The Academic Conference

BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

What kind of conferences are there?
- Graduate student conferences (get your feet wet!)
- Regional conferences (disciplinary, interdisciplinary)
- National conferences (disciplinary, interdisciplinary)
- Specialty conferences (on highly-focussed topics)
- Invitational conferences (usually held to produce a volume on a particular topic or to mark a special event)

Why should I go to conferences?
- To test your own ideas
- To encounter new ideas and the most recent research on topics of interest to you
- To expand your intellectual horizons
- To network with peers and older scholars
- To keep up to date on issues in the field, intellectual and professional
- A caveat: conferences are not intended primarily to promote tourism, partying, or embarrassing behaviors, although you will encounter all of these at a conference. Basically, however, a conference is and should remain an aspect of your professional obligations and development.

When should I begin conference activity?
- When you have something new to say and want to test your ideas on colleagues
- For a grad student conference, when you have something suitable and want to get some practice
- For a regional conference, when you have a concept of interest to the group and are ready to present at the next level
- For a national conference, just before or after your comprehensive exams; this indicates that you have “entered” the professional arena at the national level
- Even if you are not presenting a paper, you may still choose to attend a conference to see what it is like, to network, and to benefit by hearing about other people’s research

How do I find the right topic?
- Work with your advisor and your professors: have you written a really good paper, had a good idea, made a new reading, found great data that should be shared?

How do I propose a paper?
- find the “call for proposals” (under certain circumstances, find the conference organizer or the named contact person)
- follow the directions

When should I not propose a paper?
- When you have no concept in mind, nothing new to say, no research question to answer
- When a very real possibility exists that you will have to withdraw or cancel -- for any reason
What are my obligations to the organizers, discussant, the other panelists?

- E-mail a short bio-blurb to the chair so that he/she may properly introduce you at the panel
- Provide a copy of your paper to the discussant (if there is one), ideally two weeks before the conference; it is a courtesy to give the discussant time to prepare comments on your work (some people consider it a courtesy to provide a copy to the chair and other panelists as well)
- do not send a full-length article or paper (even if you are going to be cutting your presentation down from it); your discussant is also pressed for time
- do not send a messy draft -- a clean, penultimate draft is OK
- Do not pull off the panel; only a major emergency (contagious disease, hospitalization, death) gives you the right to pull off, and then you must try to find an appropriate substitute. (Both AATSEEL and ASEEES, for example, will ban you from future programs if you pull out without a good reason.) “Don’t feel like going,” “hate bad weather,” “airline ticket too pricey,” “haven’t had time to write the paper” are not good reasons. Have the reputation of being reliable.

What are logistical issues to consider?

- Membership
  - Many professional association conferences require you to be a member of the association (this is true of AATSEEL and ASEEES) or pay a higher registration fee for non-members; students often get a cut-rate membership
  - other kinds of conferences, such as one-off events, usually have no such requirement
- Registration
  - How much is the conference registration fee? (you may think registration fees are high, but even so, they almost never cover the real costs of room rental, equipment rental, catering, staff work, signage, and other costs)
  - Is there a special registration rate for students?
  - When is the registration fee due? (registration fees increase if you miss the deadline)
- Travel and Hotel
  - Will you fly or drive to the conference? can you travel with others?
  - How much is the conference hotel rate? should you look for rooms at another hotel nearby? can you share a room with friends or colleagues? do you know someone living nearby? (sometimes people advertise on SEELANGS for room-mates to share the hotel costs; students often bunk/bulk up in a room)
- Technology Needs
  - if you will need technology to present your paper, find out as soon as possible what is available in the rooms, what has to be rented, and who will pay for the rental (this can be very expensive in a hotel, and you may have to pay the cost)
  - even if you think you are going to have technology, take back-ups (visuals or handouts you can circulate among the audience when the projector doesn’t work)
  - never read your paper from a cell phone. Ever.
- Funding
  - Have you identified all funding options to help you pay for the conference? (this needs to be done well ahead of time: there is some pots of travel money for grad students in the Office of Graduate Studies, the College, and SLL)
  - Have you been saving some money for this all along?
- Practice, Practice, Practice
  - Give your paper to the mirror; give your paper to your colleagues; ask a faculty member to set up a “formal conference presentation” with a small audience
DURING THE CONFERENCE

