

Conference Presentation

Useful websites:
Where to find conferences:
<http://www.conferencealerts.com>
How to write an abstract:
<http://www.cgu.edu/pages/861.asp>
How to write a conference paper
<http://www.cgu.edu/pages/861.asp>

Call for Papers

- Who is the target audience?
- Is it a postgraduate conference?
- Is there funding available?
- How much does it cost (conferences in the US seem to be occasionally very expensive)?
- Do they have a student rate?

Writing an abstract

- Meet the specified word length (normally between 150-300 words).
- Submit on or before the due date. Late submissions suggest poor planning and preparation.
- Electronic submissions are usually preferred. Avoid sending it in formats like html. Send it in Word format or 'Rich text format'.
- Avoid bibliographic references (if you need them use in-text references (MLA-Format); no footnoting)
- You might want to add a short biographical note (approx. 5 lines)
- Don't forget to include your name, title, organisation and contact details.
- And list the technical support you'll need (overhead projector, video, power point etc.)

- Look carefully at the "Call for Papers/Proposals/Abstracts."
- Address the theme of the conference.
- Indicate how your paper fits into the theme of the conference.
- You might want to incorporate keywords from the conference description.
- Also check for conference languages, particularly when going overseas.

- It is important to think about your audience. What do they already know about your topic? Do they need any background information to understand your thesis? Do you need to define special terms? These questions are especially important for an interdisciplinary conference.
- Check out the profile (publications etc.) of some of the speakers, particularly the keynote speakers.

Examples of Abstracts

- Ensure that your ideas are presented coherently.
- Outline/Introduce your topic.
- Give a brief background of the issue, e.g. the textual material you are going to analyse.
- State the implications/outcomes/the thesis or argument you want to put forward.

- **1st Presentation: Timothy Garton Ash's *Script of Life***
- This research examines the way that Stasi files come to replace the human memory when people write their autobiographies. Stasi is an abbreviation of the German word "Staatssicherheit" and refers to the name of the former Secret Security Service in Germany. Timothy Garton Ash's *The File* is the realization that your file can change your fate. For life narrators "personal memories are the primary archival source" (Smith 6) that they use for constructing their autobiography. As supplement to their narrative, autobiographers use letters, journals, pictures and diaries. These documents serve as evidence to support their tale or provide additional commentaries. However, in Ash's case, it is the opposite that occurs. The autobiographical act begins rather by his reading of his once secret file instead of starting with his memory. In the writing process the file comes to life again and plunges Ash back into the past. Ash's biological memory is gradually substituted by the artificial memory, the archives. "I must explore not just a file but a life: the life of the person I was then. This is not the same thing as 'my life'. What we usually call 'my life' is the mental autobiography with which we all live. What really happened is quite another matter" (Ash 23). In autobiography, it is common practice to represent the self as fiction. However, it is new that the course of your life is determined by a file, a documentation that used to remain in the archive only for the preservation of personal data.

- **2nd Presentation: *Erocidic is painless. Insensation in Les Murray's "Fredy Neptune"***
- Towards the beginning of the First World War, Friedrich Boettcher, the German-Australian narrator of Les Murray's 1998 verse novel, *Fredy Neptune*, witnesses an atrocity so terrible that he responds to it by losing his sense of touch. For the next 34 years, Fredy's body disappears into its instrumental function, allowing him to carry out extraordinary feats of physical prowess and endurance while at the same time afflicting him with a pervasive numbness that eats away at his sense of self. In this paper, I argue that the crisis of memory written into Fredy's skin stamps him as a victim of what Murray elsewhere terms "erocide", the concerted destruction of a person's sexual morale. Drawing on recent work of Gernot Boehme, I show how erocide represents a form of "affected self-giveness" (betroffene Selbstgegebenheit) which confronts the sufferer with the ownmost limits and possibilities of his own lived body.

