

Choosing a Controversial Policy Topic

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

Is it currently being debated by specific groups of people? In other words, if it's a "dead" issue, it probably won't work.

Can you identify specific groups of advocates on both sides of the controversy? If not, can you at least find a person who represents the interested parties?

Can you find at least five pieces of evidence for each side in PHC library? If not, how will you have enough evidence to support your claims?

Can the controversy be stated as a particular policy proposition?

The proposed policy of _____ should be adopted to solve the problem of _____.

For example:

The proposed policy of banning the sale of automatic weapons in America should be adopted to solve the problem of increasing incidences of mass slayings.

(This exercise lends focus to the manner in which you approach your topic, which will, in turn, lend focus to your speech. If you cannot phrase your topic idea this way, dump it and find a new one, or check with me!)

ABOUT THE ASSIGNMENT:

You will give two speeches in which you will fully analyze the problem and then argue for one particular solution to the problem. In other words, you will first objectively analyze both sides, and then state and defend your case for the best answer to this significant policy controversy. After you deliver your speech you will have an opportunity to address audience questions and/or cross-examination.

POINTERS:

Begin researching immediately.

Find a debate that is actually occurring in the *real world*. (Don't sit back in your armchair and dream up something.) You may be able to articulate a significant earth-shattering dilemma that nobody has begun debating yet, in which case you will be able to locate little or no supporting evidence!

MORE SPECIFICS TO FOLLOW

IMPROMPTU TOPICS

Science

E=mc² Marie Curie
Newton The Human Body
Copernicus Space Exploration
Galileo Dinosaurs
Darwin The Computer Age

Industry

Ben Franklin Carnegie
Fulton Mergers
Edison Bill Gates
Henry Ford
Alexander Graham Bell

History

“Here I Stand”—Martin Luther
Gettysburg Address
Civil War
Bolshevik Revolution
French Revolution
American Revolution
Civil Rights Movement—M. L. King, Jr.
Pick a World War
Gandhi
Columbus
Gutenberg

Geography

Great Explorers
My hometown or state
Nearby Rev. or Civil War battlefields
Amerigo Vespucci
U.S. Geography
Europe
Asia
Pick a hemisphere

Visual Arts

Pick an artist Basics of color
Great Architecture My favorite masterpiece
Styles of painting Fashion Industry
Abstract vs. Realism

Math

Euclidean Geometry Algebra
Roman Numerals Pythagoras
Newton Descartes
Calculus Statistics
Probability Theory
History of our Numerical System

Agriculture

Mendel
The Cotton Gin
The Railroads
Advances
No-till farming
Corporate vs. family farms

All about soil
The Dust Bowl Era
Technological
Genetic Engineering

Religion

Judaism Hinduism
Islam Buddhism
Any great figure
Any great movement
Ancient or unusual religions
Doctrines (interesting, controversial)
Conservative vs. Liberal Christian Views

Political Science

Aristotle's *Politics* Marx
Plato's *Republic* Thomas Aquinas
The Federalist Papers Rousseau
Adam Smith John Locke
Bill of Rights Great Indian Chiefs
Great American Presidents

Literature

Uncle Tom's Cabin Faulkner
Dostoevsky Mark Twain
Melville Arthurian Legend
Shakespeare T.S. Eliot
Sense and Sensibility W.B. Yeats
Aesop Tennyson
Edgar Allen Poe Louisa May Alcott

Music

Pick a composer Harmony
Math in music Orchestra
Pick one facet of music theory Pick an instrument
My favorite masterpiece Contrast genres
My favorite era

Economics

All about money
Federal Reserve System
Great Depression
Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*
John Maynard Keynes
Inflation
The Stock Market
The European Union

THE IMPROMPTU SPEECH

For this speech, you will draw from the impromptu topics you have been studying. Pick a single card from three decks of your choosing. From the three, speak on the one with which you feel most comfortable. If none of them appeals to you, just choose the lesser of evils and run with it! You now have a total of 6 minutes to prepare and deliver the speech. Try splitting your time right down the middle: 3 minutes prep time and 3 minutes for your speech.

You will be graded on the basis of the following criteria: How well your introduction sets the tone for the speech, establishes your ethos, motivates the speech and provides a clear thesis. How well the body of the speech is organized, and how coherent, clear and focused it is. Whether or not you close with decisiveness and provide unity in the conclusion. Overall criteria are: substance, imagination and speech basics.

Pointers:

- Have fun!
- Ensure you (a) do your homework, or (b) have a quick enough wit to come up with something clever, and substantive, "off the cuff."
- After you draw, use the 5 canons of rhetoric as an action guide to "think quickly on your feet."
- Decide your angle, develop a simple outline, then immediately focus on stylistic strategizing (develop a running metaphor, analogy, etc.). That is, look for those places in your speech where emphasis is needed, and provide for it.
- Rehearse at least once, in your mind, focusing on introductory and concluding tactics.
- DO IT!

You will find the list of impromptu topics linked to the beginning of the Impromptu Speech assignment page on the Rhetoric course page at the Rhetoric Ring.

