

Handbook for Public Speaking Stephen Hinerman

This booklet is designed to help you prepare for your speaking assignments in Humanities. It contains background material concerning public speaking, a description of the speaking situation, and some help for you when you put your own speech together. Each of you will be expected to read and use this material when you do your assignment.

Naturally, there is much more to say about public speaking than we can cover here. That is why each student is urged to consider signing up for — Communication Studies 80.

Communication 80 is the Communications Lab course, where you learn more about various aspects of public communication by completing three specially designed modules for one hour of credit. You can see your section instructor for more details.

Even if you do not sign up for Communication Studies 80, you are invited to take advantage of the Lab, located in Hugh Gillis Hall, room 231. (Hours will be posted by the room.) Here, you can receive advice from Communication Studies majors on your speeches, or even have your speech video-taped for you to view. Feel free to take advantage of this opportunity.

The speaking assignment is important because every student needs to have two things: first, an understanding of different theories as to how communication works best (which will be covered in the lectures and readings); and secondly, a working knowledge of how to apply these principles (which will be seen in your own speeches). With both of these in place, it is hoped that you will be an effective communicator and also have a greater theoretical understanding of human communication in public settings.

• **The Assignment for Semester 1A:**

Each semester you will be asked to give one speech in front of the class. Towards the beginning of the semester, you will sign up for a particular speaking day. When that day arrives, you will deliver a three minute speech on an agreed upon topic relating to the course content this semester. This semester, you will give an “epideictic” speech which either “praises” or “blames” a person, event or institution. The purpose of the speech is to examine a particular topic and take a position: either tell the class/audience why you admire the subject of your speech, or tell them why you do not admire that subject. For instance, in the literature of the Old Testament, you might decide that Job is a great person whom we should admire, and your speech would be one to tell us why that is so. Or you might wish to blame the Greeks for their war-like attitudes. If that was the case, you would give a speech that would help us understand why the Greeks should be blamed. Notice all the aspects which Aristotle believes can go into an epideictic speech. Some of these may be relevant to your own speech. They should help you with the first step: deciding why you admire or do not admire the subject of your speech. In other words, you need to decide on the criteria concerning why you wish to praise or blame the subject. Your speech should then spell these criteria out, with examples of how these fit the topic.

Begin by asking “How do I feel about ___?” Next, go on to ask yourself why you feel positively or negatively about the topic. Here, you may want to refer to Aristotle for some help in finding the criteria. This will be the basic information which you will then work into the speech format.

That format is suggested later in the booklet. Just remember that you must decide on two or three positive or negative qualities of your subject. The next step is to back those qualities up with some evidence in the form of illustrations or examples or facts. Finally, just follow the steps below and you will have a general speech outline.

You will be required to write an outline for this speech. due before you go up in front of the class. However, the speech is not graded. This is a chance for you to practice without the fear that you are being given a grade.

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• **Misconceptions about Speaking in Public:**

Before we begin discussing the speech format, let us clear up some common misconceptions about public speaking.

1. *“You just can’t learn how to speak well.”*

Not true. It may be true, as Quintilian will argue in your readings, that there are certain things about speaking that cannot be taught. But we also know from research that both study and repetition will help people become better speakers. You *can* learn how to put a speech together more effectively and what to consider when preparing your presentation. And you *can* learn simply by doing — the more people speak in public, the better public speakers they can become.

2. *“How you say something isn’t important. It’s what you say that’s important.”*

Not true. How many times have you heard a boring presentation that almost put you to sleep, and felt that if you’d only been inspired by the speaker’s style, you would have learned some interesting things?

3. *“What you say isn’t important. It’s how you say it.”*

Not true. How many times have you heard a politician, speaking in a beautiful voice with beautiful technique, say absolutely nothing? Public speaking is most effective when it has both something important to say and when the speaker says those things well.

4. *“Public speaking is just like acting.”*

Not true. Today, we teach public speaking that is “conversational” in tone. We ask that you use your normal speaking voice (albeit with, perhaps, a little more enthusiasm and volume than you might in some conversations). We no longer teach the style of public speaking that would ask you to have elaborate gestures or extreme emotional vocal qualities. Simply try to be “yourself” when you deliver the speech, loud enough for all to clearly hear you and varied enough vocally to keep everyone’s attention.

5. *“I’m frightened of this more than most of the other students in class.”*

Most of all NOT TRUE. This is perhaps the most important misconception about public speaking. Here is a common observation heard from teachers of public speaking:

EVERYONE WHO SPEAKS IN PUBLIC IS NERVOUS.

