

LESSON PLAN: Informative Speaking / Topic Choice
COMS 130: Speaker Audience Communication
1 September 2009

MATERIALS NEEDED

- PowerPoint Slides for Lecture/Discussion
- Computer/Projector
- Chalk or Dry Erase Markers
- Timer/Watch
- *Blueprint for success*
- *Public speaking strategies for success*

OBJECTIVES

As a result of this class session, students will:

1. Generate a personalized list of potential speech topics that can be consulted over the course of the entire semester.
2. Develop examples of focused topics through crafting well-developed thesis statements.
3. Use a checklist of goals and strategies as a means of ensuring their topic ideas/thesis statements are well-targeted before continuing with the planning process.
4. Produce an informative speech topic proposal (to be turned in at the start of the following class session).

AGENDA

Today

Brainstorming Speech Topic Ideas

Establishing Informative Goals and Strategies

Honing a Topic (Crafting Focused Thesis Statements)

ASSIGNMENT: Informative Speech Topic Proposal (BS, p. 59)

Next Class Session

DUE: Informative Speech Topic Proposal (BS, p. 59)

GAME PLAN

_____ **Roll**

_____ **Items in the News/Announcements**

Q: What announcements do you have? Is there anything going on in the news, on campus, or in your lives that the rest of us should know about?

_____ **Agenda**

Alright, let's get started! Let's take a quick look at the agenda for today.

[Go over agenda on board. Emphasize the idea that each of today's agenda items will aid them in producing a successful Informative Speech Topic Proposal.]

Brainstorming Topic Ideas

Q: Speaking of informative speeches, how many of you would admit to already thinking about topic ideas for this speech? Do any of you know exactly what you want to speak on for your informative speeches?

Q: If so, are you willing to share how you chose your topic? What strategies did you use to identify a topic and narrow it down to something specific?

Because I haven't assigned the Informative Speech yet, most of you probably haven't thought too long and hard about speech topic ideas. And this is OK. That is what this class session is designed to help you with! So let's get to work and generate a list of topic ideas that are specifically geared toward your own personal interests and experiences. We're going to go through two brainstorming exercises that build on each other. Take these exercises seriously. It is very possible that you could generate a list of topics today that will serve as the foundation for each of the major speeches you will give over the course of this semester. Take out some paper and a writing implement.

EXERCISE NO. 1

This first exercise is going to require you to answer a list of questions. You do not need to write down the question; just write down as many responses as you possibly can before I move on to the next question. Don't judge yourself or your answers—but do write down as many responses as quickly as you can. Are you READY?

1. **What do you like to do in your spare time?**
2. **What are your hobbies? (Or what hobbies have you had?)**
3. **What do you like to do during holidays?**
4. **What is your favorite travel destination?**
5. **What do you like to talk about with friends? (Gossip? Go ahead and say so!)**
6. **On what issue do you hold a strong opinion?**
7. **What issue would you like to know more about?**
8. **What kinds of values do you stand for? (Even if you feel like answering this sets you up to label yourself, go ahead and write down a quick answer.)**
9. **What special expertise do you have?**
10. **What special skills do you have?**
11. **What professional or personal experiences have you had in your life?**
12. **What current topic or debate in the news has grabbed your attention?**
13. **What is your greatest pet peeve?**
14. **What makes you very happy?**

Q: Would anyone be willing to give a quick inventory of items you have on your list?

If so, the rest of you should listen up closely to see whether or not any of those particular subjects grabs your attention. If you hear something interesting, add it to your own list.

Now, we know from previous discussions and previous readings of the Zarefsky text that nearly all of the subjects we just named off are TOO BROAD. We need focus in order to attempt to turn one of the entries on your list into a potential informative speech topic.

EXAMPLE OF "A" WORK

EXERCISE NO. 2

One thing we can do to help ourselves gain some focus is to use an association method. What happens with this method is that we simply identify a topic and think about any number of sub-topics that could logically fall under that category.

Let's go through an example together. Let's use COMPUTERS as our general, broad topic. And then, let's say we are going to write down the first four themes that pop into our collective heads when we hear the word computers. Help me fill in the blanks:

[ON BOARD]

COMPUTERS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

So now, even though we don't have a perfectly well-honed informative speech topic about computers, we do have four different directions we can consider taking if we know we want to give a speech on computers.

Take a couple of seconds to look over the list of responses you generated when I asked you to answer my list of 14 questions. Circle the entry/topic that seems most interesting to you at this moment.

What I want you to do next is to use the association method we just used with the topic of computers, but apply it to the subject you just circled on your paper. So, write down the topic idea and then, write down the first four things that you think of when you focus on this subject.

OK. Now, you are going to break into groups of three and share that one topic and the four associations you came up with. So you are going to go around your group, identify what you selected and what you came up with and the group is going to give you more associations for that topic. You'll spend 1 minute on each person. I'll time you. Do you understand what I want you to do? Have you identified who within your group is going first? Go!

STOP! Reassemble chairs so you can face forward.

