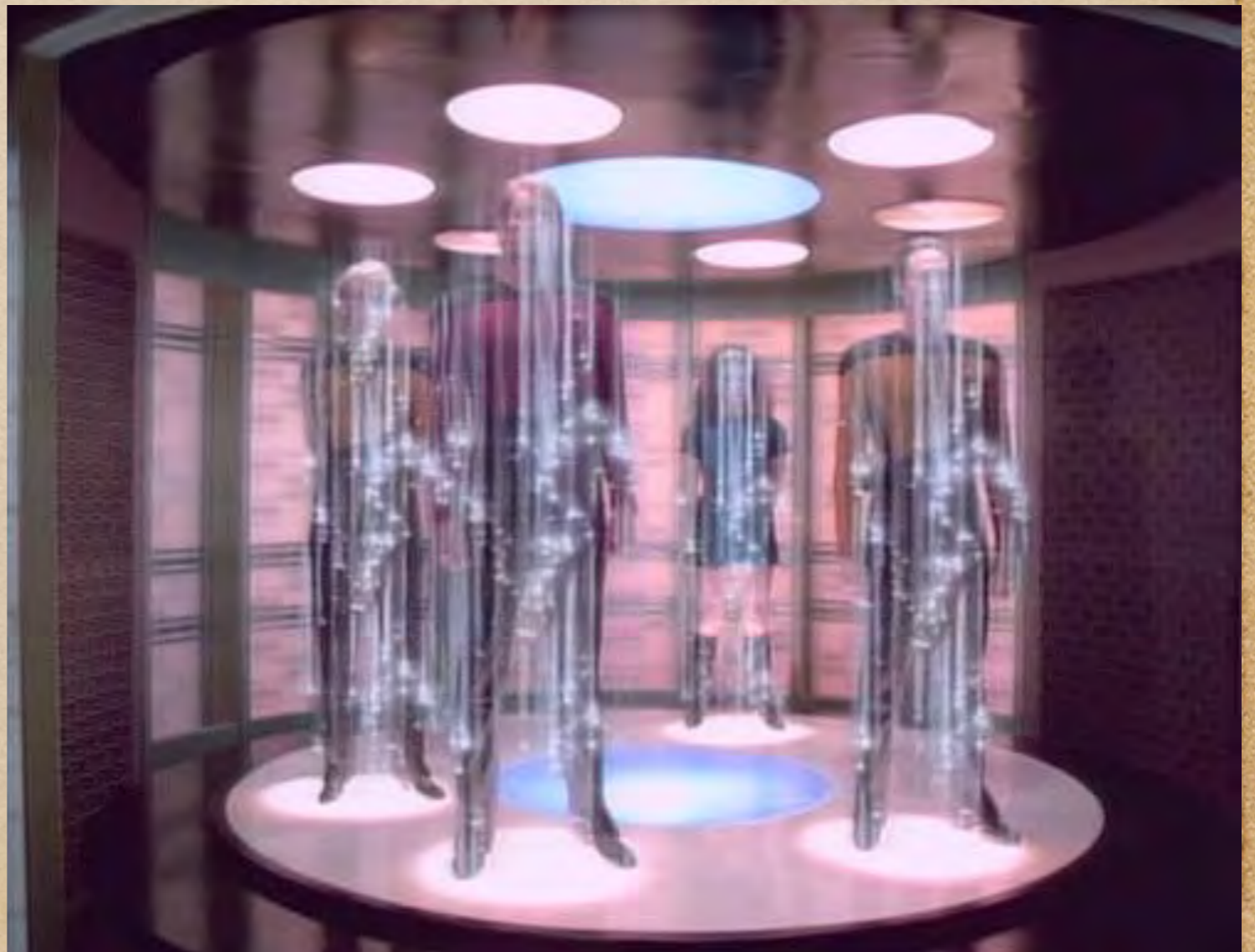
- ✦ A **BEGINNING**, **MIDDLE**, AND **END**.
- ✦ DON'T LET LITTLE **ASIDES** GET IN THE WAY
- ✦ DON'T **EDIT** AS YOU DELIVER
- ✦ MINIMIZE USE OF "QUOTATIONS"

CREATE A CLEAR NARRATIVE & DON'T STEP ON IT

Transitions Matter: Don't leave your audience behind

Ensure audience can stay with the thread

- “Sheepdog Sentences” can keep the group together.