So it is natural that you feel nervous about speaking. Everyone, to some degree or another, feels that way. And the less you have spoken in public, the more nervous you probably feel. But don’t forget that most of your classmates feel the same way. The only “cure” for nervousness in public speaking is . . . well, getting up and speaking!

There are a number of physical symptoms of nervousness you may experience. You may breathe harder, your blood pressure may go up, more blood sugar may be released, your body can tense up . . . these are just some of the things people may experience. But viewed another way, these are also symptoms most athletes feel before they go out to compete! And just like an athlete, you need to make your nerves work for you, not against you.

In order to do that, here are a few things to remember. Recall that the audience is not out there criticizing your every move, waiting for your every mistake. People are hoping you do well. And if you make a mistake — well, we all make mistakes. It is normal, and one mistake will not ruin your chances for a good grade. Just gather your thoughts and continue, trying not to dwell on what went wrong. Everyone, even the best speaker, makes mistakes.

Remember to plan. The more you plan, the less are your chances of making error after error and the more confident you can be. Also, remember you will get less nervous the more often you speak in public. Finally, keep in mind that if you weren’t nervous at all, it would be very irregular. Some nervousness may even help you “get up” for the speech, giving you some adrenaline to help you win your audience over. So even though you are nervous, “go for it.”

• The Rhetorical Situation

The scholar Lloyd Bitzer speaks about what he calls “the rhetorical situation.” This event, he claims, “is a complex of persons, events, objects and relations representing an actual or potential exigence” that can be modified by the “creation of a discourse which changes reality.” What Professor Bitzer is explaining is a situation like your speech. You have been asked to address a situation (“the topic you have been assigned”) in a complex field of persons (“you and the class”), events (“the class itself”), and relations (“the class does not yet know how you evaluate the speaking topic and is waiting to find out”). You are attempting to share with the audience your own views, and you hope that they will consider those views when they think about your topic in the future. Since Professor Bitzer calls **rhetoric** an activity in which communication is employed to “produce action or change in the world,” when you are communicating your views to the class in hopes that they may think differently about the topic, you are engaging in a rhetorical act. Rhetoric, in fact, is a term used to cover events like this since the time of the ancient Greeks. During the semester, you will be reading some of the earliest writings on the subject of rhetoric.

Every rhetorical situation, like your speech, is made up of a number of elements:

- audience (the class)
- occasion (your assignment)
- the body of ideas from which you can choose your topic
- the speaker
- the conditions of the speech (time of day, room, grades, etc.).

The list conveys the idea that any speech is not just a simple one-way situation where you speak and people merely hear. It is a complex series of events. Every speaker faces an audience whose members have their own opinions, desires, attitudes, and values. These are influenced by their past, their hopes for the future and their present situation. The audience is more or less “open” to hear your message. The speaker enters with her/his own desires and attitudes, and her/his own past experience, future hopes and present feelings. The speaker wishes in some way to alter the audience’s feelings. When we look at the speech situation in this way, we can see that it is an event in which: 1) it is very important for every speaker to understand the audience and their attitudes and values; 2) it is very important for the speaker to carefully pick their topics and arrange their argument (because all speeches are given for an audience, not just so the speaker can sound off); and 3) the conditions of the speech and the occasion of the speech have a real impact. We will spend the rest of this booklet going over many of these factors.

• Why Should We Learn Public Speaking?

But first.. .Some of you are no doubt thinking, ‘I’m never going to have to speak on TV or speak before a mob of people. Why should I learn to speak in public?’ Of course, you never know, but even if this were true, there are a number of reasons to learn public speaking. We will highlight four here.

1. The ability to understand public communication and rhetorical theory is important in all walks of life. You will have to communicate and understand that communication in relationships that are friendly, intimate, business-like, formal, short-term, and long-term. Families often rise and fall on their ability to communicate and listen. Business relationships are built on communication systems. Even if you have not been in the best communication systems so far, in order to do better in your future, it is important to understand how people *can* communicate.

2. Good public speaking skills are important in most careers. Many of you will be asked to present yourself in public in your job. Some will have to do this in presentations at work; others will have to sell their product in public. Even if you never give a speech, this does not mean you will never speak in public. But even above this, good communication skills and a solid grounding in understanding the theory of public communication will be invaluable in any job.

