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# The Academic Seminar for Hire

You've given great interviews. You've made friends. You impressed the chairman of the department and the dean of the engineering colleges.

But you can still screw up, because you have yet to give your seminar. The Seminar.

The faculty is waiting expectantly. They hope to hear a great seminar. If you haven't prepared the best seminar you've ever given in your life, then it will be easy to disappoint them.

There are many pitfalls. One of the biggest mistakes is to assume that the academic seminar for hire is like any other seminar or conference presentation.

It is not.

Unlike any other lecture you will give, this one requires that you actually lose your audience at some point. You must go over their heads.

You must demonstrate that you know far more about your subject than they can comprehend or ever hope to comprehend. You must break your audience like a bucking bronco tamed to ride. You must get them to submit that you are the undisputed Master of This Subject, that your work is World Class, that you are The Rising Star in This Field.

One of God's gifts to the intellectual world. A prima donna. After all, you are joining a club of prima donnas — that's what faculty are.

If you aren't the Top Gunslinger in your neck of the woods, you will not be invited to join the club.

You are Not Deep.

No, if this faculty can follow everything you say in your area of specialization — then you are shallow.

You will not impress any faculty if they understand your seminar completely. This is the paradox of the academic seminar for hire. You are not trying to clearly explain everything you've done.

But you must be careful, very careful about when you lose them. In this case timing is everything.

You start out at ground zero with great simplicity and clarity, but you gradually rise to higher and higher altitudes of abstraction and complexity that will have them gasping for air until they are ready to give up the ghost. Then, near the end of your seminar you plummet from the rarified heights down to breathable air. You resuscitate your audience with some numerical results which they can understand.

They are happy to be breathing again!

Then you give your list of conclusions. They are quietly stated but profound. Your audience is grateful. They've been taken on a ride to dizzying heights and have been returned safely to the Earth. They respect you.

A word of caution: remember that the timing of when you leave your audience behind and rocket skyward is crucial. It should not be too soon. You start your seminar like any other lecture. (See Chapter 22 How to Give a Presentation to Rocket Scientists and Chapter 23 How to Keep Your Presentation Short and Snappy.) Begin with a highly simplified picture or cartoon. Set the stage. Discuss the history of the problem and its significance.

Make sure that everyone in the room understands what the problem is and why it is important.

The first third of your seminar should be crystal clear to the entire audience. The crucial rise into the stratosphere should occur in the second third of your lecture. No one should be left breathing when you complete the second third. In the last third of your lecture you bring them back alive.

Finish your one-hour lecture in 45 minutes. Do not go over or under this time limit. If you go over, a stampede of students will burst into the classroom — destroying your final effect. Too short and the faculty will wonder if you ran out of material. Forty five minutes is just right.

If you do everything right, the faculty will breathe a sigh of relief. They will leap to their feet and congratulate you on a job well done. You will know from their reactions that you've won them over.

You will get the offer.