Conferences

**Purpose:** Conferences have multiple purposes. (i) The primary reason is to present research to an academic audience. They will provide questions and feedback about the state of your research and help you better understand what you need to do to make your current research a completed project that can be submitted for publication. (ii) The second reason you should attend conferences is to see the state of the art research within your field. There will be multiple panels, posters, roundtables, and working groups that you may be interested in attending. (iii) The final reason to attend conferences is for networking. This will provide you the opportunity to meet with other junior scholars as well as hopefully one or two senior scholars who you may be able to collaborate with on research in the future, be members of your dissertation committee, write letters of recommendation, and assist in you finding a job in your chosen field.

**Application:** Conferences tend to require that you submit a 150 to 300 word abstract of your research. This abstract should include the following (i) purpose of the study i.e. the puzzle or issue you seek to better understand (ii) its connection to the broader literature relevant to the conference (iii) the data you have examined (iv) a preview of the findings. You will need a title that includes the theory or framework you are using for your analysis as well as the substantive topic. Generally, these should be 5 to 15 words in length. You will need to register through the conference website. This will include all of the basic identifiable information (email address, university, birthday, etc.). It may cost money to join the association in order to register. This tends to be from $15-$150. Also, you may need the consent of your advisor as a Ph.D. student. In many cases, you will apply with your advisor or other senior scholars who will guide the research. Even if they do not provide any help other than proofreading or other guidance you must keep their name on the research. They deserve the recognition that they are a part of the project.

**Panels:** Panels generally consist of 4-6 papers with individual or multiple authors and individual or multiple presenters. Each presenter will get 10-20 minutes to present their research to an audience. The presentations may use powerpoint, overhead transparencies, posters, and handouts in addition to the short lecture. The panel will have a chair who keeps time and calls on audience members for questions. There will also be a discussant. The discussant reads all of the panel papers and provides feedback on the research. They will critique each paper after all of the presentations are made. This is generally very positive and helpful. Panels tend to have 5-30 people in the audience. Questions will be allowed after all of the presenters have completed their presentations.

**Posters:** Posters are a different option to present your research through a visual medium. Examples of past conference posters can be found on the walls in SPA. Poster sessions generally run 1-2 hours in a large conference room or hall where tens or even hundreds of other posters will be presented at the same time. You will be assigned a location and a number where you will stand and discuss your poster.
with various people who will come by. The bigger and more coherent the title is on the poster the better. People will come by and read your title and if they are interested will talk to you about the research. You can expect anywhere between 3 – 10 people talking to you about the research for anywhere between 30 seconds to 30 minutes.

**Roundtables and Working Groups:** These are opportunities where research tends not to be presented rather salient issues in the field are discussed by senior scholars.

**Before you Go:** Conference applications are generally due 6-10 months before the conference. You will be notified if your proposal has been accepted about 3-6 months prior to the conference date. You should make reservations at the conference hotel as soon as possible as the discount rates for students and conference attendees may run out or the hotel may be booked. If you cannot stay at the conference hotel there are other more economic options in most cities. Do not worry about not knowing the dates of when you are presenting. The schedule usually comes out 1-2 months before the conference. Hotels will not charge you for changing your reservation as long as you do it at least 48 hours ahead of time. Make sure you find out what is required for the conference i.e. paper, poster etc. Your chair or discussant will contact you or you may need to email them asking when the paper or poster etc. is due. Generally, the paper will be due one week before the presentation. Papers should be 25-45 pages in length. These papers may differentiate from the original title and abstract, but be aware you should not change too much from the original proposal. Register for the conference online at the conference website before you go. There will probably be a discounted registration price of $30-$60.

**At the Conference:** You generally want to arrive one to two days before you present. This will help you get acclimated, relaxed, and on time for your presentation. At the conference there will be signs indicating where you register. You will be given a nametag that is to be worn throughout the conference. There will be a schedule. Use the schedule to find out what room you will be presenting in. Also, look up names of senior scholars whose research you like and see if they are attending the conference as well. Use the schedule to find panels, posters, etc. that you want to attend along with your own presentation. Panels tend to go from 8am – 5pm. The conference itself will be anywhere from 2-5 days in length. Different conferences have different dress codes but generally business to business casual is expected at all times.

**Cost and Funding:** Airfare is generally $200 - $400 depending on how far you are traveling and when you book your ticket. Conference hotels tend to be $150-$200 a night. There are other hidden costs such as registration fees, taxis, food, etc. A total conference trip tends to cost between $500 - $800. The Graduate School usually has funding to support students who are presenting papers at national conferences (up to $500 per student per year.) Please submit a request to the Graduate School Dean. (Contact the PhD Program director if you have questions about this process and the
appropriate request form.) SPA also has some money to help support conference travel. You need to email to the director of the Ph.D. program and you may get up to $500 in funding per year for conferences. If you plan to present papers at more than one conference you may be able to receive Graduate School Funds for one conference and SPA funds for the other.