3. Communication is vital in a democracy. You will be reading many theorists ranging in time from ancient Greece to America today who argue that the ability for every citizen to voice his opinion is essential. Without good public speaking skills, you may be at a disadvantage, whether it is

before the local PTA, the local political party, or even if it is just voicing your opinions to your friends about the way you believe the country should work.

4. Public speaking can help raise self-confidence. You can learn how to overcome fear, knowing that you are able to express yourself clearly and convincingly in public situations. That skill can, in turn, help you feel more in control of your own life and more empowered as a communicator.

There are two skills that are vital to the rhetorical situation when you are in the audience: listening and giving feedback. Since all of you will be audience members more often than you will be speakers, it is essential to think about these skills.

We know humans are capable of listening to twice as much information in a minute than people are able to say. Consequently, there are many chances for the mind to wander, for people in the audience to think about things other than the speech. When you are in the audience, however, you can help out the speakers (and yourself) by listening carefully and critically to your fellow students.

There are many different styles of listening. Sometimes we listen for comprehension and we just want to gather information. Sometimes we listen therapeutically, when we seek to understand another person's feelings. And there are times we listen critically, to evaluate the speaker's message. In this class, we want to listen to learn, but also to evaluate the speaker's message. Do we agree with the speaker or not? What criteria would we use to evaluate the subject of their speech?

How can we listen this way? First, we can concentrate and think about what is being said. Yet, while doing this, try not to carry on so much of an internal debate with the speaker that you cease listening and start blocking out what they are saying. Finally, give your attention to the speaker with a mind toward helping them later. When they sit down, you will be asked to give the speaker "feedback," and feedback requires careful listening.

When the teacher asks you to give feedback to the speaker, keep these things in mind. The main purpose of feedback is to help the speaker, not destroy them and their confidence. With that in mind, try to include positive as well as critical comments in your feedback. If they did something good, tell them. If they need to work on some aspect of their speaking, let them know that as well, but do it in a helpful way. Remember, the more you give feedback, the more you can help the speaker become better in the future. If no one talks after a speech, the speaker can't know what they need to do differently in the future. You are criticizing the speech, not the speaker. So it's okay to speak up, and okay to give feedback.

HOW TO PREPARE THE ASSIGNMENT

In this section, we will go through some of the steps necessary to prepare speeches. We will use the categories that Cicero talks about in your readings this semester: the canons of speechmaking.

According to Cicero, there are five canons which make up the art of speaking. *Inventio* (or *Invention*) grows out of the fact that every speaker must find the right arguments for their speech topic. *Invention* is a name for the system for finding these arguments. When you find out your topic, you will need to decide which values you hold on the subject. This is your attempt at *invention*.

Dispositio (or *Disposition*) is the way you will arrange the ideas once you have discovered them. It involves selecting the organizational pattern for the most effective presentation of your speech.

Elocutio (or *Style*) has gone through many changes in meaning since classical times. Today, we use it to enumerate various elements of speaking style and the choice of certain words in the speech.

Pronunciatio (or *Delivery*) is vitally important for every speech. It covers "how" you present your speech to the audience.

Finally, the canon of *memoria* (or *memory*) is the least discussed of the canons in rhetoric. What we can say about it here as it relates to your speech is also fairly simple and brief. You should not memorize your speech word-for-word. Instead, know your material, and know basically what you wish to say. But deliver the speech "extemporaneously," which will be explained in the "Delivery" section below. The best way to learn the material, by the way, is practice.

Before we discuss the first four canons and how they relate to the preparing of your speech, a few words need to be said about your relationship to your audience. Aristotle certainly knew how important it was that the speakers understand their audience. Today, we still speak about the importance of audience “demographics.” In other words, it is important that you remember who your audience is: their ages, sex, intelligence, attitudes, values, prejudices. This will not be as difficult for you as it is for some speakers — you are sitting in class with your audience every week. But it is important to remember that you are speaking to this class. Watch that you don’t speak “above them” or “below them.” Structure your language and your idea arrangement to the class who are your current audience.

This concern about the audience should lead you to several conclusions. First, it is important to get the audience’s attention at the beginning of a speech. Therefore, begin the speech with an attention-getter that will stimulate their curiosity for what is to follow. Secondly, make your speech clear. Don’t get so complicated as to lose your audience. Next, use stories or illustrations when you can. People listen best to stories and examples (much more than they do to a lot of facts and figures). Also, do what you can to keep the audience interested by giving them the kind of material you yourself would like to hear.

