SEALS Guidelines for Panel Moderators

SEALS plans its panels carefully, to ensure vibrant, high-level and respectful scholarly exchanges. Moderators are a critical part of ensuring the success of a panel. To assist moderators, we have developed a set of policies and expectations. Moderators should familiarize themselves with these duties; they're not onerous, but they will help ensure that their panels are a success.

3-5 months before the conference

- Email the presenters, introduce yourself and explain any thoughts you have about what the panel should focus on and how it should be organized. Consider issues such as the speaker order (once you know what they are going to say), how much time you want to allocate to each speaker, and whether you will want to do Q&A after each talk or only after all panelists have spoken.

- Invite suggestions or comments on your preliminary thoughts. Sometimes these comments will require a phone call so that consensus can be reached, but often things will fall into place easily as each presenter explains what s/he is planning on speaking about.

- Confirm each speaker's planned attendance.

One month before the conference

- Confirm each panelist's attendance and topic. If any problems arise, contact the panel committee immediately.

- Inquire whether any panelist requires technology as part of the presentation. Except for discussion groups and new scholar workshops, presentation rooms are fitted with slide projectors and screens. However, any presenter wanting to use technology such as PowerPoint must furnish a computer to hook up to the projector. Because of the cost involved, SEALS is not able to provide more elaborate technology, such as video recording.

- Obtain brief bios from the speakers so you can introduce them. Consider (and discuss with the panel, if you wish) how you will introduce the speakers (*e.g.*, all at once, or as the speaker takes his/her turn).

In the room

- Show up early to make sure the set-up is ready and the table clean.

- Confirm any order/time arrangements you made before the conference

- Remind the speakers of their obligations to keep their presentations focused, scholarly and respectful.

During the presentation

- Start the presentations on time. End the panel on time.

- Keep each panelist on time. Often, moderators use informal time-cards they pass to the speaker, as needed.

- When the discussion begins make sure speaking time and opportunities are divided up fairly. Animated, dynamic discussion is expected and encouraged, but it's important for the moderator to make sure of the following:

  - Nobody monopolizes the conversation

  - Nobody talks over anyone or cuts anyone off

  - The discussion remains respectful and appropriate

  - Audience questioners do not ramble and rob other audience members of the chance to participate

  These last items constitute the most important part of your responsibility. Once speakers are "off-script" they may be tempted to focus less on scholarly arguments and more on personalized, non-scholarly observations, and to attempt to monopolize or control the conversation. It is crucial for the moderator to keep the conversation balanced (between speakers and between speakers and the audience), appropriate and civil.