

NJU-SESE English Paleontology Seminar - Guidelines

The purpose of the English Paleontology Seminar is to give NJU School of Earth Sciences and Engineering (NJU- SESE) paleontology graduate students an opportunity to practice their presentation skills in a manner that both simulates the format of professional presentations given at international meetings and encourages extended discussion of the presentation topics by seminar participants. All NJU- SESE paleontology graduate students are invited to attend and participate in the seminar which is held once a month throughout the regular NJU Autumn and Spring semesters.

During each seminar two student presentations will be scheduled each lasting a 20 minutes in total.¹ In order to encourage discussion each presentation will be followed by two short presentations by responders who will present critical reviews of the presentation just delivered highlighting important contributions made, outlining alternative interpretations of the data presented (if appropriate) and commenting on the larger significance of the work. These responder presentations will be followed by a short question-and-answer session during which the presenter will have an opportunity to respond to issues raised by the responders and the students will have an opportunity to raise issues and/or ask questions not raised by either of the responders. After both presentations have been delivered, and following a short break, the seminar will reconvene for an extended discussion of the issues raised by the presentations during which all seminar participants (students, post-doc, faculty) are encouraged to participate.

While all presentations, along with questions, comments, replies and discussions, will be conducted in English, the seminar is designed to be a supportive event that will help students practice their English-presentation skills. Accordingly, the seminar will provide time for students to formulate their questions/ comments/discussion and provide assistance if a student becomes stuck for an English term, concept or the construction of a phrase. The seminar is organized and moderated by a native English speaker and its participants have a wide variety of experience and facility with the English language.

Topically, any aspect of paleontology (construed broadly) is appropriate for presentation/discussion at a seminar meeting. Prior to the seminar meeting itself seminar presenters will be required to prepare an English-language abstract of their presentation so seminar participants will be aware of the topics scheduled for discussion. This abstract will need to follow standard guidelines (see [NJU-SESE English Paleo Seminar Abstract Guidelines](#)) and will be reviewed for both content and style. Pre-presentation review of the presentation's slides are also available to all seminar presenters. Thus, participation in the NJU-SESE English Paleontology Seminar will provide participants with instruction and experience in all aspects of the conceptualization, documentation, preparation of visual slides, and delivery of a professional-style scientific presentation. All seminar participants will be required to make at least one formal presentation during a seminar cycle and to serve as responders to the presentations of their fellow students. A schedule of presenters will be drawn up from the participant list prior to the first seminar meeting though the specific topics of the presentations will not need to be decided at that time.

Generally speaking, two categories of presentation topics will be allowed: (i.) a critical review of one or more published research article(s) that the student finds relevant to their personal research interests and (ii.) a progress report on research the student is conducting currently. A presumption will exist that research-article reviews will be contributed by graduate students at the beginning of their research projects, but that students should move to providing research progress reports as soon as possible.

Research progress reports should focus on a specific aspect of the overall research project for which data have been collected, analysed and interpreted within a formal hypothetico-deductive framework. For these presentations the focus should be on the testing of specific hypotheses, the outcomes of which can be evaluated objectively and carry implications not only in the context of the overall research project's specific goals/objectives, but also with respect to the larger issues of improving our collective understanding of life's history, including the history of the environment(s) within which organic evolution took place. Critical evaluations of taxonomy, phylogeny, data-analysis methods, the adequacy of computer simulations and/or



¹ Presentation time limits will be enforced strictly as they are at international meeting symposia and theme sessions.

theoretical models, in addition to more specific, taxon or biota-focused paleontological/paleobiological analyses, will be accepted as potential seminar research-presentation topics.

Any student wishing to undertake an article review must make a copy of the article(s) available to the moderator for distribution to the seminar participants at least one week prior to the relevant seminar meeting. All seminar participants should read and be familiar with these articles prior to the seminar and arrive with an understanding of the article's content. Accordingly, the presenter of the article review should assume the audience is already familiar with the article's content and so focus on their critical review of that content. In other words, there should be no need to devote all, or most of the presentation to describing what information the article contains. Rather, such presentations should focus on (i.) what the presenter finds important about the article, (ii.) whether the data collected and analyzed in the article were appropriate, (iii.) whether the conclusions drawn from the data analysis were supported by the data and warranted logically, (iv.) what implications the appropriately justified conclusions (if any) have for future paleontological research in this specific area and/or more generally, etc.

If any advanced graduate student encounters difficulty deciding on a presentation topic he/she should seek guidance from their academic advisor, or the seminar organizer, well in advance of their scheduled presentation date.

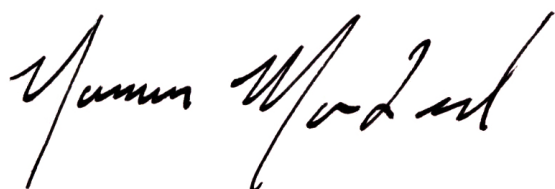
Ms Shuyi (Ariana) Xu (ariana.xu@nju.edu.cn) will be handling all administrative aspects of the NJU-SESE English Paleontology Seminar. As noted above, based on the list of students who express interest in participating in the seminar, a schedule of presentations will be drawn up and published at the outset of each semester. English seminars will normally be held once a month on Thursday evenings and commence at 18:30 in Room A212 of the Zhu Gongshan Building. A Tencent Meeting address will be provided for those eligible to join via video link. I will be moderating each English seminar unless I cannot be available, in which case I will ask another faculty member to assume the moderator's responsibilities.

Final titles and abstracts for all presentations should be sent to Ms Xu no later than two (2) weeks prior to the presentation date. For presenters wishing to review an article a reprint of the article should also be submitted to Ms Xu by that deadline. Ms Xu and I will assemble a seminar agenda from these submissions and that agenda will be distributed at least one (1) week prior to the date of the English Paleontology Seminar. If these deadlines present a problem for any student the student should seek guidance from the seminar organizer as soon as the problem is recognized. Any student who fails to submit their materials according to these deadlines without authorization from the organizer will have their presentation canceled.

With regard to eligibility, participation in the NJU-SESE English Paleontology Seminar program is open to all NJU-SESE paleontology graduate students (MSc & PhD) irrespective of their academic advisor. Requests by advanced NJU undergraduate students to participate in the seminar will be entertained and decided following a meeting by the organizer and the student to determine whether the student has adequate English skills and background knowledge to participate on a par with NJU-SESE graduate students. NJU post-doctoral researchers are also welcome to participate in the NJU-SESE English Paleontology Seminar and will be afforded the option of making a formal presentation or simply participating in the post-presentation discussions. A [seminar web site](#) has been set up to provide access to seminar guidelines and other documents.

Although no academic credit is associated with participation in the NJU-SESE English Paleontology Seminar, the opportunity for instruction, experience and support afforded by this program is both valuable and unique, especially in the context of a Chinese university. English is the language of international science and all those who aspire to a professional career in science and/or technology will find their employment and advancement opportunities enhanced via acquisition of the skills this seminar is designed to provide.

With kind regards.



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