

# A Job Talk Talk

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\* With handy tips from recent Cornell grads!

# Overview

What?

Why?

How?

When?

# The Basics

1. Talk about your research
2. For 35 minutes
3. And then take questions

# The Deep Structure

1. Can you describe your own work to an audience?
2. How do you respond to questions?
3. How do you think?
4. Can you ~~recognize and respond to incentives~~ participate in rituals and ceremonies?

*“If they brought you in, the committee already thinks you’re competent; it’s up to you to confirm you’re competent and to show them that you will be a likeable colleague/teacher.” – Lauren*

# The Deep Structure

Inefficient, open to bias, position and positionality...

# The Biggest Misconception

## Your Audience Wants You to Fail

- This is exactly wrong
- There are exceptions

# Other Misconceptions

1. All job talks are alike
2. You must do something flashy or fancy
3. Your audience knows you or what you're doing

# Tips for Success

1. Worry about what you can control,  
anticipate what you cannot
2. You are the star



# Tips for Success

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3. Clean, precise visuals—be obsessive

*“Everyone loves photos.” – Lauren*

# Visuals

Maps, pictures, plots >>> words, numbers

## Indonesian Papua

Unique colonial history, bioregion, human geography, politics



# Tips for Success

1. Worry about what you can control,  
anticipate what you cannot
2. You are the star
3. Clean, precise visuals—be obsessive
4. Narrative arc, delivery, pacing, body  
language

*“I actually had in my mind TED talks. Not their substance, but their rhetorical ‘I want to convince you of [counterintuitive thing here]’ focus”* – Kevin

5. The “hummmable tune”

# Tips for Success

## 6. Your audience has good questions and you don't need to know all the answers

*“I was surprised at how different the questions I got in the Q&A were from the ones I got at Cornell. Things I thought were very important didn’t matter at all to others. And they dwelled on things that I thought were sort of trivial or unrelated.” – Kevin*

## 7. A pre-talk break.

*“A pre-talk break ought to be built into your schedule, but if they get you off schedule it is OK to advocate for yourself on this!” – Lauren*

# Largely Irrelevant

## Powerpoint versus Beamer

- There are exceptions

Read more by Josh Parsons: the Latex Cargo Cult

# My First Anecdote

Clever observation

- ① very clever, no?
- ② makes you think, just like this person



A tidy equation:  $E[\hat{b}_X] = \beta + \delta \cdot \frac{Cov(X, U)}{V(X)}$

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# My First Anecdote in Powerpoint w/ Computer Modern

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My equation looks lousy, I actually gave up after  $E[\hat{b}] =$

# The Leading Edge is Markdown

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## What is Markdown?

Markdown is a text-to-HTML conversion tool for web writers.

Integrates coding, results, analysis, and write-up in a single application (i.e. Rmarkdown in RStudio).

What is  
Markdown?

Remark.js

Remark.js is an easy tool for making  
HTML presentations using Markdown.

- Nice for technical workflow
- Still does not matter
- Be careful with foreign computers
- It is neat
- I made this in Powerpoint

# Largely Irrelevant

Other candidates for this job

# Variation

“Room norms”

R1 versus LAC

Political theory versus everything else

US versus everywhere else

# Variation

*“It was important for me to avoid framing the job talk around a contribution to the field. I talked about that a bit, but I spent a lot of time stressing what I thought was intrinsically interesting or important about the topic, what I was arguing, etc.”* – Kevin (political theory, LAC)

# Timing

When should you start thinking about the job market?

# Timing

When should you start writing the job talk?

JUNE 1: job market paper

SEPTEMBER 1: applications in

SEPTEMBER 15: job talk draft

SEPTEMBER 16 - ? practice

# My Regimen

- Full talk once or twice a day for 30 days
- Two public test runs (one w/ faculty, one with friends)
- Complete print out of entire text

# Final thoughts

- Scholarship is a public exercise
- You are an expert
- It gets easier