*How it works:*

Without Zoom – in Person:

1. The topics to be discussed were given in a handout, with a list of the overall topics and a set of questions that, when answered, would explain the topic to the class. The whole class receives the list of topics and questions.
2. Students who are to be presenters are put into teams by general topic, with details (questions to be answered) about the topic assigned to specific members of the team. The teams are assigned by alphabetical order on the roster, with the students whose name comes first as the captain. (Assigning the captain in this manner has its problems, since the selection is random. In many teams, if the captain is not tech-savvy or very organized, another team member may step in to help.)
3. The teams and topics are announced at the end of a class a week before presentations. The team members are then assigned a corner of the classroom to meet and exchange contact information.
4. The finished product is to be a PowerPoint presentation, with contributions from all members of the team. In class, the team members come to the front of the class and, one at a time, using the PowerPoint, present their information and analysis to the whole class.
5. The class has been alerted to take notes, since some questions about the presentations may appear on the next test.

On Zoom:

Two different methods used:

Similar to in-person:

1. The organizational step is similar, but the topics, questions, and teams are sent as a pdf to all students. The teams are given email addresses so they can contact each other. They exchanged emails and texts and worked remotely.
2. In the presentation class, each contributor discussed their assigned issue as the PowerPoint page was shared on Zoom. An example of a PowerPoint assembled remotely is attached.
3. All students were told to be ready to answer questions about the presentations on the next test.
4. The PowerPoints were ultimately emailed to all the students in the class, since test questions can be built around them.

Splitting up the Answers to Topic Questions into Individual Answers:

1. Alternatively, individuals were told to be prepared present their answers to the questions asked, when the day for presentations arrived.
2. In the order that the topics and questions appeared on the list of topics and questions (already sent as a pdf to students), the students answered their questions either in class or remotely. Many of the remote students had prepared a PowerPoint or other visual that was shared. Others had their answers in a Word document that was shared. Some merely gave their contribution orally.
3. Whatever visual was provided by students was made available to the whole class.
4. All students were told to be ready to answer questions about the presentations on the next test.

Comments and Comparisons

* Having students organize themselves as a team and putting together the PowerPoint presentations has its plusses and minuses: some are not adept at PowerPoint (but they might learn in the process) and often one student carries he burden of putting the presentation together, regardless of whose name appears as author on a PowerPoint slide
* Having students in person presenting each of their question’s answer (without merely reading the PowerPoint) usually leads to more detail and livelier presentations than a remote voice from Zoom
* The Zoom PowerPoints were surprisingly good. There were embedded videos (some of which were technically a problem) and some good graphics.

The Project about Elephants

In discussing the assignment of property rights in the Law & Economics class, the issue of who owns or is responsible for wildlife comes up. The economic theory known as the Tragedy of the Commons (if no one specifically owns them, no one specifically protects them) is usually employed to explain what happened to the American bison in the early Twentieth Century, why there is overfishing in the north Atlantic, and other situations where lack of ownership of, or controlling authority over wildlife leads to the over-harvesting. Such it is with African elephants, which are disappearing at an alarming rate.

The topic of discussion of elephants was given to a group of students. Each student was given a partner. The partner set was given the specific task of answering a question about the disappearance of African elephants. In a second section of the same course, the partners worked independently from the group as a whole. The presentations were better when the group worked together. The last two questions involved the students taking a position, one team with pro and another with con, about Botswana’s program of licensing elephant hunting. Here is the PowerPoint for the class that worked as a team.