

Instructions for Student Seminar Presentations

Each participating student will give a seminar presentation to the entire class. For undergraduates, seminars should be 15 minutes long with 5 minutes for discussion and elaboration. For grad students, seminars should be 25 minutes, again with time for questions. You should think on some questions that you can pose to the class to prompt discussion. Seminar topics can be found below and on our website:

<https://mexico2025.sclougheed.ca>

For Canadian students, we will try to start seminars in Canada to provide some background before our travel to Mexico in a time slot that is mutually agreed upon. We will try to create a Zoom link so that Dr. Salgado-Ortiz and his students can attend if they are able. We will continue seminars in Mexico where Mexican students may give talks as well.

Be sure to use Mexico and Middle America as your touchstone for these seminars, but also compare to Canada and other countries to provide context. For example, for seminars focused on diversity: How many species are there in Mexico versus Canada? How does each country rank in terms of global biodiversity? Where do most species occur in terms of habitat and geography? Why are some groups so speciose/depauperate? Which families or orders (or other higher-level taxon) tend to dominate in Mexico? For other topics, be sure to use Mexican case studies, provide Middle American context, or situate Mexico geographically. For example, for such topics as ecotourism or conservation in agricultural landscapes, be sure to find examples that are Mexico- or Middle America-specific. Be sure to impart rigor to your talk (e.g. not simply a slide show of pretty pictures, but a thorough treatment of the topic that you have been charged with). You should also contemplate what the most salient points are for your topic and consider the best way to structure your talk to impart these.

Prepare PowerPoint slides (and also create a PDF version) and once we sort out the schedule (i.e. who is talking when), please have your presentation on a memory stick (preferably with USB C) or send us the final versions of your slides before you are to present (steve.lougheed@queensu.ca). Order of presentation will be according to the ordered list below and on our web site.

Your talk will be evaluated based on: Background & Context, Content & Thoroughness, Visuals, and Presentation style. A seminar evaluation sheet can be found on the course web site and this will provide additional insights into grading. Evaluation will be done both by your peers and by the instructors. We will put evaluation forms on our web site.

A few useful tips for preparing and delivering an excellent seminar.

Visual aids.

- Make sure to use simple and clear telegraphic prose (i.e. point form).
- If possible, redraw graphs and redo tables, again using appropriate font size.
- Label all figures, graphs and graph axes.

- Use a large font size so that all audience members can clearly read the text (typically 24 point or larger)
- Use the same font throughout presentation.
- Be consistent with use of font size, colour and style (e.g. Headings 28 pt. boldface red, Other text 24 pt. Regular black).
- Avoid some colour combinations (e.g. yellow on white, red on green).
- Note that pictures that require a lot of memory often slow down your presentation.
- Avoid complicated backgrounds (simple one colour backgrounds we find allow all visuals to be seen easily)

Presentation

- Keep your presentation within the time limit. You will be penalized for a seminar that is too long. Note that the equivalent of one double-spaced typewritten page usually takes about 2-3 minutes to present.
- Do not read your PowerPoint slides verbatim. Make sure to face the audience not the screen or your computer.
- Use the active voice and first person where possible. (e.g. “I think ...” rather than “It is my opinion ...”).
- Make eye contact as this makes audience members feel involved.
- State your objectives clearly and maintain the same logical structure throughout.
- Convey your ideas in clear direct sentences (i.e. don’t make it sound like you are reading from a book).
- Explain all figures and tables thoroughly.
- Allow sufficient time for people to understand slides and overheads.
- Talk (relatively) slowly so your audience can follow
- Vary the volume and pitch of your voice to maintain interest.
- Note that in English an upward at the end of a sentence implies a question and may make the audience think you are uncertain.
- Practice your seminar out loud to check timing.
- Try to avoid verbal tics like “ah’s”, “er’s”, “like” or other distracting behaviours.

Seminars

1. *The latitudinal gradient in biodiversity – patterns, causes and consequences.* **Josh Kowal**
2. *The role of disturbance and gap dynamics in maintaining diversity.* **Bailey Ruest**
3. *Closing of the Isthmus of Panama and the Great Faunal Exchange.* **Elyse Potter**
4. *Phytogeography of Mexico. Climatic, geological, edaphic and other factors that shape the patterns of vegetation in Mexico and Middle America.* **Anna Pasila**
5. *Vertebrate endemism in Mexico. Patterns, causes and consequences for conservation.* **Amyre Wells**

6. *Epiphytes. Taxonomic diversity, ecological and micro-climatological challenges and tropical diversity.* **Naida Ribau**
7. *The role of coevolution in generating contemporary diversity with focus on tropical examples.* **Ciara Hanna**
8. *Relationship between local species richness and ecosystem stability, resilience and functioning.* **Bethany Marquardt**
9. *Biodiversity hotspots. Definitions, distributions and value for global conservation.* **Sienna Gillie**
10. *Feeding the world. New World and particularly Middle America crops and their importance in the global food economy.* **Clarisa Griffin**
11. *Agroforestry as a more sustainable alternative to industrial agriculture with explicit examples from Middle America.* **Alex Brandt**
12. *UNSECO World Biosphere Reserves. Definitions, effectiveness and examples from Middle America.* **Michaela Naumann**
13. *Effects of climate change on tropical ecosystems.* **Mica Mae Boychyn**
14. *Migratory birds. Challenges and solutions for their conservation in North America and beyond.* **Jade McNeice**
15. *The promise and pitfalls of ecotourism in conservation.* **Claire Matthews**
16. *The role of Hurricanes in shaping the dynamics of tropical biodiversity.* **Alexia Rodriguez Garcia**
17. *Biodiversity in a highly endangered ecosystem: the cloud forest.* **David Ruiz Domínguez**