

Public Speaking

Choices and
Responsibility



William M. Keith and Christian O. Lundberg

Fourth Edition

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William M. Keith and Christian O. Lundberg



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Fourth Edition

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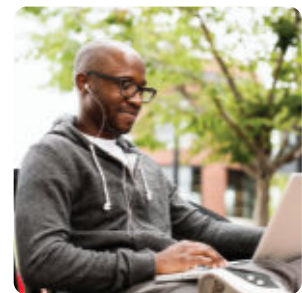
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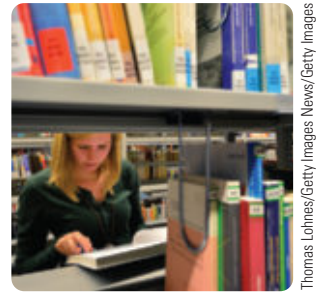


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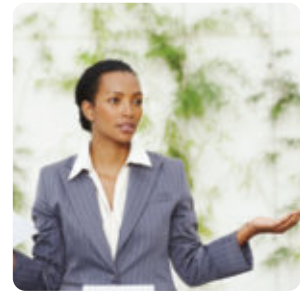
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Preface

The ability to engage an audience with skill, elegance, and clarity can have a decisive impact in our lives. The difference between success and failure in academic work, personal relationships, and your career path often depends on the ability to create compelling speeches. Even though future success is a good reason to cultivate skill in public speaking, it is not the only reason—it is also important, for all of us, that we speak in public in ethically and argumentatively sound ways. In an increasingly polarized, globalizing, and information-saturated world, students who become more engaged, informed, and responsible public speakers may well be among the last and best hopes for our civic and democratic life together.

Training in public speaking is about more than simply talking—it is about learning to listen, to understand an audience, and to evaluate the motives and reasons behind arguments. In an era of hyper-partisan politics and creeping disillusionment with public discourse and the political system, our best resource may be a return to the ancient arts of rhetoric and public speaking. These arts can teach us how to really listen to, respond to, and respectfully engage with each other.

We wrote *Public Speaking: Choices and Responsibility* because we believe that public speaking matters profoundly to our personal and collective futures. This text embodies our vision of ethically responsible yet practical public speaking that is accessible, easy to engage, and relevant to our students. In contrast to many approaches to public speaking, which present only a catalogue of tips and techniques for giving a speech, we have attempted to create a simple framework for helping students learn to be better public speakers. Our framework is compact, simple, and easy to teach and learn. The essence of teaching public speech is in helping students to make informed choices about how to approach a speaking situation, and in helping them to see and take responsibility for the implications of their choices.

The fourth edition of this book continues the focus from the first three editions on making speaking choices and taking responsibility for them. But we have sharpened our approach to this theme based on feedback from our readers and instructors. We are focused on how we might best live together with those with whom we disagree, learning how we can help one another to separate constructive argument from “fake news.” What students need is a way to understand and navigate these problems, not a cursory list of dos and don’ts, but the mechanics of the “deliberative stance,” the willingness to communicate with others for making good choices and solving problems. This edition of the book refocuses us on reclaiming political civility and positioning students to evaluate “fake news” as a response to our current situation. The version of civility that is woven through this book is about much more than being superficially nice, and it recognizes the ways that demands to “act appropriately” or “speak respectfully” can also be used to silence legitimate democratic dispute.

This edition also clarifies the scope of public speaking by including a section on world tradition, which argues that the basic principles are, despite their differences, common to many cultural traditions around the world. We also added a section on language prejudice; we want public speaking to affirm the many different valid ways of speaking English. We’ve also tried to make this edition easier to use and more accessible to students by shortening it, smoothing out the prose, and using infographics instead of bulleted lists, since these are easier to digest and remember.

New to This Edition!

