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Self-Evaluation Paper

Giving four speeches in class and afterward observing them like an audience member has been a helpful and interesting experience. Messages that I felt would be delivered successfully ended up falling flat, while others that I worried over turned out positively at times. This has benefited me by allowing an assessment of the planning and preparation stages along with the execution and result. Entering the class, I felt that I was already a rather strong public speaker. Now I know more clearly the many areas on which a person can focus when honing this skill. I am also aware which of these areas I must improve upon to become a more effective public speaker.

I have had a number of opportunities in the past to get in front of people and speak. Usually it was related to work and involved the demonstration of a procedure or educating people on a subject. While this class did not introduce anything immediately unfamiliar to me (such as getting in front of a group and doing something worthwhile with everyone's time), the *objectivity* of speechmaking was very much a new idea for me. Along with this came learning many of the tools a speaker must employ when crafting a message that is to be received by an audience of *individuals*—also a new idea. In the past, I always felt confident in my ability to deliver a speech or give a demonstration effectively, but now I realize that I did not generally concern myself with the many speechmaking tools that have been brought up in this class. Knowing one's

audience, citing sources orally, and effective ways of persuasion are just some of the things that a person must keep in mind when producing a successful speech.

As for my own attempts, I have been mostly happy with the results. I feel that I do a good job of structuring information and content within the general rubric: central idea, opening, previews, main points, transitions, summary, and closing statement. Most of my effort goes into providing information thoroughly and in a way that will be easily understood by the audience. This has been true not just for the two informative speeches I have given, but also for my persuasive speech about online video games. My outline has served as the foundation for my speaking, and has supported me when I am communicating lots of information. It also has helped in preventing different points from getting crossed up or lost within one another. The organization of my speeches— having strong evidence and information, connecting main and sub points together, and creating a strong introduction and conclusion that tie in with the rest of the speech—is an area which I feel I have become accomplished.

Speaking in front of people has never been a difficult thing for me to do. It was not something I worried about when signing up for the class. However, I discovered a new challenge when I had to give my speech within a certain amount of time. This caused me to worry about the success of my speech because, by sacrificing information that supported my main points in order to fit into the allotted time, I felt it was becoming too incomplete. (I also had to get a good grade. Usually I wouldn't worry about making people wait a little longer so that I can finish what I have to say.)

Another area in which I could improve is the task of balancing extemporaneous speaking, eye contact and referencing notes simultaneously. While I don't have

difficulty with any of these alone, the three together at the same time is harder for me to juggle without sacrificing a little of one for the other two (which, according the videos, was most often eye contact). This certainly would have been easier for me if I had spent more time rehearsing my speeches. As much as I would rather not admit it to my instructor in this paper, I didn't spend any time rehearsing my speeches out loud; only in my head. No doubt my speeches would have benefited from more of this kind of preparation.

Interestingly, I discovered that many of the tools often employed during persuasive speaking are things that I am readily capable of doing, such as maintaining strong eye contact, talking confidently and convincingly, and appealing to the audience. However, I feel uncomfortable speaking this way, especially when it is to compensate for a lack of information and evidence. When working on my speech about online video games, there were times where I felt I could have made appeals to the audience's emotions while sharing only some of the information on the subject. This would have strengthened my argument and perhaps convinced more people. However, even if I felt my argument or cause was worthy of being placed in such an advantageous light, it would feel incorrect to support my points with anything other than fair facts and information.

In the future, when an occasion calls for me to give a demonstration or a talk before others, I will spend more time researching and rehearsing my speech than I have for my class assignments. That is not to suggest that I do not take this class seriously, but in other situations there will be different motivators for me to give a speech other than to receive a good grade. Also, the individuals within my next audience are likely to

have more in common with one another than my fellow classmates, most of whom are taking a public speaking course because it is required to transfer to a four year university.

I consider the speeches I have given to be successful and my methods of speech organization and preparation to be improved. While there are still areas I can work on, I am satisfied with my speaking delivery and the ways I communicate ideas and points to the audience. Sharing my information and perspectives with others is exciting because I trust my methods for research, the resources I use and my own opinions. In fact, if it wasn't for the two minute window of time imposed on our assignments, I would have anticipated giving each of my speeches and worried less about their completeness.