Q: What is the purpose of pulling in other people to your brainstorm?

So, let's talk about how you **might** transform one of the potential speech topics in front of you into an actual speech topic proposal that could work very well for a potential informative speech.

First, we are going to identify informative goals and strategies. Then, second, we are going to work at crafting focused thesis statements. Both of these activities can help us develop our speech topics.

Informative Goals and Strategies

First, let’s talk about the basic expectations that we have for an informative speech. You might want to take out some note taking devices because these could be helpful entries for exam preparation and speech preparation.

PPT: There are three criteria for good informative speaking. Those criteria are:

- 1. To communicate information accurately.**
- 2. To communicate information clearly.**
- 3. To make information meaningful and interesting to the audience.**

We need to use these criteria to guide our planning once we have a topic in mind.

And, in order to meet these three criteria—and to build on the work we have already done, we can look to our Zarefsky reading for today.

PPT: Zarefsky encourages us to really explore the rhetorical situation and to identify what our informative purpose is in:

- **speaking to a particular audience**
- **speaking on a particular topic**
- **speaking at a particular occasion**

Q: Remind me why these items are so important to consider when we are crafting a speech

PPT: Zarefsky also tells us that in order to be intentionally informative, there are 3 goals we should consider. The **three informative goals** Zarefsky offers to us are:

- 1. Providing new information or perspective**
 - a. Enrich an audience’s common knowledge on a subject or issue**
 - b. Update and revise common knowledge**
- 2. Setting an agenda**
 - a. Create an awareness about an unknown or unfamiliar subject**
 - b. Focus attention on a topic that is typically ignored**
- 3. Creating a positive or negative feeling**
 - a. Empower listeners to feel better about their ability to take control of a situation**
 - b. Or cause listeners to sense discomfort about a situation that might lead them to think about a subject in a different way**

Q: Can you see how thinking about identifying one of these three goals might help you in narrowing the focus of your potential speech topic? How?

EXAMPLE OF “A” WORK

PPT: Zarefsky also identifies that we need to move from one of these three goals to consider **six informative strategies** to help us achieve those goals. Remember, Zarefsky indicates that you likely will find yourself using a couple of these strategies in your informative speeches. Let’s revisit those strategies to refresh your memory from your reading.

1. DEFINING

- clarifies a term or concept that is vague
- required when the concept is not clear (technical information)

2. REPORTING

- tell what happened with little-to-no analysis
- tell what you saw or read

3. DESCRIBING

- giving details to create a picture
- useful for helping listeners visualize what you are talking about (familiar situation)

4. EXPLAINING

- goes beyond definition and reporting to explain why and how something happened

5. DEMONSTRATING

- showing a process, not just explaining
- not ideal for this class

6. COMPARING

- clarifies something for the audience based on similarities and differences

Use these strategies to help you refine your informative speech topic. In fact, let’s think back to our computer example. Which of these strategies would be most helpful to us if we were planning to speak about _____.

Honing a Topic (Crafting Focused Thesis Statements)

One last exercise that can help you to narrow and hone your topic Let’s think about how we might possibly turn a general topic into a more narrowly focused thesis statement and ultimately a multi-dimensional topic proposal.

PPT: As we work toward identifying our topics for speeches in this class, I will ask you to begin with this basic formula. You can think of it as your topic proposal formula. Making a draft following this formula will help you prepare to hand in the required speech planning forms you will tear out of your *Blueprint for Success* handbook.

Topic
General Purpose

Thesis Statement
Main Points of the Body of the Speech

Specific Purpose Statement

- Your **topic**, is in very general, broad terms, what you will speak about.
- Your **general purpose** will either be: to inform, to persuade, to entertain
- Your **specific purpose statement** will merge together your topic and general purpose in order to give your speech clarity, depth, and limitations.
e.g., to inform my audience _____ about (topic)
to inform my audience about three causes of cancer
- Your thesis states your specific purpose statement in declarative sentence form.
e.g., There are _____ of _____.
There are three causes of cancer.
- From your thesis statement, it should be apparent as to what the main points of the body will be.
e.g., I. Smoking can lead to cancer.
II. Environmental conditions can lead to cancer.
III. Eating habits can lead to cancer.

Assignment: Informative Speech Topic Proposal

For next week's class session, you need to come to class with a well-planned informative speech topic proposal. How you are going to achieve this is by:

1. First, walking yourself through this basic speech formula and then,
2. Second, you will use that information to fill out page 59 in the *Blueprint for Success* handbook. In addition to the questions that are listed on that sheet, I want you to add a 9th and a 10th question.

[Additions to Proposal Assignment]

9. Which of Zarefsky's three informative goals do you want to aim for with this speech?

10. Identify two of the six informative strategies you plan to use to achieve your informative goal.

Wrap Up

From today's class session, you have:

1. a list of potential speech topics,
2. a better idea of how to narrow a topic in order to get it ready to serve as an informative speech topic, and
3. an assignment to identify your informative speech topic and put it in proposal form using page 59 from your *Blueprint for Success* handbook.