**Job Talk Basics**

**Audience**

* Know who they are
* Assume few if any in your area
* If some are, say, continental, bear that in mind
* Make the talk accessible to students
* Every job talk is a test of teaching skills

**Style**

* Exude enthusiasm (but not mania)
* Pacing matters
* Look at audience
* Smiling is contagious
* Humor (but not in excess)

**Content**

* Don’t give outline
* Pose a question that gets audience thinking
* Use concrete examples
* Show critical skills
* Show constructive skills
* Solve a problem
* Indicate why the problem/solution matters

**If Teaching**

* Pose and motivate questions
* Be interactive
* Make sure they follow
* Diagram different positions on board if possible
* Use concrete examples or get them to come up with some
* Have them respond to each other

**Methods (General)**

* Always
  + Practice
  + Try to find a couple of points to interact with audience
* How to pick
  + Always ask, what will the method do for me? Then use it that way!
  + Ask, what am I good at?
  + *Slides* are good when material can be presented visually (no talk on a screen)
  + *Speaking* without slides or paper is impressive, accessible, and engaging—especially good if you are teaching a class
  + *Reading* is ok if precision is important, but only if you read and write beautifully

**Methods (Specifics)**

* *Slides*
  + Pictures help
    - Bigger the better
    - Think visually
  + But too much flash can give the impression that you are compensating
  + Don’t bring all bullet points at once
  + Too many words distract (fewer the better, none as regulative ideal)
    - If your bullets contain more then a sentence, something has gone wrong.
    - If you have a full screen of text, something has gone wrong
    - Keep font large and san-serif, offset headings in bold
  + Arguments with premise help, highlight each as discussed
  + Presenter tools in Powerpoint allow you to make notes to yourself
  + Never speak to the screen
  + Bring talk on Flash drive
* *Speaking*
  + Maintain control
  + Be highly organized, so people can follow
  + Practice a lot
  + Break monotony by using blackboard a couple of times
* *Reading*
  + Avoid academic monotone, alter pace, act
  + Look up as much as possible
  + Break from reading at least three times to use board or say something extemporaneously
  + Make sure you have a good justification for reading (Is your prose gorgeous? Is exact wording crucial? Would you mess up otherwise?)
  + Write the paper to read, rather than reading something for print
  + Using drama, narrative, or other devices that engage your audience
* *Handouts*
  + If using slides, no handouts (too much to look at)
  + Handouts are appreciated but potentially distracting
  + No one complains if there is NO handout, so use only if they add
  + Main reasons to consider:
    - If you talk is structurally complex
    - If it’s places burdens on memory (do you refer back to a technical term)
    - If you present an argument that you will exam systematically
    - If you include technical material (symbols)
    - If you quote historical texts
    - If you want people to have a record (as with this handout)
  + If you use them, use them with a specific function
    - Quoted passages
    - Talk outline (for complex talk)
    - Key terms defined
    - Thought experiments/vignettes
    - An argument in premise/conclusion form
  + Try to keep to one page (can be double sided)
  + Bring copies yourself so as not to burden the department

**Q & A**

* Listen carefully, reconstruct question if you are unsure
* Look for frustration—you can always say, “Let’s talk more about this later”
* Know when to say, “I’ll have to think more about that” (then reply later)
* You can say “That’s a good/interesting question,” but not each time
* Draw on knowledge not in the talk, to show depth in the area
* Retain a positive demeanor, not cocky or flip, but take pleasure in having a good philosophical discussion about your work, even with skeptics
* Thank the audience