

Speechwriting: Composition and Delivery

Textbook: William Safire, *Lend Me Your Ears: Great Speeches in History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004). The 2004 edition is available in the bookstore, but any previous edition is fine.

Objective: Students will learn both to write speeches for a variety of settings and to coach speakers in the basics of effective delivery.

Overview

This will be a hands-on, participatory course with a heavy writing commitment and, I hope, a hefty payoff: the ability to write effective speeches for either principals or yourselves to deliver in diverse settings and circumstances—from conventions to committee hearings, at commencements or during crises. Generally speaking, half of each class will be devoted to lecture and discussion on the topic for that day, and the second half will consist of (a) critiques of famous historical or contemporary speeches or (b) student presentations (and critiques) of speeches drafted for the previous week's assignment.

Ethics Statement

The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Report any violations you witness to the instructor.

Disability Statement

If you are a student with a documented disability who requires accommodations or if you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact Denise O'Sullivan, AAP Coordinator for Disabilities, at 202-452-0983 or dosullivan@jhu.edu.

Assignments and Grades

Students will be responsible for turning in drafts of five brief speeches (roughly 1,500 words) and one keynote address (2,800 to 3,200 words). The keynote is the equivalent of a term paper: It should cover a topic and scenario (crisis management, inspirational, etc.) of your choice, selected in consultation with me.

Students will also choose one class session during which they will deliver (for coaching and critiques from the class) one of their speech assignments.

Final grades will be computed as follows:

Brief speeches: 25 points each (total of 125)

Keynote speech: 50 points

Participation: 20 (two points per class)

Total: 195 points

For each assignment, I will distribute a rubric explaining specific grading criteria. Generally, you will be graded on rhetoric, persuasiveness and syntax.

Participation includes making polite, constructive and substantive comments during the presentation portion of each course meeting (“I did/did not like it *because ...*,” not simply “I did/did not like it”) and offering thoughtful questions/comments (that reflect familiarity with the assigned readings) during the lecture/discussion portion. Absent students will receive zero points for each missed class. Please note that the absence policy applies even if you inform me in advance and regardless of the reason you miss class.

Readings

Reading assignments (usually selections from the Safire anthology) will be relatively brief so that students can concentrate on writing. The readings below should be completed before the session for which they are listed.

Our schedule and topics are as follows (schedule subject to change based on availability of guest speakers).

June 1: Introduction

June 8: Rhetorical Devices

- Readings: “An Introductory Address” (Safire anthology), “Lincoln, in His Second Inaugural, Seeks to Heal the Spiritual Wounds of War,” “Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. Ennobles the Civil Rights Movement at the Lincoln Memorial”

June 15: Delivery and Coaching Techniques

- Readings: TBA

June 22: Inspirational Speeches

- Readings: “Winston Churchill Braces Britons to Their Task,” “John F. Kennedy: Address at Rice University on the Nation’s Space Effort” (<http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/Speeches/JFK/003POF03SpaceEffort09121962.htm>), “Address of President Bush to a Joint Session of Congress, September 20, 2001”

(<http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/>), President Obama's Inaugural Address (www.whitehouse.gov)

June 29: Eulogies, Toasts and Tributes

- Readings: “Electronic Journalist Eric Sevareid Remembers Rocket Scientist Wernher von Braun,” “Senate Leader Robert Dole Remembers Richard Nixon as ‘One of Us,’” “President Nixon’s Prepared Text in Case the *Apollo XI* Moon Landing Ended in Tragedy”

July 6: Political Speeches

- Readings: “Senator Edward M. Kennedy Exhorts Fellow Democrats to Hold Fast to Liberalism,” “George H.W. Bush Accepts the Republican Nomination,” Barack Obama, “2004 Democratic National Convention Keynote” (<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/convention2004/barackobama2004dnc.htm>)

July 13: Persuasive/Challenge Speeches

- Readings: “General Washington Talks His Officers Out of Insurrection,” “Senator Margaret Chase Smith Issues a ‘Declaration of Conscience’ Against Senator Joseph McCarthy,” “Holocaust Witness Elie Wiesel Asks President Reagan to Reconsider a Visit to a German Cemetery”

July 20: CLASS WILL NOT MEET

July 27: Business Speeches

- Readings: To be announced.

August 3: Mea Culpas and Crisis Communications

- Readings: “President Clinton Rejects a Contrite Speech Draft and Elects to ‘Move On’” (Draft and As Delivered)

August 10: Student Presentations