- World Traditions—Chapter 1 connects public speaking to cultural traditions from around the world, so you can connect students from different cultural backgrounds to the essence of the course.
- Page layouts use infographics instead of bulleted lists, making it easier for students to grasp groups of concepts/skills and take notes on them.
- Prose has been simplified from previous editions, making it easier for first-year students and second language speakers.
- A section on language prejudice has been added to Chapter 8, facilitating discussion about including and valuing the full diversity of the varieties of English spoken around the world.
- Chapter 10 now covers both online delivery and speaking aids; since many schools have committed to teaching public speaking online, this will make it easier for teacher and students to take advantage of the latest research about how to be effective in the online setting.

We are excited about each of these additions to the fourth edition. We believe that these changes will enhance and extend our original focus on making choices and taking responsibility as the core of public-speaking pedagogy.

For us, “making choices” means seeing every public speech as a collection of decisions that starts with inventing a topic; moves through effective research, organization, and delivery; and ends with successful interaction with an audience. “Taking responsibility” means owning your choices, both by making them intentionally and by accepting the obligation to be responsive to the audience. With these two concepts forming the core of this book, we believe we have provided a set of guiding principles that ties many of the best insights of public speaking pedagogy together around a central theme and that satisfies the demands of the current generation of students for broader civic and social engagement.

The style of the book also reflects our concern not only to engage students but also to inspire them to use their voices to make a difference in their communities, future workplaces, and the broader public sphere. Many of our examples are directly relevant to students’ everyday lives; others are drawn from issues that occupy the front pages of newspapers, websites, and social media sources. In both cases, our goal is to provide students with examples that are relevant and engaging and that demonstrate the importance of public speaking to the broader health of civic life.

To create a text that is intuitive, easy to teach and learn from, and engaging to students, we have placed special emphasis on significant themes. In the introductory chapter we emphasize the world-changing power of public speech, and we introduce students to our central concepts of making choices and taking responsibility for them. Our goal is to “put the public back in public speaking” by introducing students to the idea that every speech targets a specific strategic goal (informing or persuading an audience, for example) and simultaneously forms a part of the larger public conversation around issues important to each of us.

Chapter 1 is devoted to helping get students up and speaking, and more important, to give them a basic understanding of the choices that go into an effective public speech. We provide a brief, early overview of the process of creating and delivering a public speech. Perhaps most significant for many first-time speakers, this chapter tackles the issue of communication apprehension head-on, offering effective introductory advice for dealing with public-speaking anxiety.

Because this book is so centrally concerned with responsible speaking in personal, work, and public contexts, Chapter 2, addressing ethics, is the first substantive chapter of the book. We believe our approach to ethics will resonate with contemporary students because, instead of simply producing a list of dos and don’ts, we provide a set of principles for thinking about

ethical public-speaking practice as an intrinsic element of every communicative interaction. We always have the option of relating to people ethically—or not. Making the choice to be ethical requires both the intention and some skills. The chapter treats all the standard topics in an ethics chapter—including properly citing sources, accurately representing evidence, avoiding deception and prejudicial appeals—but it does so in the broader context of encouraging students to think about the health and quality of the relationship they are establishing with their audience.

To be ethically sound and strategically effective, good public speaking should begin and end with thinking about the audience. In Chapter 3, we discuss how thinking about the audience influences speakers' choices and how to take responsibility in composing and delivering speeches. Not only do we talk about skills at the core of good public speaking—for example, analyzing and adapting to the audience—but we emphasize thinking about public speaking as an opportunity for engaging the audience in a conversation around issues of personal and public concern. Our goals in this chapter are to take advantage of the current sentiment among students, promoted in colleges and universities, for greater public and civic engagement and to demonstrate to students that in addressing a specific audience, they also are making their views known in the context of a broader public conversation.

