

# MEMO

To: Penn theorists (faculty and students), Theory Workshop speakers  
From: Dave Cass  
Date: January 13, 2003  
Subject: "CARESS Rules" for the Theory Workshop

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In an attempt to counter the evident and unfortunate tendency of theory seminars – much as the University milieu itself during the Judith Rodin era! – to degenerate into pap and PR (rather than to generate ideas and thought), I am instituting the following so-called "CARESS Rules" for the Theory Workshop, at least when I am running it. These are the natural successor, for the new millenium, to the famous "Cowles Rules" of the 50's – which, as I understand, were adopted by Tjalling Koopmans in reaction to the belligerent, counterproductive tone set by Milton Friedman and his ilk at the University of Chicago.

## REQUIRED

- Starts **sharply** at 3:30, ends **no later than** 5 PM – except with special dispensation from the person in charge that day
- Introduction, i.e., rubbish – or more bluntly, crap at the beginning of the seminar, for no longer than 15 minutes (which is, from my own viewpoint, even too liberal) ... **If there is not a serious equation, model, result, ... on the blackboard (or, grudgingly, a slide) by the end of 15 minutes, then anyone in the audience – including me – is perfectly free to simply leave: THE SEMINAR IS FORMALLY OVER!**
- No more than 5 (or, **if there is very good reason**, really stretching it, 10) references, preferably just those which the speaker thinks are the most substantively important (not the most politically correct or self-serving)
- Only a reasonable number of useful slides, i.e., slides thoughtfully prepared just for a seminar – with large enough characters to be easily read ... **ABSOLUTELY BANNED** (what my grandmother would have disdainfully – and correctly – dismissed as the "lazy man's solution"): slides handwritten in great haste (and which are therefore pretty illegible, if not totally incomprehensible) or, even much worse, slides which are merely xeroxed copies of parts of a preprint – in 12 pt or smaller, no less

## STRONGLY RECOMMENDED

- Discuss work in progress – not a polished paper which has already been "sold" 50 times already, so that the speaker is completely bored (if not plain forgetful), and cognoscenti (who've already heard it 25 times already over coffee or beer, in other seminars, at conferences, ...) are also
- Readily admit, and, if possible formally address the limitations of your narrow purview, restrictive parameterization, special assumptions, ...
- Present one concrete result (for example, God forbid, a theorem), pretty completely stated **and justified/proved** (very convoluted, ugly [note: this is a modifier, not a description!] game theory is, for sure, excepted)
- I, myself, also abide by the "Cowles Rules" (just kidding, of course)