Notes on ‘Grab ‘em by the throat: How to give a great oral presentation’
Robert Dickson

What’s wrong with most lectures?
- Lack of **empathy**: failure to imagine the experience of the lecture from the audience’s perspective
- Lack of **synthesis**: mere reporting of data without meaningful interpretation
- Lack of **preparation**: little thought or time given to optimizing presentation

Grab ‘em by the throat:
- The **stakes**: why this matters to your audience
- The **crisis**: the problem that you’re going to remedy
- The **fix**: how you’re going to resolve the crisis in your talk

Three compelling story structures (from Little 2016):
- **Story A**: Facts about the world; existing work explains it poorly; we explain it better.
- **Story B**: Topic is heavily studied; but something is missing or wrong; we fill that gap.
- **Story C**: Theories and facts seem contradictory; we resolve the contradiction.

Further resources on effective communication:
- *Trees, Maps, and Theorems* by Jean-luc Doumont: phenomenal book on clarity in communication (writing, presentations, figures);
  Doumont speaks at UM every fall, well worth attending.
- *The Sense of Style* by Steven Pinker: thoughtful and practical “style guide” on writing by a lucid cognitive scientist.
- *Authority and American Usage* by David Foster Wallace: wonderful essay on code-switching and adaptive grammar.

Further resources on effective storytelling:
- *Three Templates for Introductions to Political Science Articles* by Andrew Little: [www.andrewltlitle.com/papers/little_intros.pdf](http://www.andrewltlitle.com/papers/little_intros.pdf)
- *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell
- *Story* by Robert McKee
- *Aaron Sorkin Teaches Screenwriting*: [www.masterclass.com/classes](http://www.masterclass.com/classes)

Further resources for choosing color palettes:
- *ColorBrewer*: colorbrewer2.org/
- *Pictalicious.com*: make a palette from a photograph:
- *Wes Anderson palettes*: wesandersonpalettes.tumblr.com/

Advice on using PowerPoint:
- Teach more by teaching less: prune slides to a single coherent point.
- Stop dividing the audience’s attention: don’t display text you don’t want the audience to read.
- Avoid the passive voice trap.
- Be concrete with your slide title.
- Use hierarchies coherently.
- Use light text on a dark background.
- Use small number of themed colors.
- Use a sans serif font (Arial, Helvetica, Gill Sans, etc.).
- Never use Comic Sans.
- Use animations to control your audience’s attention.
- Consider avoiding bullet lists altogether.
- Use coherent heuristics.
- Use vivid, self-explanatory figures to improve clarity.
- Don’t use unnecessary animations.
- Don’t use unnecessary clip art.
- Show radiology images on a black background.
- End strong by bringing it home.
- Consider a handout.
- Invest in a laser pointer/slide advancer.
- Bring your own laptop and adapter.
- Show up early, run through your slides.
- Practice! Time yourself.