For the model of public speaking as a part of a broader public conversation to be successful, we believe a public speaking text should present more than just the best ways to speak to an audience. Thus, Chapter 4 addresses how we should listen. One of our goals is to help students become better audience members and more responsive speakers by emphasizing the role of active, critical, and ethically sound listening. We include detailed advice on eliminating impediments to good listening, taking good notes, and giving constructive feedback. But perhaps more notably, we believe that privileging listening in the public speaking classroom is a pivotal first step toward improving the quality of public conversation in that it emphasizes paying attention to the claims of others as a necessary part of participating in a robust and respectful public conversation.

In the next three chapters we move from a basic framework for making choices and taking responsibility in public speech toward a practically oriented treatment of how to make effective choices in selecting a topic and purpose (Chapter 5), doing effective research (Chapter 6), and organizing your ideas and information (Chapter 7). Chapter 5 provides students with a practical rubric for making good topic choices that best balance their interests, their goals for interaction with the audience, and the nature of the public-speaking situation. We provide easily implementable solutions for picking a topic area, defining a purpose, generating a thesis statement, and focusing the speech in light of the occasion and character of the audience. A culture of search engines and social media has fundamentally changed the way in which students relate to information, and any public-speaking pedagogy worth its salt has to take into account this sea change in information culture. Chapter 6 faces head-on the unique challenges of researching in a digital world, providing students with a detailed guide to navigating a research context that is substantially more challenging than it was even a decade ago. Again emphasizing the central role of making choices and taking responsibility, this chapter on research provides a detailed, easy-to-follow, step-by-step protocol for designing a research strategy. Because contemporary students do research primarily online, we start with a discussion of all the research options available to them and provide concrete instructions for searching the Internet and other sources effectively. Given the changes in student research practices, we place heavy emphasis on methodical searching, including designing and keeping track of search terms, and on focusing research efforts amid the near-avalanche of online sources from which students can choose. Because today's student often struggles with what to use and how best to use it, we devote parts of the chapter to evaluating the credibility of sources and to thinking critically about the role of evidence in the composition of a good speech. Chapter 7 teaches students how best to integrate their claims, arguments, and evidence in a lucid and compelling format that engages an audience effectively. This chapter on organization presents

a rubric from thinking about introductions, signposting, the body of a speech, and a good conclusion. Instead of simply offering a catalogue of possible speech formats or deferring to the nature of the topic for inventing an organizational pattern, however, we discuss organization as a choice that, like any other, entails specific advantages and drawbacks. Thus, students should come away with a set of resources for developing a capacity for critical thinking about organizational choices.

Chapters 8 and 9 deal with verbal style and delivery, applying the same basic framework for making choices and taking responsibility that we have woven throughout the text. Chapter 8 addresses the best of the rhetorical tradition's reflections on lively language use, borrowing from a wide range of contemporary and pop culture discourses to discuss effective choices for the use of figures and tropes, including treatments of repetition, contrast, comparison, substitution, exaggeration, and personification. We conclude this chapter by reflecting on the ways the speaker's topic and the occasion might serve as a guide to the style choices good speakers make. Chapter 9 extends this same line of thinking to choices in delivering a speech. To help students negotiate these choices, we discuss various types of delivery—from memory, from a manuscript, extemporaneously, with the help of a presentation aid, and so on. We conclude this chapter with discussions of how best to practice and effectively handle audience interaction.

We follow physical delivery with a detailed and visually rich Chapter 10, which applies the principles of choice and responsibility to the use of technology in public speaking. After the quarantine of 2020–2022, it became clear that online public speaking courses were here to stay, and we have added half a chapter on how to prepare and present in the online setting. For visual aids, applying the basic framework of choices and responsibility provides important insights. Chapter 10 concludes with a pragmatic, detailed discussion about integrating presentation software into a speech without leaning on it as a replacement for good public-speaking practices. Here we discuss a number of messy but critically important practicalities that go into the effective use of presentation software, including how to think about delivery with presentation software, how to practice with and use presentation software in the classroom, and how to develop a backup plan.