Don’t read your speech. As you well know, there is nothing more tedious than a speech that is read. Watch that you don’t use stereotypes that could offend members of your audience. Remember, the idea here is to communicate effectively. Finally, be yourself. The audience expects it. They don’t want a “different” person to suddenly emerge when you go up in front of the class to speak.

••• Invention •••

When dealing with invention, remember that it involves that first step of finding the right arguments for your speech. In your case, that means it not only involves choosing the right subject of the speech, but also determining the speech’s purpose and the arguments you will employ.

Different sections of IA may have different ways that subjects are chosen. But whether you get to choose your subject or have one assigned, you still have to narrow down the topic. Here are some things to keep in mind.

First, remember the time constraint of your speech. You only have three minutes this semester. Do not try to talk about something that cannot be fairly covered in these three minutes. While you can certainly admire some aspects of job’s character in three minutes, it is not enough time to give a speech on “All the Great Characters in the Old Testament.” The time constraint will also influence the dispositio of your speech.

Find a topic that is challenging. Don’t tell the audience what they already know. That defeats the purpose of giving a speech in the first place. Tell us something new and something interesting. And always, when you choose your Topic, remember both your audience and their interests, and what they have in the way of expectations from you.

Every speech also has to determine its purpose. Your speech has a general purpose and a specific one. The general purpose is always to change the level and/or quality of understanding in the audience about the topic of the speech. You can do this by giving an informative speech or one that will seek to persuade the audience to take some action. In this semester, your purpose is to inform the audience by praising or blaming. Later in the program, you will be called upon to give a speech whose general purpose is to persuade.

The specific purpose of your speech is the effect you wish to have on the audience. For instance, you may think of it as: “In this speech, I want the audience to better appreciate the character of Job.” Your speech is then structured around this specific purpose.

Finally, every speech needs a central idea or **thesis**. This is the main idea which the speech has, summed up in a complete sentence. It should capture the main point of your speech. For instance, one thesis might be, “The character of Job exhibits virtues which we could learn from today.” Every idea in the speech would then lead us back to the thesis, or the main claim your speech makes. Having a good thesis is perhaps the most important step in having a successful speech. You may want to talk to your instructor about the ideas you have for the thesis.

The thesis should suggest the main ideas you want you convey. In my Job speech, perhaps I have decided that there are three things about Job that make him virtuous: he was patient at certain times; he was impatient at other crucial times; and he was always searching for the truth. These three aspects of Job would become the three claims I am going to make which will support my thesis. (I will later need to add

illustrations as evidence that will help the audience understand why I feel the way I do.) At this point, I am ready to arrange my speech in more detail.

•• Disposition ••

Once you have your thesis and main points, the next step is to begin to find ways to arrange and support these main ideas. There are many ways to do this. You may want to cite facts or statistics to make your claims stronger. You may want to use an “explanation,” which is simply making a term or process clear to us. You may want to use the opinions of others and cite “testimony,” quoting from what others have said. You want to use comparisons, contrasts, or analogies, using something familiar to us to illuminate something new. (For instance, I might compare Job to a hostage in the Middle East, who might have had similar questions about his predicament.) Finally, I may wish to use illustrations or stories, to explain why my point makes sense. (In this case, I may want to illustrate Job’s searching with a story from the readings on Job.) All of these are supporting materials, and you can pick and choose which may be most effective for you.

Next, you have to arrange the speech. The main consideration in arranging a speech is again your knowledge of the audience. Anything you can do to make a speech clearer to the audience is valuable. And there are various standard **patterns of organization** which can make speeches clearer.

There are a number of patterns of organization, but *we* will only speak of the most common here. Some speeches may be arranged *chronologically*, from the earliest time period to the latest. If I were giving a speech on the fall of Rome, I might want to begin when Rome was in its glory and end when it was invaded. This would be a chronological order.

Some speeches can be ordered *geographically*. You may begin in one part of a country, for instance, and end in another. Or you may organize your speech in a *causal* manner, starting with an event that then “causes” another event to be brought about. If I am giving a speech on why the Roman Empire fell, I may want to structure it causally by talking about which elements “caused” the fall of the Empire.

There is also an order known as *topical*. Topical order is probably the most common pattern of organization. For instance, my speech on Job as a virtuous man would be arranged by the three “topics” that were suggested above. Most of your speeches will probably end up being arranged topically. (There are other ways to arrange speeches which we will speak about in the following semesters.)

Once I decide on my pattern of organization, I then need to organize my speech. Here is one method to use, which breaks any speech down into three parts: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion.