Glossary of Schemes and Tropes

alliteration a scheme; repetition of initial or medial consonants in associated words near one another.

anaphora a scheme; repetition of a word or group of words at the beginning of successive clauses.

antithesis a scheme; expression of contrasting ideas, often in parallel structure.

asyndeton a scheme; omission of connectives between a series of clauses.

epistrophe ending successive clauses or sentences with the same expression.

hyperbole a trope; deliberate exaggeration.

irony use of a word or words to convey a meaning opposite to their apparent meaning.

litotes a trope; deliberate understatement.

metaphor a trope; an implied comparison between two dissimilar things.

metonymy type of metaphor; the image used to represent the object is closely associated with it—e.g., what contains it, what causes it, what stands for it, etc.

onomatopoeia a trope; words whose sound reflects their sense.

oxymoron the linking of ordinarily contradictory terms.

parallelism a scheme; the expression of similar meanings in similar grammatical constructions.

periphrasis substitution of a descriptive word or phrase for a name, or of a name for a quality associated with the name

personification a trope; endowing objects or abstractions with human attributes.

polysyndeton a scheme; deliberate use of many connectives.

pun a trope; a name given several varieties of plays on words.

rhetorical question a trope; a question not intended to be answered.

scheme a deliberate deviation from the ordinary arrangement of words for rhetorical effect.

simile a trope; a comparison between two dissimilar things.

synecdoche a trope; the use of a part to stand for a whole.

trope a deliberate deviation from the normal signification of a word for rhetorical effect.

Adapted from Jim W. Corder's *Uses of Rhetoric*. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co.), 1971.

INFORMATIVE

Name _____

	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement
INTRO TACTICS:			
Ethos	_____	_____	_____
Set tone	_____	_____	_____
Thesis/Preview	_____	_____	_____
Transition	_____	_____	_____
BODY:			
Organization	_____	_____	_____
<i>Logos</i>	_____	_____	_____
Coherence	_____	_____	_____
Transitions	_____	_____	_____
CONCLUSION			
Summary	_____	_____	_____
Unity	_____	_____	_____
Decisiveness	_____	_____	_____
OVERALL			
Evenhandedness	_____	_____	_____
Quality of Support	_____	_____	_____
Clarity	_____	_____	_____
Coherence	_____	_____	_____

COMMENTS:

NEXT SPEECH:

Time: _____

Grade: _____

ANALYSIS OF CONTROVERSY

Name _____

	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement
INTRO TACTICS:			
Ethos	_____	_____	_____
Set tone	_____	_____	_____
Thesis/Preview	_____	_____	_____
Transition	_____	_____	_____
BODY:			
Organization	_____	_____	_____
Use of Stock Issues	_____	_____	_____
<i>Logos</i>	_____	_____	_____
Coherence	_____	_____	_____
Transitions	_____	_____	_____
CONCLUSION			
Summary	_____	_____	_____
Unity	_____	_____	_____
Decisiveness	_____	_____	_____
OVERALL			
Tact	_____	_____	_____
Depth of Analysis	_____	_____	_____
Quality of Support	_____	_____	_____
Handling Questions	_____	_____	_____

COMMENTS:

NEXT SPEECH:

Time: _____

Grade: _____

PERSUASIVE

Name _____

	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement
INTRO TACTICS:			
Ethos	_____	_____	_____
Set tone	_____	_____	_____
Thesis/Preview	_____	_____	_____
Transition	_____	_____	_____
BODY:			
Organization	_____	_____	_____
Focus	_____	_____	_____
<i>Logos</i>	_____	_____	_____
<i>Pathos</i>	_____	_____	_____
Style	_____	_____	_____
Transitions	_____	_____	_____
CONCLUSION			
Summary	_____	_____	_____
Unity	_____	_____	_____
Decisiveness	_____	_____	_____
OVERALL			
Tact	_____	_____	_____
Depth of Analysis	_____	_____	_____
Quality of Support	_____	_____	_____
Argumentation	_____	_____	_____
Application of Lecture Material	_____	_____	_____

COMMENTS:

NEXT SPEECH:

Time: _____

Grade: _____

STUDY GUIDE FOR CLA 223

Every student will draw one concept from the list below, and will be expected to discuss that concept in relation to one other idea below, in a single lucid, insightful and substantive answer. You have 6 minutes to prepare and deliver your speech. Lucidity is a matter of economy and coherence; insight is gained through both careful study and taking time to reflect on the concepts with imagination; substance is achieved through using specific examples from lecture, etc. to develop your answer. In order to do well on this final, make the following "moves" in your answer: (1) Give an introductory remark or two to set the tone, motivate and preview your "speech." (2) Overview both concepts. (3) Elaborate on them individually. (4) Discuss their relation one to another. (5) Conclude, as you would any good speech, with a summary and a decisive close. Good luck!

Rhetoric in the Classical Liberal Arts	Categorical Syllogism
The Greek Conception of "Excellence"	Mediate Inference
The Five Canons of Rhetoric	
Rhetoric: the "most humane of the humanities"	Enthymeme
Joseph Dunne on Techne Art vs. Intuition	Quintilian on <i>Pathos</i> and <i>Ethos</i>
Aristotle's Definition of Rhetoric	Tallmon Model
Aristotle's Three "Modes of Inartistic Proof"	Validity vs. Truth
Kairos To prepon	Dialectic
Sir Francis Bacon's definition of rhetoric	Law of contradiction
faculty psychology	Common Material Fallacies
<i>Style</i>	Weaver's "The Cultural Role of Rhetoric"
Figures of speech	Longinus' <i>On the Sublime</i>
Schemes	Griffin's "The Edifice Metaphor in Rhetorical Theory"
Tropes	

Learning rhetoric was, according to Aristotle and Plato, learning to speak the truth to fellow human beings in a way that respects their freedom and helps them achieve excellence.