Chapter 11 focuses on informative speaking, beginning with thinking about how our contemporary context and news media in particular have changed the way we think about information. More than ever, the culture broadly, and our students specifically, have begun to think about the notion of “spin” in presenting information. Our goal in this frame is to help students think about responsible choices for presenting information in a way that is clear, well organized, and useful for the audience. The chapter returns to the theme of topic selection to deal with the unique challenges of picking a good informative topic, and then moves on to discuss techniques for informative speaking and the set of choices a speaker might make to ensure that information is helpful for the audience.

Chapter 12 updates Aristotle's three modes of proof—logos, ethos, and pathos, or rational argument, the speaker's character, and emotional appeals—to give students concrete guidance in composing and delivering an effective speech. Though our inspiration is ancient, we draw from contemporary examples to provide a basic framework for thinking about how best to convince modern audiences through appeals to reason, character, and emotion. This chapter places special emphasis on processes of reasoning, not only to help students give better speeches but also to help them sharpen their critical thinking skills.

Chapter 13 concludes the text by focusing on other types of speeches and speech occasions. Even though a first course will focus appropriately on basic informative and persuasive speeches, with classmates as the main audience, students will encounter many other speaking situations in the world, and these will present new communication challenges. We believe the skills to meet these challenges will be extensions of the skills already learned. Students can easily learn to give effective and compelling speeches at life transitions and ceremonial occasions.

So, we believe we have produced a public-speaking curriculum that:

- is comprehensive, but systematically organized around a coherent system for making good speech choices and taking responsibility for them
- is simple to learn and to teach, always returning to the themes of making choices and taking responsibility
- is rich in practical advice and concrete detail for composing and delivering speeches
- is focused on the biggest struggles and conceptual issues faced by public-speaking students
- is an effective reworking of ancient arts for the modern world—faithful to the best insights of the rhetorical tradition but responsive to the contemporary student in its use of examples, composition and delivery practices, and style
- puts the civic and relational character of public speaking in the foreground of choice making

Resources for Instructors

Additional instructor resources for this product are available online. Instructor assets include an Instructor’s Manual, Educator’s Guide, PowerPoint® slides, Transition Guide, Guide to Teaching Online, and a test bank powered by Cengage®. Sign up or sign in at <https://faculty.cengage.com/> to search for this title. Then, you can save the title for easy access and download the resources that you need.

Online Learning Platform: Mindtap

Today’s leading online learning platform, MindTap for Keith and Lundberg, *Public Speaking: Choices and Responsibilities, 4e*, gives you complete control of your course to craft a personalized, engaging learning experience that challenges students, builds confidence, and elevates performance.

MindTap introduces students to core concepts from the beginning of your course using a simplified learning path that progresses from understanding to application. This MindTap follows a “Learn It, Apply It” structure that guides students through comprehension-based concept checks, followed by authentic application opportunities.

- The “Are You Ready?” (AYR) modules at the beginning of the learning path help students build foundational public speaking–related skills before diving into the course. These modules cover communication, active listening, critical thinking, and citation basics.
- “Learn It” activities are brief concept checks that give students low-stakes opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of key concepts from the chapter.
- “Apply It” activities are designed to walk students through the speech process. Then, students can take a comprehensive quiz on the information and skills covered in the chapter.
- The Speech Confidence Series folder at the bottom of the learning path contains 20 videos that provide students with tips for delivering successful speeches.

Learn more about MindTap here: <https://www.cengage.com/mindtap>

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—**Bill Keith**

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Fourth Edition

Public Speaking

Choices and Responsibility

William M. Keith and Christian O. Lundberg

Part **1** Fundamentals of
Good Speaking

Chapter **1** Public Speaking

Chapter **2** Speaking for the Common Good: The Ethics of the Responsible Speaker

Chapter **3** Understanding Audiences and Publics

Chapter **4** Becoming a Skilled Listener



Chapter 1 Public Speaking



Learning Objectives

- Explain why public speaking is powerful and worth mastering
- Contrast the public and civic dimensions of public speaking with other types of communication
- Define the special responsibilities of a public speaker
- Identify the stages and choices necessary to compose and deliver a speech
- Describe communication choices at each stage of the speech creation process

