

S1: Stump Speech

Prepare and deliver a speech, *no more than four minutes long*, in which you attempt to influence your audience's behavior at the voting booth. This could mean a number of different things, and you are free to choose among them. Most straightforwardly, you might urge your audience to vote for a particular candidate or party. If you choose, you can deliver the speech as though you are the candidate in question, or a close associate, or you can just be you. Instead of trying to earn votes for a candidate, you could argue for the importance of a particular issue, urging conclusions about how that issue should influence voting. At bottom, the idea is to exert an influence over the voters, to push people to vote in a particular direction.

Research: Though this assignment does not require research, it is often persuasive to bring facts to bear in your case. In their stump speeches, candidates running for president frequently cite statistics or give concrete examples both to evince their claims and to augment the impact of their words with vivid stories or heart-rending anecdotes. If such evidence would help to give your speech additional power, make sure to do the necessary research, which probably won't be much. Do not offer vague assertions with the proviso that "everyone knows" that this is the case. Assume you are speaking to an audience of intelligent skeptics, who will not choose to agree unless you give them compelling reasons. At the same time, be careful to help your audience to see the big picture, rather than getting lost in lots of interesting but "small" details.

Criteria: You will be judged on both the form and content of your speech. Formal elements include your pace, tone of voice, gestures, eye contact, stance, fluidity, and your general charisma or bearing. Your speech should be dynamic and spirited, with a sense of conviction, expertise, and affability. (You will not be judged on the quality of your attire, so feel free to wear what you would wear to class any other day. On the other hand, the t-shirt with mold growing under the armpits can't help but give a certain impression.) Elements of content include the quality and originality of your ideas, the structure of your speech, your sensitivity to your audience, your choice of words and sentence structures, your use of compelling imagery, examples, and rhetorical tropes, and the cumulative force of your argument. Bear in mind that while images,

analogies, anaphora, litotes, alliteration, and other rhetorical techniques can greatly enhance the power of a speech, these techniques must be appropriate to the context rather than contrived. You are often better off saying something in the most straightforward way possible, rather than risking the confusion of a metaphor that doesn't quite work.

Format: Speeches will probably be spread out over two days of class, Tuesday, March 1, and Thursday, March 3. All speeches should be prepared for Tuesday, as speakers will be chosen at random on that day. We have lots of speeches to get through, so please be ready when your name is called. After your four-minute presentation, there will be sometime for brief questions from the audience to which you are expected to respond intelligently and compellingly. Following the question-and-answer session, we will critique your speech as a group. Throughout your presentation, including the question period, you are advised to maintain a professional demeanor, though this does not mean that you must be formal or stiff. The point is to take your role seriously, to believe for those few minutes that you have the opportunity to exert an influence over a significant audience of voters.

Presentation: You can read, speak from notes, or deliver your talk from memory, but know that the most effective speeches have at least the appearance of a certain spontaneity. A speaker who reads verbatim from a sheet of paper invites doubt as to her sincerity. Whatever method you choose, you would be well advised to practice, probably a few times, to avoid stumbling during your presentation.

S2: Micropolitics

Prepare and deliver a speech, *no more than four minutes long*, in which you present the micropolitical dimension of an object or phenomenon that is not normally thought of as political. In terms of content, the speech should have three things: (1) a vivid and intriguing description of the object, (2) a detailed analysis of the political dimension of that object, and (3) a persuasive argument about how we should behave with respect to that object, given its political aspect.

Research: This is not primarily a research assignment. Though you may want to do some research to be able to

indicate connections between your mundane object and the larger world, or to be able to cite surprising and little known facts about your object (or phenomenon), these will not be the focus of your speech. Rather, your speech will show that you have thought a lot about your chosen object, discovered aspects of it that your audience will not have thought of before.

Criteria: The criteria are pretty much the same as in S1. You will be judged on both the form and content of your speech. In general, content will be weighted more heavily than form, though both are significant factors. Formal elements include your pace, tone of voice, gestures, eye contact, stance, fluidity, and your general charisma or bearing. (You will not be judged on the quality of your attire, so feel free to wear what you would wear to class any other day. On the other hand, the t-shirt with mold growing under the armpits can't help but give a certain impression.) Elements of content include the quality and originality of your ideas, the structure of your speech, your sensitivity to your audience, your choice of words and sentence structures, your use of compelling imagery, examples, and rhetorical tropes, and the cumulative force of your insight. Bear in mind that while images, analogies, anaphora, litotes, alliteration, and other rhetorical techniques can greatly enhance the power of a speech, these techniques must be appropriate to the context rather than contrived. You are usually better off saying something in the most straightforward way possible, rather than risking the confusion of a metaphor that doesn't quite work.

Format: Speeches will take place over two days of class, October 26 and 28, with order to be determined randomly. Once again, there will be a couple of minutes after each speech for questions, during which I will have an opportunity to complete my notes.

Presentation: This time, please do not read, though you may use notes. Also, please *practice* prior to your speech, not only to make it go more smoothly, but also so that you can be more certain of remaining within the allotted time frame of *four minutes*.

The bottom line here is to help your audience understand the way in which their actions and choices in the world really matter. The hard part of this speech is to make a genuine connection between the ordinary and the political.

Note: to call something *political* is not necessarily to connect it to the government or the election process. Rather, a political dimension of an object is a way in which it takes on a value above its mundane role in our lives.

S3: Open Topic Persuasive Speech

Prepare and deliver an extemporaneous speech, *no more than eight minutes long*, on a topic of your choosing. The only stipulation regarding content is that it must be a persuasive speech, an attempt to influence the convictions of your audience.

Content/Criteria: The choice of topic is open. Though your speech must have real substance, thoughtful argument, and a genuine attempt at persuasion, the topic might still be humorous, hypothetical, or narrow. You need not be grave nor must your topic be severe. Without restricting your choice of topic, the nature of the assignment does suggest a number of guidelines. Your topic should be appropriate to the audience. Your topic should allow a thorough engagement within the time limit. Your topic should be motivated, which is to say, it should concern an issue that has or should have a value to your audience. As in a good essay, your speech should make an original and contentious claim, which it supports through critical, thoughtful analysis and appropriate use of evidence. Good speeches will generally have an introduction that clarifies the topic and establishes a common ground with the audience, as well as a conclusion that not only reiterates, summarizes, and closes, but also points onward toward farther reaching conclusions. Effective speeches tend to refer in the body of the argument to the central point; don't forget to speak to your audience, keeping in mind that we are not as well versed in the details of your analysis as are you. These guidelines may not help you to figure out what to speak about. If you want additional assistance, please ask the instructor.

Grading: As usual, your speech will be graded primarily based on its content. Presentation is crucially important, and you will be rewarded for an effective use of rhetorical techniques, good intonation, pacing, body language, and other formal aspects of your delivery. But clever wording or entertaining antics cannot substitute for having something to say, and the content of your persuasive speech is paramount in the determination of your grade.

Format: The speech should be no longer than eight minutes. Please respect this time limit, as we must ensure that every student gets a chance to deliver her speech before the end of term. When the speech is over, there will be a short question period, approximately three minutes. *This speech is extemporaneous*, which means you are not allowed to read the speech verbatim. You may read, if you choose to, the introduction and conclusion of your speech. But the body of the speech should be delivered from memory or from note cards or an outline. You will be penalized significantly if you read your whole speech. *Note cards or outline will be submitted at the end of the speech.*

Audience: Your audience for this speech comprises your classmates and the instructor. Choose your topic and present your ideas accordingly.