Developing a Speech Topic for Speech 100

In choosing a topic for your speech, try to think of something that (1) interests you, and (2) that you are familiar with. If you are interested and familiar with the topic, your research will be easier, your delivery will be more comfortable, and your enthusiasm will keep the audience interested. The best speech topics for this class are those that are about you – your job, your hobbies, your travels, your activities, your vacations, etc.

What may seem mundane or ordinary to you can become a fascinating 5-7 minute speech for the rest of us. In addition, developing a speech about something you do is much easier to do.

The speech topic should be...
1. ... interesting to you. If it’s not, the audience won’t care about it either!
2. ... interesting to your audience. Or, at least it should be capable of being made interesting to them.
3. ... appropriate to the situation or occasion (that is, informative, persuasive, geared towards the audience, etc.).
4. ... appropriate to the time available. Your speech should be from 5-7 minutes in about 3 weeks from now. Don’t tackle a topic that cannot be researched and presented in the time allotted.
5. ... manageable. In other words, it should be something with which you are familiar so that you do not get in “over your head.”

So how do you choose a topic if you haven’t already? Try developing a personal inventory.

Personal Inventory

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper. Now, look over the lists that you have created. Which of these topics could become speech topics based upon the six criteria? Select five (5), and think of at least 2-3 topics about each of these five. Select the one that interests you the most.

- What news stories in the past year have been of interest to you?
- What are your favorite books?
- What magazines do you read regularly?
- What magazines interest you even if you do not find time to read them regularly?
- What local events have fascinated you?
- What makes your family interesting or unique?
- What travel experiences have you had?
- What activities do you participate in regularly?
- What activities would you like to participate in but time or cost prohibit you?
- What volunteer or service learning experiences have you had?
- What jobs have you had?
- List all the hobbies you have, even if you don’t have as much time for them as you’d like.
- What other hobbies have you pursued and been active in the past?
- What spiritual beliefs do you hold?
- What activities do you regularly engage in? [Think of the mundane as well as the special: grocery shopping, car repairs, fitness center, etc.]
- What awards have you received?
- What probably makes you different from almost everyone in the class?
- What common interests do you think you’d have with most everybody else in the class?
- What experiences have you had that many people didn’t have?
Speech 100 – Speech Topics

Speech Topics not appropriate for Speech 100

Free Speech! (but only when it doesn’t conflict with the learning objectives!)

The purpose of this class is to help you and others develop proper form and delivery of a speech in the informative and persuasive patterns as well as to allow fellow students to learn objective methods for critiquing and evaluating your speech.

To that end, controversial topics and other issues of political/societal debate distract from learning these principles by generating subjective evaluations of the topic, itself, through extraneous debate and discussion not related to either (1) the proper form and delivery of a speech in specific patterns [informative and persuasive] or (2) the objective evaluation and critique of the same.

This class is designed to teach you the fundamentals and foundations of good public speaking. This class is not a forum for public debate or discussion of societal problems.

Therefore, although all of the following are worthwhile topics and fodder for considerable societal debate (and may be completely appropriate in other classes), you may not use any of them in this class.

- Abortion, abortion rights, right to life, etc.
- Gun control – either pro or con
- Death penalty – pro or con
- Marijuana/hemp/controlled substances – legalization, use, paraphernalia, etc.
- Pornography – pro or con
- Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), gay marriage, domestic partnership rights or advocacy, etc.
- Religion – advocacy for/against any particular religion
- Euthanasia – physician-assisted suicide, right-to-die legislation, etc.
- Politics – advocacy for a particular candidate, political party, platform, position, or agenda
- Other topics that might be controversial to the audience and distract from the learning objectives of the class.

You are welcome to review your topic with me if you are worried that there may be cause for concern.

Although you may have strong feelings about all of these subjects, this class is not the proper vehicle for expression of these ideas. I encourage you to use the foundations you learn in this class to address these issues, when/where appropriate, in other classes or throughout your life.