Chapter Outline

- Introduction: Why Learn Public Speaking?
- Speech Is Powerful
- Public Speaking Across Cultures
- The Communication Process
- Speakers Make Choices
- The Speaking Process: Preparing and Performing
- Thinking Through Your Choices
- Creating Your First Speech
- Giving Your First Speech
- Making Responsible Choices

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Overview

This chapter will give you an overview of the communication process, highlighting the difference that public speaking can make in your life and in the lives of the people listening to you. You will learn about the process of composing and delivering a public speech, focusing on the variety of choices you will make when you give a speech. Finally, to get you started on the process of composing and delivering a speech, we will walk you through the basic elements of speech preparation, which are the topics of the subsequent chapters.

Introduction: Why Learn Public Speaking?

Caution: The contents of this book can be dangerous—dangerous because they are powerful. Whether used for good or for ill, speech is one of the most powerful forces in human history. Sometimes it has been used to unite people around a common democratic goal—for example, to advance the cause of civil rights. Other times dictators have used speech as a powerful weapon. But however it is used, speech can change the world. More important, your speech can change your world in big and small ways.

The principles we'll introduce will help you give better speeches in almost any context. They will help you learn to be a better public speaker—clearer and more persuasive, but also more engaged, responsible, and well-reasoned.

We often hear that public speaking is just about being clear. That's true, in part, but performance counts too—actually getting up and talking in front of other people. You may be surprised to find out by the end of this course, however, that getting up and speaking in front of other people (the scary part) can be the easy part. In this book, we would like to introduce you to the range of skills that go into preparing, producing, and delivering a speech, skills that will make you a more effective advocate for yourself and for the people and ideas you care about.

You may not be in this course to change the world: Many students take a public speaking course because it is required. But taking this course, working through this book, and adopting your instructor's advice on how to be a better public speaker will make you more successful not only in class but also in your everyday life and beyond the classroom.

You are about to become part of a tradition that stretches back thousands of years, across every continent and culture. So stick with us. We hope to convince you of the power of words, of the world-changing capability that each of us has if we learn how to develop and use it responsibly.

Whatever brought you to this class, public speaking is necessary not only for your education and career but also for your life and for the health of our political communities. We will argue that speech is powerful and that speech matters.

Speech Is Powerful

rhetoric Term for the study of how language, argument, and narrative can persuade an audience.

The study of public speaking began in ancient Greece. For the Greeks, public speaking was part of the broader field of **rhetoric**, the study of how words could persuade an audience. In the modern world, many people associate public speaking with manipulation, and the term **rhetoric** with “empty talk.” They may say, “Let’s have less rhetoric and more action.” Although it is true that talk is sometimes empty, good speech also can be a form of action, motivating people to make important changes in the world. To see why, the first thing to understand is that because speech is powerful, your speech can be powerful.

The Power of Public Speaking to Change the World

Speech and speeches have been used for both good and bad ends. They have introduced and converted many people to the world’s great religions. They have helped to elect presidents and overthrow dictators. They have begun wars and ended them. Winston Churchill’s and Franklin Roosevelt’s speeches rallied the British and U.S. populations during World War II. In the 19th century, Elizabeth Cady Stanton spoke out to make people aware of the rights of women. In the middle of the 20th century, the speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr. showed people in the United States how to think differently about civil rights and issues of race and racism.

We need the power of words to speak a better world into existence. Speech, used effectively, should motivate us to make changes on our campuses, in our communities, and as a nation. It also should help us make better decisions about the kinds of changes we make. We need the ability to speak with clarity and conviction, but we also need to be able to listen with attention and respect to other people’s viewpoints. Thus, one of the biggest challenges of our time is to learn how to speak in a way that generates cooperation and insight, and that avoids division and narrow-mindedness. But what can learning to speak well do for you?

The Power of Speeches to Change Your World

Even though speeches can change the world, common sense tells us that they also can make a big difference in your individual life experience. Every day, people speak in courtrooms, boardrooms, and classrooms to persuade others of their points of view or to inform others about things they need to know. A good speech can make all the difference in winning a lawsuit, pitching a business idea, or teaching people about something that might change their lives significantly. And, ultimately, that is the point of this book: Because speech is such a powerful tool, we should learn to use it as effectively and as responsibly as we can.

The skills you will learn here also will make you a more effective speaker in your career. If you want to come across as the candidate to hire when applying for a dream job, being an effective speaker is a crucial part of your success. If you prepare well for the interview, thinking about how to present yourself as a fitting and capable candidate, if you perform well by speaking clearly and articulately, if you make a persuasive case, and if you invite the participation of the interviewers by fostering a good dialogue, you can be a shoo-in for the position. By the same token, if you pitch a business proposal to a supervisor, a client, or a lender, you will have to project an attitude of competency and meticulous preparation, as well as to speak articulately and build a relationship with your listeners.

Here are some examples of the kinds of speeches that can change your life if you deliver them effectively:

- the speech you give as an answer to the job interview question, “Tell us a little bit about yourself”

- the speech you give when you pitch an important business idea
- the speech you give when you are trying to persuade people in your community (for example, a town council or a neighborhood association) to change something in your community that should be changed
- the speech you give when convincing a loved one to do something—to enter a long-term relationship, for example, or to support you in an important project
- the speech you give to convince others to vote for a candidate or a law that affects your everyday life

The basic principles are similar for any speech, whether it is delivered on the Senate floor, in a State of the Union address, in a business meeting, or before a local community group. In each instance, you will have to plan carefully what you will say and how you will say it, and to build a relationship with the audience.

Speaking Connects You to Others: The Democracy in Everyday Life

Democracy is basically the set of institutions that allow people to solve problems together, by talking. A local, state, or national legislature consists of representatives elected to deliberate together in order to solve problems through laws and policies. This process of choice making through mutual reasoning is called **deliberation**. This is true in constitutional monarchies and parliamentary democracies as well the U.S. system. If everybody were the same and agreed on everything ahead of time, this would be an easy job. But it's not. People differ in all kinds of ways, from values, to customs, to religious beliefs, and there are often no easy solutions. So, representatives deliberate (often with speeches), trying to reason their way to solutions that work best for everybody. Sometimes people feel representatives haven't found the right solution, and they use protests, marches, and speeches to publicly argue for a better one. In the United States, even people who aren't citizens have the right to take part in these activities to influence lawmakers.

Deliberation also happens for groups of people who aren't elected.¹ The people in your neighborhood or apartment building may talk together to solve a problem. If you are doing group work for a course, you will deliberate about the best way to complete an assignment for the best grade.

The extent of deliberation is why we need to see **democracy** as more than a set of institutions: It is a relationship to other people, and a relationship you can choose to have whether you are elected or not.² Let's call that the **deliberative stance**. The deliberative stance is choosing to work with someone on solving a problem or conflict, instead of deciding what to do and forcing, bullying, or tricking the other person into doing it. If you believe that other people's knowledge, values, and interests have to be part of any solution, then you are taking the deliberative stance toward deliberation. If you are just thinking about how to get your own way, or make sure that you benefit the most, then you are not.

Public speaking, at its best, is a deliberative stance about respecting the differences we have with others. We have to speak and listen in a way that preserves the important differences that make each of us who we are as we work our way through living together.