Panel Etiquette:
- Show up to your panel at least a few minutes before it starts
- Keep your paper strictly to the time allotted, otherwise you are stealing time from other panelists and from the audience’s question time, an important part of the feedback exercise (for many people, 2800 words are 20 minutes, but you can time yourself several times as you speak for one minute (60 seconds), see what your own per-minute rate is, and multiply that by the number of minutes allotted)
- Do not leave the panel before the chair declares the session over
- Be courteous to your fellow panelists, the chair, and the audience: thank them for questions and respond professionally

Conference Networking:
- Publishers: the conference can be an opportunity for you to visit with editors and publishers, to find out where you might eventually place your work and who might be interested in what you do
- Publications: Find out more about new books, journals, research abroad opportunities in the field by attending the book exhibit
- Scholars: is there someone you particularly want to meet? have faculty from your own institution or other colleagues get you an introduction
- Peers: these are the people who will be moving through the profession with you -- eventually, you will be reviewing each others’ proposals, books, articles; serving on national panels together; giving papers together, etc. Get to know your peer group from other universities and make them part of your network
- Attend: Attend everything you can:
  - Attend the business meeting: it is an opportunity to learn what the profession is talking about, to learn the concerns of your colleagues
  - Attend plenary sessions, which are usually dedicated to hot topics and feature key people in the field; ask a question, introduce yourself afterward
  - Attend general receptions, award ceremonies, etc. to see who is honored and why and maybe meet them
  - Above all, attend as many other conference sessions as are suitable to your own work and interests; hear what others have to say. After all, if you do not attend other scholars’ sessions, why should they attend yours? And what’s the point?

AFTER THE CONFERENCE

- Send an e-mail thanking the chair and/or the other panelists for including you on the panel, especially if you are a junior; this is a good networking strategy
- Stay in touch with important contacts: e-mail them and tell them how glad you were to have met them (if a senior scholar, thank them for their time)
- If you promised someone a copy of your paper, send it immediately, BUT BE ALERT!!! there are things to consider before sending your work to others
- Do a post-mortem of the conference with your advisor: discuss how you did, how your paper might serve as the basis of an article, either now or later in your career
- Compare notes with your peers -- share your experience and evaluate it
- Enter your paper title, panel, conference, date into your CV
SAMPLE: AATSEEL’s Call for Papers
(from http://www.aatseel.org/cfp_main)

AATSEEL Call for Papers for 2012 Conference

The AATSEEL National Meeting is a forum for scholarly exchange of ideas in all areas of Slavic and East/Central European languages, literatures, linguistics, cultures, and pedagogy. The Program Committee invites scholars in these and related areas to form panels around specific topics, organize roundtable discussions, propose forums on instructional materials, and/or submit proposals for individual presentations for the 2012 Conference, which will be held Jan. 5-8 in Seattle, Washington. The conference regularly includes panels in the following areas:


**Pedagogy and Second Language Acquisition:** Second Language Acquisition, Empirical Studies in Language Learning, Study Abroad, Teaching of Individual Skills (pronunciation, reading, listening, writing, speaking), Content-based Instruction (in film, history, politics, culture, literature, etc.), Curriculum Design, Language Teaching for Special Purposes, Teaching of Languages other than Russian (Polish, Czech, Croatian, Romanian, etc.), Use of Technology in Language Teaching.

**Literature and Culture:** Individual Writers and Poets (Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Akhmatova, Bulgakov, Nabokov and others), Themes (history and literature, travelogues, gendered readings, etc.), Critical approaches (including various theoretical approaches), Genre (avtorskaia pesnia, ode, drama), Periods (medieval to contemporary), Culture, Film, Dance, Music, Philosophy, and Religion.