- **3rd Presentation: *Traumatic Memory and Holocaust Testimony: Passing Judgement in Representations of Chaim Rumkowski***
- In 1986, Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi published 'The Grey Zone,' one of the most influential essays ever written on the Holocaust. He addresses the highly complex and sensitive issue of prisoners who, in response to dehumanising and life-threatening persecution, 'compromised' themselves by 'collaborating,' to use Levi's terms, with their Nazi captors. A key example Levi uses is Chaim Rumkowski, the controversial Jewish Council official of the Lodz ghetto. Responding to the simplifying effects of the judgements he sees contained within popular histories and films, Levi argues that one should not pass moral judgement on Jews who found themselves in extreme situations. His concept of the 'grey zone' holds that certain Jews, including Rumkowski, should not be condemned or absolved for their behaviour in extremis, suggesting that representations of these victims require an element of ambiguity. However, even Levi himself struggles to withhold judgement when discussing Rumkowski.

- This paper will compare Levi's paradigmatic analysis of Rumkowski with the treatment of the Jewish leader in various other survivor testimonies. An analysis of recent works in particular, including Abraham Biderman's *The World of My Past* (1995) and Jacob G. Rosenberg's *East of Time* (2005), will show that in spite of Levi's call to abstain from judgement, representations of Rumkowski invariably display strong moral condemnation. The judgements contained within these Holocaust testimonies reveal the volatile nature of traumatic memory. Nonetheless, Rosenberg's self-reflexive portrayal of Rumkowski and questioning of one's capacity to judge him appears to move towards an acknowledgement of the ambiguity that Levi's 'grey zone' recommends.

Types of Presentations

- Panel Presentation
- Paper with Respondent
- Roundtable
- Workshop
- Poster/Poster Talk/Poster Presentation/Poster Discussion

The Conference Paper

- Remember that you are writing an oral presentation. Include oral cues to assist the audience.
- Transitions should be clear.
- If you quote text, pause and indicate the quote by saying "quote end quote."
- Don't use lengthy quotes or quote too much material.
- If it is absolutely necessary to include lengthy quotes, provide the audience with a handout of quotes/overhead/power point slide with quotes.

- Be careful with criticism of other scholars. Be aware that the people you are criticising could be sitting in the audience. It is appropriate to put forward a critical or controversial argument, but use a tone of respect and objectivity.

- Keep your presentation focused! You only have time (usually 20-30 minutes) to present one idea. Try to mount a clear and logical argument.
- You do not need to provide the entire background to your argument. No literature review. Present your point and back it up. The audience is interested in **your** point of view, in **your** particular interpretation.

- Try to be precise. If you use specific terminology, make sure that you know what it means and give a brief definition if it is a term that has multiple uses or interpretations in your field.

- Find appropriate ways to discuss complex ideas, but do not insult the intelligence of your audience. A paper which is not challenging in terms of the argument it presents can get very boring.

- Prepare for the conference presentation. Read the text aloud to yourself. This will help to eliminate wordy sentences and awkward phrases.

- Meet length and time requirements. This is extremely important. If you have 20 minutes, do not go to your panel with a paper exceeding 10 (double spaced; 12 point font) pages in length or 4000-4500 words.
- Prepare the document in such a way that you can read it easily.

- Follow the conventions of your discipline when presenting a paper.
- Unless you are a very accomplished extemporaneous speaker, it is extremely preferable to read from a prepared text rather than speaking from notes or an outline alone.
- Show your audience that you are interested in your paper! Try to project your voice and speak in an engaging way.
- Don't race through the paper. Try to relax!
- Look at your audience frequently. Give them the impression that you are addressing everyone in the room.

- When the chair is telling you that you need to finish up don't get nervous. Don't try to summarize the last page or two in a few sentences. It will more often than not take longer than just finishing your reading (given that you have timed it properly.)

Question Time

- Take notes of questions and suggestions that are important; you won't remember them otherwise.
- You could also have a few phrases ready which help you to gain some time to gather your thoughts.
- Don't be afraid to say that you don't know the answer to a particular question. The trick is not to sound defensive.
- Familiarize yourself with the tone of the conference. Go to other panel presentations to see what types of questions people ask.

Networking

- When approached by other conference participants it might be a good idea to have a business card at hand, particularly at large international conferences.
- Go to the conference dinner. The best conversations happen over dinner.

Publication of your Paper

- If you want your paper published in the conference proceedings you might have to submit a publishable document soon after the conference. It helps if the paper you present at the conference is almost ready to be published.