

Assignment #4: Speech

Perfecting Eloquence: Jesuit Pedagogy in the First-Year Writing Classroom

DUE DATE

Assignment Background:

In this assignment, you will compose and deliver a **three- to five-minute speech** to your classmates. Speeches are an ancient form of composition and were often used to inform one's community about a pressing issue and inspire action toward the common good.

Composing and delivering a speech will require different but related skills to your previous assignments. For instance, you will now have to make your message clear and understandable to an audience that *can't read* what you're telling them. On the other hand, you'll have previously-unavailable techniques of composition and persuasion (vocal tone, body language, volume, silence, etc.) to make your message understood.

By offering their writing and their voice to this assignment, writers are invited to **1.)** Better understand an issue in their local community, **2.)** Develop their public speaking skills, and **3.)** Practice open-minded listening while hearing their classmates' speeches.

Jesuit Inspiration:

The *Ratio Studiorum*—the official plan of studies followed by the Jesuits for most of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries—emphasized eloquence. Classes would focus not only on the written aspects of composition, but on the memorization and delivery of written works. Moreover, students were frequently expected to speak in front of their class, and even in front of a public audience on special occasions.

This was because, for the early Jesuits, eloquence was not a mental exercise: it did not simply mean that one was articulate or creative. Eloquence was something that required a healthy body, with proper attention to personal appearance; it was something that required a strong moral character, with time to pray and discern the best “way of proceeding.” Every aspect of the human person played a role in achieving *eloquentia perfecta*”; writing was just one of many tools for persuading an audience.

Prompt: With proper attention to the vocal elements of speech-making, compose and deliver a three- to five-minute speech to our class in which you inform them of an issue in our campus community and persuade them to act on a plausible solution.

Assignment Goals:

After completing the assignment, students should be able to...

- Investigate meaningful issues in their community
- Compose writing that’s clear and engaging when read aloud
- Recite a piece of writing in a persuasive and effective manner
- Actively listen to speeches and critically analyze their messages