The Program Committee will accept proposals for the following eight formats:
1. individual paper
2. fully-formed panel
3. roundtable
4. forum
5. poster presentation
6. workshop
7. master class
8. poetry reading

Each proposal will be reviewed by the Program Committee. Proposals for all formats should not exceed 300 words, but a successful, effective proposal for any format can certainly be shorter.

Individual paper proposals must identify a problem that needs solving in the fields of linguistics, pedagogy, literature, and/or culture, or present a hypothesis that sheds light on the interpretation of a text or body of texts. It should outline the author's plan for defending the paper's hypothesis or advancing an interpretation.

Proposals for fully-formed panels will now contain, in addition to a panel title, the titles of individual papers and names and email addresses of presenters, chair, and discussant (if there is one), a single paragraph-long statement, prepared by the panel organizer (who can also serve as one of the presenters, the chair, or the discussant). This single-paragraph proposal should also not exceed 300 words, and like a paper proposal it can be shorter. It must contain a concise description of the rationale for bringing the individual papers together as a panel and describe briefly how each paper fits into the discussion.

No individual proposals for papers submitted as part of a fully-formed panel need to be included at the time the panel is proposed. If a panel proposal is accepted by the Program Committee, the organizer will be responsible
for obtaining from each participant a description of each paper for inclusion in the program book, and sending
in those descriptions to the Program Committee Chair by Sept. 30, 2011. These descriptions, like individual
proposals, should outline the author’s plan for defending the paper’s hypothesis or advancing an interpretation.
If a description is not sent for an individual paper on an accepted panel, that paper may be deleted from the
program.

Proposals for fora, workshops, master classes, and poetry readings should include concise description of the
rationale for bringing conference participants together for the discussion envisioned by the event organizer;
they can, and in the case of the poetry reading should, contain brief descriptions of the participants’ particular
scholarly or creative interests and expertise.

Proposal deadlines are April 15 and July 11, 2011.
The first deadline allows for revision and resubmission of proposals, should reviewers deem that necessary.
The second deadline does not allow for resubmission. Proposals should be no longer than 300 words
(including select bibliographic citations in the standard format in the respective discipline). Detailed guidelines
for proposals and published program abstracts from past years are available on the AATSEEL website.

The Program Committee notes that all conference participants must be AATSEEL members in good standing
for 2012 or request a membership waiver. Membership (which is based on the calendar year) can be renewed
by regular mail or online on the AATSEEL website. Authors must be members in good standing or have a
waiver in order to receive the results of proposal review.

Questions regarding the proposal process should be sent to Alexander Burry.

SAMPLE: ASEEES’s Instructions for Participation
(from http://www.aseees.org/convention/program.html)

ASEEES panels are one hour and forty-five minutes in length, consisting of:

• a Chair, allotted a total of five minutes for panel and presenter introductions;
• three panelists, allotted 20 minutes each; and
• a discussant, allotted 10 minutes;
• followed by 30 minutes for questions and group discussion.

As a general rule:

• the Chair seeks CVs from each of the panelists in advance to prepare their introductions;
• for an average 20-minute presentation, panelists should prepare papers no longer than 8 pages,
double-spaced, to communicate in advance to the discussant. Presentations requiring additional
explanation of data or images should be shorter. Panelists who send works longer than what they will
actually present pose an undue burden on their discussant.
• normally, papers should be sent to the discussant up to two weeks in advance of the meetings, and no
later than the Friday prior to the convention, in order to allow for time to prepare the response.
• chairs are urged to announce their plans to keep time at the outset of the panel, in order to not
discriminate between panelists, and to ensure time for the question and answer period.
• following discussion, the Chair should normally cede to questions from the audience, rather than
inviting panelists to respond immediately. The panelists have had enough time to talk already!
DISCUSSION

Origin of Responsible Seminars:

Grad Studies Initiative driven by issues of ethics

Purpose:

Professionalization increasingly important (academic life is getting more and more complicated)

Office of Grad Studies has assumed increasingly important role in professionalization: all of you received a copy of this brochure -- I want to hear back from GS that Slavic has taken the lead in attending relevant events -- take advantage of these

Discussion: