



INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL LAW & POLICY
HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

An IGLP Approach for First Time Panel Presenters

ALL OF US PRESENT OUR WORK IN A VARIETY OF SETTINGS. Although we all say we want to contribute to a discussion and look forward to feedback, all too often we fail to present our work in a way that encourages discussion or even leaves time for feedback.

At the IGLP Conference, we hope to encourage a truly engaged and collegial conversation on every panel. Here are some tips – and policies.

TIME MANAGEMENT. Every panel will follow this format:

Opening remarks: 5 minutes. The Moderator will introduce all panelists.

Panel Presentations: 10 minutes each. Each panelist is strictly limited to TEN MINUTES for a preliminary presentation of his or her paper. We have asked Moderators to be ruthless. Moderators will have IGLP time cards to indicate clearly to speakers when there remains 5 minutes, 2 minutes and 0 minutes.

General Discussion: 30 minutes. Our goal is a spirited discussion of the larger themes or issues posed by the panel, drawing on the presentations and on the work of others who may be in the room. To this end, we recommend that this time NOT be used for specific questions directed toward individual panelists. Individualized comments and questions are often better addressed to a speaker after a panel has concluded and one has time to engage informally in a direct conversation.

The Moderator may open the discussion by reflecting for up to five minutes on cross cutting themes, distinguishing or contrasting the papers to encourage a more general discussion. The Moderator will ask the audience NOT to ask specific questions of individual panelists, but to engage the panelists and one another on the larger themes.

Feedback: afterwards. It is enormously useful to receive feedback on what one has presented at a Conference. The best time is rarely when one is still up on the panel. We encourage everyone to seek out panelists whose ideas or research they found stimulating for further discussion after the session has concluded.

TIPS FOR PRESENTERS. How can you make best use of your ten minutes? Here are some tips suggested by people in the IGLP network. If you have other suggestions from your own experience listening to or giving academic presentations, please send them to us. We'll pass them on!

You can't "present" your paper. No one can present an entire paper it has taken months to research and write in ten – or fifteen, or twenty, or thirty --- minutes. You must be selective. That means you need a strategy. In light of your research and all the thinking you have done, what would you like to say to this group today?

Describing your paper is rarely a good strategy. Tempting as it is, describing in general terms “what I did in part one” and then “what I do in part two” rarely works. Few people can get a sense for HOW you do what you do and what is interesting about it from this kind of 30,000 foot table-of-contents description. State your ideas, your findings, your conclusions: BE the paper – don’t describe the paper. The paper can take care of itself.

Retracing the logic of discovery is rarely a good presentation strategy. When you think back on your work as a whole, it can be fascinating - for you - to remember how you came to the topic, how you did the research, what you thought half-way through and how you developed your ideas. This kind of bildungsroman is rarely fascinating for other people. They want to know what you think about something they are also interested in *now*. How should they change their ideas and why?

THE ELEMENTS OF STRATEGY. At IGLP, we encourage presenters to answer four simple questions:

Identify the terrain. In what field and what debate are you intervening?

Identify your intervention. What did you discover that others have not seen? How has your work changed the debate? What was misunderstood that you have set straight? How should we understand things differently?

Identify the stakes. Why does this matter? Who would or might do what differently? What lines of inquiry have you opened which were closed? What tools have you developed that might be used? Here, you might wish to pre-empt opposition. How would those with whom you disagree, against whom you have written or who stand to lose given the stakes you have identified – respond? Why should we adopt your view. Are they wrong? If your view prevails, who will benefit?

Start a conversation. Presenting academic work is more like tennis than moot court. The goal is not to prove that you are right. It is to start a conversation. What remains puzzling for you? How would you frame the methodological, political, doctrinal or institutional choices opened up by your analysis? What next?