Sheepdog Sentences



Sheepdog sentences sum up before moving on: “So, my point has been X. Now let’s see how Y follows/adds to X, etc.”

A handout can help do these chores.

Style

A talk must be understood **AURALLY**:
your audience is *listening not reading*.

- **Monotone voices** cause **SUICIDAL** thoughts
- **Vary the volume and rhythm** of your voice.
- **Speak confidently** but not quickly.



*The right word may be effective, but no word was
ever as effective as a rightly timed pause*

— Mark Twain

For listeners: **Less** is More

Listeners cannot retain large numbers of details

Less is More:

- Cut material ruthlessly
- Build around one or two central concepts
- Allow time for a conclusion



Talk it or Write it?

If you can TALK a paper (using just bullet points but creating a coherent narrative): great.

Know that this requires you to have your material down **COLD**.

If you need to write/read ...

KISS: = Keep It Simple Stupid!

- Use direct language, shorter sentences
- Insert directions to yourself—
- *“pause here”*
- *“emphasize this point”*
- *“make eye contact”*

REPEAT KEY INSIGHTS:

Forecast -- Tell -- Remind

- **F**orecast what you're going to tell them
- **T**ell them
- **R**emind (summarize) what you've said



Interrogating the Denotative Method and Primary Experience

Bernstein

Now, it was abundantly clear to Dewey—and should be for Dewey's admirers today—that the term "experience" doesn't typically act resolve most disputes regarding political theory. As Richard Bernstein points out in his recent review¹² of Martin Jay's book *Songs of Experience*¹⁵ **both conservative and progressive thinkers have appealed to experience's funded wisdom**, and the battle over how "experience" should be taken and used is unresolved and ongoing. While it is true that accumulated political experience helps us evaluate currently reigning ideologies, it is also true that we can forget that such experience is often rife with ideological prejudices needing "to be subjected to rigorous critique." (Bernstein, 2006, 268)

To put it another way,

- **we need to check old theories** for faults by continuing to examine new evidence.
- But
- **we need to check favorite collections of facts** by remaining alert to the theory or ideology those collections can be subtly reaffirming.

Pragmatists' use of *experience* was fresh, Bernstein reminds us, because their **appeals to experience were not merely dialectical**. Rather, Bernstein writes,

PUT
ROAD
SIGNS

in your
draft



WHAT'S THE
WORST THAT
COULD HAPPEN?

Using signs helps you
manage your performance





Talking Pretty

- **Stand** up to speak, do not sit.
- **Move** while talking if you can.
- Speak **loud**, speak **clear**.

Time & Timing



Respect the assigned time limit.

- ◆ *Time yourself carefully when you practice.*
- ◆ Get a good estimate for your reading speed



My self testing (which I use as a basis now):

- ◆ I read 142 words in a minute.
- ◆ That's 1420 words in 10 minutes
- ◆ That's 2840 words in 20 minutes, etc.

Concluding the Talk



Signal that you're DONE:

- ◆ *“THANK YOU FOR LISTENING”*

Invite and Encourage discussion

- ◆ *“I'M REALLY INTERESTED TO HEAR YOUR THOUGHTS”*

Couple Last Hints

- ◆ **Practice** in front of others--then **revise**
- ◆ Be **enthusiastic** and enjoy the limelight
- ◆ **Discussion** needs to be managed

Handling Discussion



1. Let the questioners finish speaking
2. Answer questions directly and succinctly.

Discussion...

3. **Clarity** is crucially important to the audience.

Re-stating each question:

(a) makes sure **everyone heard it**

(b) can **change the tone** or improve clarity,

(c) give you a little **extra time** to think about it

Discussion...

4. Always take the high road. Defend your argument without being overly defensive

- Being **kind** is always paramount.
- Lose your **composure** and that is all people will remember

5. Don't read too much into the question.

Answer it directly & let deeper things emerge.

Thanks for listening





Sources



1) **“Giving a Conference Talk,”** Mike Dahlin University of Texas at Austin

www.cs.utexas.edu/~dahlin/professional/goodTalk.pdf

2) **“The Captive Audience; or Liberating Thoughts on Conference Papers,”** Edward H. Friedman, ADFL Bulletin, Vol. 27, No. 3, Spring 1996

3) **“How to give an effective conference paper: Five tips to impress your audience and get the most out of your presentation,”** by Francine McKenzie

<http://www.universityaffairs.ca/how-to-give-an-effective-conference-paper.aspx>