

8. Written Version of Final Persuasive Speech

Due: 24th class, 5/11 (R)-- EMAIL me a copy before class

Length: 8-10 minutes (1500-2500 words, 6~10 typed pages)

Oral Presentations

To Prepare for your speech:

- Make an outline of the main points you wish to make (never more than 2-4 main points and then examples or evidence or reasons to support them)
- Practice the speech at least 4 times all the way through: 2-3 times by yourself (practicing gestures as well as the phrasings), and at least once in front of someone (e.g., a Writing Center Consultant, a friend). The more you practice, the less nervous you will feel and the better your performance will be.
- Time your speech when you practice—never run over the allotted time!

Giving a Speech:

- Use an outline, preferably on note cards (they are less distracting than a sheet of paper)—the outline is your safety net.
- Act like a professional speaking to other professionals.
- Use an “enlarged conversational quality” (speak with the same naturalness you would use with a friend, but enlarged a bit for a whole audience)
- Use gestures to emphasize points, but don’t randomly gesture
- Make eye contact with members of the audience so they feel involved (this also helps you see if some point didn’t get across to them)
- Use facial expressions to convey your feelings—but subtly
- Average speaking rate is 110-130 words/minute. Don’t speed up
- Enunciate and pronounce words clearly
- Vary your rate of speech, the pitch of your voice (don’t speak in a monotone), and volume (don’t shout and then whisper, but some variation is good).

The Structure of Any Speech: The overall structure of any speech (or essay, for that matter) is straightforward: Introduction, Body, and Conclusion.

- Introduction—The first few seconds of any speech establish its rhythm and mood. The Intro should be 10-15% of your speech (a 5-minute speech has 300 seconds, so 30-45 seconds for your Intro; a 10-minute speech has 600 seconds, so that means 60-90 seconds for the Intro). A common mistake is to give too much information in your introduction.
 - o Never start off with “My name is” or “My topic is” or “Ah...er...gosh.”
 - o The first words out of your mouth should be your attention getter—a question or a startling statistic or a thought-provoking quotation (e.g., “Without question, the most important class we can take at MIT is not an engineering course or a math course or a science course—the most important class we can take here is ‘Rhetoric,’ 21W.747”)
 - o Avoid starting with a joke.
 - o A forecast of your main points should follow the attention getter. This is a one-sentence

statement of the 2 - 4 main points you will present (e.g., “What other class can help us make our writing persuasive and, more importantly, improve our thought processes?”)

- **Body**—The Body of the speech develops the main points of your talk. No speech, no matter how long, should have more than 2-4 main points. Longer speeches simply develop those 2-4 main points in greater depth, using more examples and more evidence. The Body constitutes 75-85% of your speech (for a 5 minute speech, that’s about 3.75-4.25 minutes; for a 10-minute speech, that’s 7.5-8.5 minutes).

- o The Body of your speech may follow any of the typical essay ordering schemes, including (but not limited to) the following:
 - topical order (“2 reasons for buying supplies at the MIT Coop”)
 - chronological order (“3 steps for writing a good essay”)
 - advantage-disadvantage order (“the advantages and disadvantages of attending Interphase”)
 - problem-solution (“grades cause anxiety, so we should abolish grades”)

- **Conclusion**—This section is as crucial as your Introduction since it is the last thing listeners will hear and hence the thing they will remember the longest. It should be 5-10% of your speech (15-30 seconds for a 5-minute speech; 30-60 seconds for a 10-minute speech).

- o Never end by saying something like “Well, I guess that’s about it...”
- o Begin your conclusion by summarizing your main points in one sentence (e.g., “I have been arguing today that, even though we are at a technical institute, the most important course we can take is a humanities course called ‘Rhetoric’ because it makes us more persuasive arguers and more careful readers.”)
Then end with a final thought (something for your listeners to remember)—a short quotation, a brief anecdote that illustrates your final opinion of the article you’ve analyzed, a call to action (e.g., “Let me leave you with this final thought: No matter what plans or discoveries we make as engineers and scientists, if we cannot communicate them in a persuasive manner, we will not succeed. So sign up for Rhetoric as soon as you can. Thank you.”).
- o You can lead into your final thought with words that indicate the speech is ending—e.g., “Finally,” or “Let me conclude with an anecdote” or “I’d like to leave you with this final thought—”

Sample Note-card:

Intro: Without question, the most important class we can take at MIT is not an engineering course or a math course or a science course—the most important class we can take here is “Rhetoric,” 21W.747. What other class can help us make our writing persuasive and, more importantly, improve our thought processes?

1. Persuasive writing
 - a. Rhetoric is all about persuasion
 - b. Ancient rhetoric
 - c. Modern rhetoric
2. Our thought processes

- a. Thinking outside the box
- b. Anticipating others' arguments
- c. Guard ourselves against politicians etc.

Conclusion: I have been arguing today that, even though we are at a technical institute, the most important course we can take is a humanities course called "Rhetoric" because it makes us more persuasive arguers and more careful readers. Let me leave you with this final thought: No matter how good our plans or discoveries are as engineers and scientists, if we cannot communicate them in a persuasive manner, we will not succeed. So sign up for Rhetoric as soon as you can. Thank you.