— The Introduction

— Start your speech with some kind of attention-getter. A quote, a startling statistic, a rhetorical question (one that does not require the audience to answer), or a story or illustration are all good ways to grab the audience’s attention.

— Work out an introduction. Lead us into the thesis statement with a few lines that set the scene. Tell us the general topic of your speech

— Say your thesis. If you don’t tell us early what your thesis is, we may not find out until it is too late. By then, we in the audience may have given up trying to figure out what you are taking about.

— Finally, preview the points you are going to make. Tell us, in other words, the main things you are going to tell us. If you have three main points, say what they are going to be. This helps the audience follow you once you reach the body of the speech.

— The Body

— This is where you spend most of the time in the speech. You need to have two or three main points you wish to make about the thesis. The sub points to these will be helped along by your supporting material.

— Try, over the next year, to develop transitions, as well. These are sentences that smooth the move from one point to the next.

— Once you have organized this part of your speech, which should take the most time . . .

— The Conclusion

— Review the points you have made. In this way, you are telling us what you just told us, reminding us of the major points of the speech.

— Conclude. Don't just stop talking, but try to end with a general set of statements. You may want to end with a quote or a story or a call to action.

•• Outlining

Once you organize the material, you need to turn it into an outline. Why? There are several reasons to outline speeches. First, it is a way to make sure you have the speech organized well. This is vital to any successful speech, and in order to make sure you learn how to do it right, you are required to turn in a full outline to your instructor before you speak. Secondly, you do not want to take a manuscript of your speech up front with you. (If you do, it is likely you will read it and that is not acceptable.) You need something to remind you of what to say, and the outline is a good tool.

“Rough out” an outline when you prepare the speech as we suggested above. List your topic, your specific purpose, your arrangement of ideas, and your thesis. Then, try to organize the body of the speech. (It often helps to organize the body of the speech first, then the introduction, and finally the conclusion.) Think of the two or three main points you wish to make about the thesis. These will become the main points of the body, listed in the outline as I, II, and III. Then ask yourself what you wish to say about the main points. If you can make a couple of observations about the main point, they will become your “subpoints,” and go by A, B and C. Examples, illustrations, and facts that back these up can be written out as 1, 2, and 3 under A, B, and C. A sample outline, which speaks about some of the steps you need to consider in outlining, is offered here. (It is taken from Bruce Gombeck, Raymie E. McKerrow, et al., *Principles and Types of Speech Communication*, 11th Edition.)

Steps in Preparing a Good Outline

I. The first step in preparing a good outline is to determine the general purpose of the speech for the subject you have selected.

- A. You will need to limit the subject in two ways.
 - 1. First, limit the subject to fit the available time.
 - 2. Second, limit the subject to ensure unity and coherence.
- B. You also will need to phrase the specific purpose in terms of the exact response you seek from your listeners.

II. The second step is to develop a rough outline of your speech.

- A. First, list the main ideas you wish to cover.
- B. Second, arrange these main ideas according to the methods discussed in Chapters 8 and 9.
- C. Third, arrange subordinate ideas under their appropriate main heads.
- D. Fourth, fill in the supporting materials to be used in amplifying or justifying your ideas.
- E. Finally, review your rough draft.
 - 1. Does it cover your subject adequately?
 - 2. Does it carry out your specific purpose?

III. The third step is to put the outline into final form.

- A. Begin this process by writing out the main ideas as complete sentences or as key phrases.
 - 1. State the main ideas concisely, vividly, and—insofar as possible—in parallel terms.
 - 2. State the major heads so that they address directly the needs and interests of your listeners.
- B. Write out the subordinate ideas in complete sentences or in key phrases.
 - 1. Are they subordinate to the main idea they are intended to develop?
 - 2. Are they coordinated with other items at the same level (that is, are all *A—B—C* series roughly equal in importance; are all 1-2-3 series roughly equal in importance)?
- C. You now are ready to fill in the supporting materials.

1. Are they pertinent?
 2. Are they adequate?
 3. Is there a variety of types of support?
- D. Finally, recheck the completed outline.
1. Is it written in proper outline form?
 2. Does the speech, as outlined, adequately cover the subject?
 3. Does the speech, as outlined, carry out your general and specific purposes?
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You are not required to take a full outline up front with you when you speak. You may take what we call a “speaking outline,” which just has the main points you wish to remember. You may just want to take a “key-word” outline, with simply the key words that will help you recall the points you wish to make. Remember, the outline you take is simply to help you recall what you have practiced. Don’t read it to us.

