

7. Final Persuasive Speech

Due: 24th class, 5/11 (R)—everyone must be ready to give a speech on this day

Length: 8-10 minutes

Details: Your speech should be written and practiced ahead of time.

- Delivering the speech extemporaneously is the best approach for most occasions since it combines the impromptu speech's spontaneity and interaction with the audience (eye contact, gestures) with the read or memorized speech's deeper thought, practiced style, and phrasings.

- You may, however, read your speech if you prefer—it will be more difficult to get an “A” if you read the speech, however, since doing so usually limits the performance aspects.

- In any event, have notes or the speech up front with you.

- You will lose points if the speech runs shorter than 8 minutes or longer than 10 minutes.

Speech Topics: Feel free to use your imagination with the topic selection. There are only two restrictions:

- You cannot give a speech on a topic that anyone might find offensive or insulting

- You cannot give your speech on a topic you have written an essay about

Here are suggested topics, but feel free to create your own:

- Give the closing argument as the defense attorney for some famous criminal (e.g., for John Wilkes Booth, Al Capone, Brutus, Lizzie Borden, Jesse James)—this type of topic requires that you know some facts about the person and his/her life and crimes

- Argue for the greater importance of some belief or value over some other belief or value (e.g., the importance of compassion over justice, or of justice over compassion, or of honesty over success, or of success over honesty)

- Argue for some change in some policy (at MIT, in Cambridge, in your hometown, in the US, in the world)

- Argue that all college-age students should (or should not) be forced to do 2 years of community service before entering college

- Argue that college students should be free to choose any courses they wish rather than having to fulfill General Institute Requirements (such as English, math, etc.)

- Argue your own topic

The point is to plunge deeply into the implications of and qualifications to your position. Make explicit appeals to ethical principles as well as to practical consequences; use all the resources of rhetoric to make your speech convincing.