EXPOS 20: Rhetoric and Representation

WA 3.5: A short speech, 5-7 pages long (or no more than 7 minutes)
WA 3.5 due date: Thurs., May 11 at 7 p.m., which is our last class session during reading period

WA 3.6: A short reflection paper on the speech, no more than three pages long
WA 3.6 due date: Fri., May 12 at 7 p.m., or 24 hours after our last class session

The Power of Persuasion

The Speech

Using the tools we have developed throughout the semester, your goal is to craft a persuasive, and even inspiring, speech on your chosen topic. You should stake out a clearly defined position, deploying counter-argument to establish the boundaries of your position. The speech will be grounded in the research you performed in WA 3.4, and should represent the complexity of the topic without losing sight of your argument. You should also be prepared to respond to questions from your peers with the understanding that much of their knowledge will emerge from your representation of the issues at stake.

In addition to the research you incorporate, I will look for effective uses of the rhetorical forms we have studied throughout the term. How do metaphor, framing, logos, ethos and pathos inform your rhetorical choices? How do you deploy terms that you and your peers investigated—for example, symbolism, trope, chiasmus, hypophora, repetition or any of the other concepts defined through our class glossary? You may also wish to develop your ideas in line with either Plato’s or Aristotle’s conceptions of ethical persuasion or implement Luntz’s theory of rhetoric as rooted in emotion or Lakoff’s concept of framing. Through your synthesis of the rhetorical forms we have studied, you may discover that you have developed your own rhetorical style or even a theory of persuasion. You may choose your own persona and audience for the speech. In the past, students have delivered stump speeches for congressional campaigns, advocated causes to special interest groups, argued on behalf of constituent needs from the floor of the Massachusetts state legislature, and appeared as themselves speaking naturally to their peers in an Expository Writing class. In each case, the audience—fictional or real—helped to determine the rhetorical shape of the particular speech.

As you know, you may optionally give your speech before your peers. Students who choose to deliver their speeches will have the benefit of hearing others’ responses to their work, which they may then address in the reflections component of this assignment. In the response session, we will briefly discuss not only the arguments that attach to your particular issue but also the effectiveness of your rhetorical style. If you choose to deliver your speech, you may also optionally ask to have it recorded on DVD. I am then happy to meet with you individually to debrief you on your spoken form and manner.

Training Session: During reading period, there will be an optional training session on public speaking in which we will also review methods of persuasion. To prepare for that class, please review the text of John F. Kennedy’s Inaugural Address, thinking again about the kind of rhetorical terms at play. Please also review pages 26-44 of Peter Dixon’s *Rhetoric* in the course pack, focusing particularly on pages 26-35. If you wish, you may present a short excerpt (no
more than one minute long) from your speech, asking your peers for their thoughts on its form and your delivery.

Conferences: You may, if you wish, conference a draft of your speech with me no less than 48 hours before the due date. The week before our last class meeting, I will post on my Quincy office door a sign-up sheet for optional conferences. Expos rules require only three conferences during the term, thus the conferences for the speeches are purely optional.

Reflection Essay

This is a meditation on the language that you used to craft your speech. What are the primary rhetorical features of your speech? Where and how did you employ them within the context of your speech? How effective were they in advancing your argument? What counter-argument did you consider before writing your speech? What research was especially useful towards your argument? What aspects of your intended audience influenced your rhetorical choices? And, finally, what have you learned throughout the course about the power of persuasion? What are some of the features of persuasive rhetoric that most intrigue you? Were you to write political speeches, what kinds of tools would you be likely to implement? Have you begun to conjecture on your own theory of rhetoric?

Components of the speech:

- Research. The speech should be based on a minimum of three sources of different genres--scholarly articles, books, interviews, statistics, or videos, for example. Since I will be reading the speech as well as listening to it, please cite your materials in endnotes or a Works Cited. Obviously, you will not read the citations in your spoken address.

- Motive. Use the handout on motive to spur your thoughts.