•• Style ••

There is a difference between oral and written style. Aristotle noted this in *The Rhetoric*, when he stated: “. . . each kind of rhetoric has its appropriate style. . . . The written . . . style is more finished; the conversational is far better adapted to dramatic delivery. This implies that when you write something, you use a different set of techniques than when you speak. For instance, I may write a sentence that states: “John, in the midst of real anguish, could not bring himself to study.” When I would speak the same sentence, I would probably say something like: “John was so upset that he couldn’t study.” If you were to speak the “written” sentence, it would sound strange and perhaps pretentious. The oral style is more direct, more the way we would talk to friends. This is the style you want to use in your speechmaking.

We have more impact when we speak with a personal, conversational style. Audiences want to hear us be “genuine,” to speak with conviction that rings true. Don’t worry about how the speech “looks” if you write out part of it; in fact, it may not be wise for everyone to write the whole speech out. Above all, use the kind of style that comes naturally for you. As long as it isn’t distracting to the audience, this oral style will be appreciated far more than written style.

Be clear. Use language that comes directly to the point of what you want to say. Don’t try to be too “academic” sounding, merely to impress the audience with how smart you are. In speaking today, we are most impressed when you are at ease and treat us as your equals. Make sure your language is appropriate, however. Watch too much slang, as it may lose some members of the audience. Try for words that are forceful (that indicate actions) and are lively. In style, the important aspects are to keep both the audience’s attention and their respect.

•• Delivery ••

DO NOT READ YOUR SPEECH. This rule should be strictly adhered to. We realize that it is difficult not to read a speech — all that work, and no one wants to make a mistake. But mistakes are usually small, and it is much more important that you give a lively and focused presentation. Reading a speech will ruin your delivery, no matter how well you read.

We require you to speak in extemporaneous style. This does not mean that you are unprepared. It means that you speak from notes, in a conversational voice with enthusiasm and interest, and worry less about the “right” word and more about having the audience understand the “right” idea. You should practice your speech to know it, but once up front, concentrate on trying to just tell us what you know.

DO NOT MEMORIZE YOUR SPEECH WORD FOR WORD. Again, extemporaneous speaking is not memorized. Learn your material and have a clear idea of what you are going to say. But don’t work at recalling every word. Memorization will make your delivery flat and it will often speed your voice up until you are talking too fast. It will generally cause you to sound unenthusiastic about your topic, thereby making the audience less interested in your speech.

If you miss a word or a sentence, it does not matter. Chances are good that no one will notice it. The important thing is to get your ideas clearly across. So the reason for memorizing or reading — to make sure every word is said at the right place — is not needed as a part of extemporaneous public speaking. As far as your own delivery goes, remember that we are not acting. Oratory today is grounded in the idea that the speaker is comfortable and confident, not stiff and stumbling. BE YOURSELF. Think about what you are saying while you **are** saying it, and concentrate on simply getting your information across in as clear a manner as you can.

The vocal cords should be as relaxed as possible. Even if you hear some shaking in your voice, most of the time the audience will not. Try to clearly enunciate your words. Put some variety in the way you are saying things. And try not to talk too fast. Most of the delivery work will pay off later in the program, so don't worry if the first time is a bit rough. We'll try to help you know what you need to work on.

••• Nonverbal •••

Just a few words on what to do with your body up in front of the class. If you notice your hands shaking, don't worry. Everyone shakes and hardly anyone ever notices. Chances are, no one will see.

As the two years go on, you should begin to be more comfortable moving up in front of the class. But right now, try to stand comfortably but also fairly still. Watch swaying back and forth or useless pacing. Remember, anything that can be distracting to the audience needs to be eliminated.

Simply take a few deep breaths as you go up front and try to relax. Most of the gestures will come naturally as you do more speeches, so you don't need to try to make your hands do anything special. Place them in front of you however, and try to keep them out of your pockets or from behind your back.

We have given you a lot of information — perhaps too much to digest the first time around. And perhaps the more you read, the more nervous you became! Well, try not to worry. Remember, it is everyone's first speech; you are not alone in being apprehensive. Also, remember that the first speech is not graded. It is for your benefit, to help you get comfortable and learn about speaking in public.

Try to make it fun. It is your one chance this semester to share some of your extended observations about the course with your fellow classmates — try to look at it as an opportunity. And remember, most of all, we all want you to do well. Give it your best and have fun.