Now you may be saying to yourself, "Wait a minute. I was hoping to get some communication skills out of this class that I could use in business, for my job." Actually, you will get that, and more. Successful and effective persuasion and informative speaking in politics, business, and even personal life can invoke the highest democratic values. Why? Because speakers who make good decisions consider the effects of their words on all **stakeholders**, or all the people who have something at stake in the decisions. Skilled speakers not only know how to adapt to their audience of stakeholders, but they also understand their audience's diversity.

democracy A system of government in which people govern themselves, either through direct votes on policy issues (*direct democracy*) or by electing officials who deliberate and make decisions on their behalf (*representative democracy*).

deliberative stance An orientation toward another speaker, or to an audience, that values listening to people, stories, argument and evidence for the purposes of problem solving and decision-making.

stakeholders The people who have something to lose or gain as the result of a decision or policy. They have an *interest* in that decision.

The Conversational Framework

In this book we'll distinguish different approaches to communication, especially public communication. Speakers are never just informing and persuading; there is always a larger context that creates mutual responsibilities between speakers and their audiences. To sharpen the picture, let's compare advertising and democracy as contexts for communication. They represent fundamentally different approaches to public discourse and different ways of understanding this mutual responsibility.

In advertising, a company is trying to sell something, to get someone to buy something. Ads target specific groups of people called market segments—men between 30 and 40, for instance, or working women who live in urban areas, or Twitter users. Advertisers are successful when sales increase; their responsibility to their audience is limited, and communication is usually in just one direction.

In contrast, the deliberative stance requires communication among people who are trying to “think together.” Decisions should emerge as a result of the mutual exchange of arguments, information, and points of view. Democracy is big and messy; imagine it as an enormous system in which different ideas and arguments circulate, being expressed (and maybe changed) at many different points. Sometimes democracy is you and a friend talking about what the government should do about student loans; sometimes it's you reading a debate about student loan finances in the newspaper or on a website. Sometimes it's your roommate watching an argument being mocked on a satirical news show, and sometimes it's your family attending a community meeting to hear what people say.

Clearly, this deliberative thinking is very different from advertising. Deliberative conversation, or dialogue, aims to solve problems, not to sell products. It involves everybody, not just a target consumer audience. To be successful, arguments need to adapt to men and women alike, older and younger, and of different races, religions, regions of the country, income, education levels, and so on. Advertising bypasses differences such as these by selectively targeting a smaller audience of people who have something in common.

Suppose a student is going to give an informative speech on a surprising or controversial topic, such as the campus need for gender neutral bathrooms. An advertising approach probably would start by defining the target market as the types of people most likely to be sympathetic to gender identities that are different from their own and would ignore everyone else. Would a good speaker give a speech to a class and ignore many or most of the people in it?

In contrast, in a democratic conversation or dialogue, the speaker would begin by identifying the larger public issues that connect to the availability of gender neutral bathrooms: equality, civil rights, and the increasing acceptance of LGBTQ+ people. The speaker would be placing the issue of gender neutral bathrooms within larger discussions that have been going on for 10, 50, or maybe 150 years, portraying the issue as part of a larger conversation about civil rights or equality.³

As another example, consider a speech about yoga. In a public speaking class, is it the speaker's job to “sell” yoga to their classmates? Probably not. But they could present the information gained from research on yoga in the context of public conversations about health, athletic performance, or even spirituality.

Our point here is that while you are learning many new techniques in public speaking class, such as outlining, research, and delivery, you also will learn new ways of understanding the kind of communication that makes up truly public speaking. It isn't quite like talking to friends about movies and music, and it isn't like a sales pitch. Public speaking is the adventure of taking your turn in one of the amazing ongoing public conversations that are happening right now.

In short, speech is powerful, and it matters in ways that you may not have thought about too much, but after taking this course, you'll never hear a speech the same way again.

Case Study

How has Public Speaking Instruction Changed?

