Senior Thesis Speech | PPT Tips

From the ST Packet:
"A PowerPoint presentation must be included with your speech. Included in the PPT could be:
charts, graphs, photos, video clips (individual clips should not exceed 1 minute; total visual aid
time should not exceed 3 minutes), interviews. Keep in mind, less is more when it comes to
visual aids. Phrases work better than sentences and images work better than words! You must
include a works cited on your last slide."

So, that's not a lot of information, nor is it a lot of guidance. Past ST assignees have been more
regimented—only black backgrounds, a certain font size, certain number of slides, etc. Based on
the above, whoever wrote this year's assignment was much more laissez-faire.

Knowing that the guardrails are off does not mean anything goes, however. There are good and
better ways to incorporate visuals into your presentation. There are also really bad ways that you
should definitely avoid. Here are some tips to help boost your visuals to the "better" category:

According to The Official TED Guide to Public Speaking, the key elements of strong visuals fall
into 3 categories:

- To Reveal
- To Explain
- To Delight

Reveal—this is simply to show something that's difficult to describe with words. This would be
to put a phenomenon on display where mere words won't do—the number of stars in the galaxy,
a fire that rages out of control, the moment the planes hit the towers on 9/11. But don't just dump
the image in the laps of the audience—set the context, prep the audience, and reveal to let the
visually inspire. If a picture is worth 1,000 words, this element of visuals should be used sparingly
and only with the most powerful images, or your speech will be way too short! Full-screen
images work best for this—don't cram this image on an already-full slide.

Explain—the "show and tell" of presentation, where words and images work together. We are
visual people, and often an explanation of something new is best absorbed with an
accompanying image. But be careful—a complex image will cause the audience to focus ALL of
their attention on figuring out the visual, leaving you speaking to a tuned-out audience. Keep
your image simple, adding layers/builds as you add explanation.

Delight—because sometimes you just need a pretty picture. Not every image needs an
explanation—sometimes they are just background aesthetics, "moments of visual indulgence."
This last category is probably minimally applicable to a PEP senior speech, unless your speech is
on Art or Architecture or some other highly visual topic where appreciating beauty for beauty
might apply. But Mental Health or Snycretism? Not so much. I could see this used with Liliana's
topic—a famous work of the Garden of Eden while she discusses the fall of man, or a visual of
space when discussing creation. The visual in this category needs to comment—it is just
background to the spoken word.
Other helpful Tips:

- Confine to each slide a single core idea—rather than adding more to an existing slide, just move on to the next one with your next thought/idea
- If your next idea does not have an accompanying image, don't stay on the previous slide—insert a blank, black slide to move to, reminding the audience to re-direct their attention to you the speaker instead of becoming distracted by the last slide
- Use as few words as possible—NEVER allow the words on the slide to be the same words that come out of your mouth. Many words on a slide encourages the audience to read ahead, so by the time you get around to saying it, they already know what you are going to say.
- There is no value in simply repeating in text what you are saying on stage—your audience can read, don't insult them and make yourself redundant!
- Instead of a slide that reads: "A black hole is an object so massive that no light can escape from it," try "How black is a black hole?" written on the slide, while the definition is spoken. The question piques the interest of the audience and your words become more interesting, not less.
- If you find yourself leaning toward bullet points, rearrange to make each point its own slide, use an image instead, or delete the bullet entirely.

Specifics:

- Don't use the software's templates if you can avoid it—using the templates means everyone's presentation looks similar.
- Start with a blank slide and build out
- Neutral backgrounds keep the focus on the images (use black for photos—they stand out more)
- Stick with one easy-to-read font like Helvetica or Arial
- Use a font size of 24 point or larger, and be consistent with sizes (one size for titles, another for main ideas, smaller for supporting ideas)
- Use a high-contrast color—dark type on a light background, light type on a dark background
- If adding text to a photo, use a black bar at the bottom to add text that stands out
- Avoid bullets and dashes
- Resist underlining and italics—they are hard to read, but bold is ok
- As stated earlier, use builds to add info to a slide (example—a chart to which information is added with a click as you talk about it)
- Nix the fancy transitions between slides and spinning drops into place, unless your topic calls for it (considering our audience, this might be more appropriate, but don't overdo it)
- Give credit where credit is due—all images must be cited, either on the final slide or directly under the image itself (write down where you found them as soon as you locate them, or you will NEVER find them again—speaking from experience!)

Info taken from TED Talks: The Official TED Guide to Public Speaking by Chris Anderson (2016)