- Introduction. You will need an introduction that grabs the reader with some interesting piece of information. You might begin with a description of something that the reader thinks she probably already knows only to discover through your analysis of the problem that there are complexities that she had never envisioned. Alternatively, you might bring her in through historical material that sets the stage for the contemporary dilemma you are about to investigate. You might also find a metaphor that thematically stitches together your argument. Or, perhaps, you will choose to use one of your authorities as the foil to or inspiration for your own position.

- Thesis statement. Your thesis must be persuasive and the body of the speech should address the evidence that leads logically to your position.

- Evidence. The hazard of research is that the research can overtake your own analysis. Use the research as you would any other text to mobilize and support your own argument. This means that, as in Units One and Two, you will need to be conversant in the results of the issue you investigate before you start your speech or attempt to draft a thesis statement. If you find yourself resorting continually to your research, go back and try to summarize it in
preparation for a point of your own. The average speech will fight to negotiate a truce between the research and its own position. The excellent speech will deploy the research exclusively and synthetically in support of its argument.

- Counter-Evidence. In this speech, I expect you to be conversant with arguments on both sides of the issue, and able to acknowledge and rebut the counter position. To meet this demand, you'll need to come to terms with your counter-evidence before you advance your own argument. Why is it important? How can you refute it? If you can't refute it, what does it suggest about your initial argument? Does it nuance that argument or does it so fully refute it that you must change your original position? Remember, the most persuasive and thoroughly researched essays account for the counter-argument that a skeptical reader is likely to bring. Try to anticipate those arguments so that your listener will be fully informed of the issues and convinced of your thinking.

- Conclusion. Here, you will more fully account for your motive in writing. Remember, this is not the motive of your authorities. It is yours. What makes the topic important to you? What kind of speculations does it lead you to consider? Take a look at the handout "Writing Conclusions" for more ideas on how to complete your thoughts.

- Works Cited. Because one aspect of this assignment is research, you will need to include endnotes or a Works Cited.

- Grammar and Style. Please be sure to refer to Strunk’s Elements of Style and to the grammar links on our course website to clarify questions of style and grammar. I will mark off for such basic mistakes as the mis-use of semi-colons and commas, for example, and for such stylistic basics as run-on sentences and paragraphs, awkward transitions between ideas, misplaced descriptive and introductory clauses, and the abuse of parallel structure. I am sure, too, that you will carefully proofread your work before presenting it. In instances in which you make a particular rhetorical choice for effect that might otherwise appear awkward or abrupt, be sure to describe your reasoning in your reflection essay.

Attachments and helpful additions:

- Peer editing. Optional. If you choose to peer edit your work, be sure to turn it in--with the peer editor's name clearly marked--with your final speech. I will include comprehensive peer editing as extra credit in your class participation.

- Reverse Outline. Always recommended, not required. If you use one, please submit it with the written speech.

- Cover letter. When you turn in your essay, include a cover letter that accounts for the problems and successes of the process of writing this essay. What do you like best about your speech? What do you like least? What would you do if you had more time or space?
• Pre-assignments. Please use a folder to turn in WA 3.2 (thesis/motive, research summary), WA 3.3 summary of your oral presentation (if applicable), WA 3.4 (the research or position paper).

Grading:

The speech and reflection paper are the apex of your work in this course. Indeed, I hope that the speech represents the best work you’ve yet produced, and that this unit inspires you for the research, writing and oral presentations that will follow in the coming years. Remember, too, that the units in this course build upon each other, beginning with motive and thesis and extending to the persuasive use of research and rhetoric. I will be interested to see that you have successfully negotiated the basic components of each of the three units. Unit Three is worth 40% of your term grade. The speech and reflection paper are worth half of that (or 20% of your total semester grade) and will break down as follows:

• The speech: 30% of the unit grade
• The reflection paper: 20% of the unit grade
• Class participation: Again, participation is the variable that can affect the upward or downward trend of your final grade.

Much good luck on a successful rhetorical experience!