Currently we expect a natural, conversational style of speaking rather than something that appears heavily prepared. Yet, at one time, teachers taught public speaking courses by having their students memorize and deliver great speeches of the past (not their own words), learn ornate hand gestures, and focus in excruciating detail on pauses, tone, and vocal flourishes. If you were taking this class in the 1800s, you might have had to master hand movements to go along with a text that you were memorizing, and to do this, you might study something like this:



But starting around the 1900s, and continuing until today, public speaking has focused more on helping people to compose and deliver materials that they wrote, in a clear conversational manner. Why the change? Well, when education was the privilege of a small segment of society, knowing how to deliver a riveting version of a speech from ancient Greece or Rome might have been a useful skill. But current public speaking instruction, including this book, focuses on helping students find their voices so they can advocate for themselves and for the things that matter to them. This is part of a larger historical trend to see higher education as critical for an ever-greater number of people and, by extension, prepare more people for productive lives in the workplace and in the broader public sphere. To the extent we want more inclusive politics, we need to be inclusive in teaching the skills for those politics.

An accompanying turn in public speaking, then, was to see the point of a good speech as more than just helping students really nail vocal flourishes or hand gestures, or to show how well they could recite ancient poetry. The new point of public speaking was to see it as the ability to communicate in one's own voice to an audience of peers—to other people who were also in public listening and speaking and talking about matters of common interest.

For more information, check out:

J. M. Sproule, *Democratic Vernaculars: Rhetorics of Reading, Writing Speaking and Criticism since the Enlightenment*. New York: Routledge, 2020.

Zeam Porter speaks at a public hearing about a proposed transgender policy for high school sports. Porter identifies as transgender.

Can just speaking up, and speaking out, make a difference to public discourse?



Public Speaking Across Cultures

In the perspective we've just outlined, public speaking draws on norms about the U.S. political system, as well as stories about how people can make a difference in public and private settings. Some of the terminology we draw on in later chapters comes from the European tradition, especially Greek and Roman.

Yet, while the contemporary United States is the context for learning and using public speaking, there is good evidence that the principles we draw on are common to cultures around the world. Certainly, public speaking is taught and practiced on every continent today, in a vibrant diversity of languages and styles. Many traditions seem to rely on assumptions about the role and meaning of public speaking, which converge on the case we are making here. While, of course, these traditions diverge in many ways, we can see some common themes.

- Both African and Mesoamerican (Central and South American) traditions emphasize engaging the audience as a member of a community and speaking so that you reinforce and support that community.⁴ According to one scholar,

African rhetoric is first of all a **rhetoric of community**. In other words, it evolves in ancient African cultures as a rhetoric of communication deliberation, discourse and action, directed toward bringing good into the community and the world.⁵

- Tradition is very important in Asian rhetoric, with the expectation that speakers are respectful to audiences and deferential to those who have come before. This theme recurs in Indigenous North American rhetoric as well, with speakers positioning their personal experiences within a community tradition.
- African, Asian, and Mesoamerican traditions each value logical reasoning (East Indian and Chinese logics were well developed and theorized) and the use of evidence in persuasion, while emphasizing a dialogic engagement of people. Ancient Hindu traditions of debate (particularly the Nyāya tradition, refracted through Buddhist practices) permeate Tibetan, Indian, and Chinese cultures.⁶
- Showing respect for your audience is common to all traditions, though of course forms of respect differ between cultural traditions, from the “speaking straight” of the inland



Pacific Northwest Indigenous Americans to gestures of praise and goodwill in African and Asian traditions.⁷

While a full treatment of them would go beyond the scope of this book, all of these traditions deserve to be better known and understood. Now, let's look at an overview of the actual process of communication.

The Communication Process

In this book, we'll often refer to communicating in the context of public speaking as *rhetoric*, but with a different meaning than you're used to. As we noted, today the term "rhetoric" is often negative and refers to discourse that is empty, insincere, and pompous. In its classical sense, however, rhetoric is about the art of speaking, and it requires at least three components:

- a speaker;
- a listener; and
- some means of sharing facts, ideas, reasoning, and information between them.

There might be a conversation between two people or among several people, as in a group discussion. Or, as in public speaking situations, there might be one speaker and a large audience. Or the medium might change: One person writes a letter or an email to