

SPEECHWRITING SPC 3605

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Speechwriting is an *advanced* composition course. In this course, students acquire stylistic prowess by which their sentences have increased potential to be remembered and quoted to achieve greater persuasiveness and resultant acclaim for you as one who uses the English language well in written discourse. The course is called Speechwriting because models to be imitated are in those most quotable sentences of Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, John Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr., for examples. Although you practice these stylistic skills while writing speeches, the acquired prowess is applicable in many future communication endeavors, as speakers or writers, regardless of profession or later, important role in life. The textbook is Ronald H. Carpenter, *Choosing Powerful Words: Eloquence that Works*.

This course is *not* about supporting arguments or organizing them into broader discourse. For those skills, other courses are more appropriate. Speechwriting is about the best words and their best orders—*within sentences*—to achieve optimal impress of *your* ideas upon readers or listeners. Your writing is perfected in first drafts that you read aloud in class among peers (and for me), wherein you should acquire a sense of what to do to achieve the final products desired at the semester end for a grade. Thus, present drafts when due; listen carefully to other students' drafts; participate in rewriting others' sentences; and heed my commentary about *all* drafts. Do not assume that participation means simply presenting your drafts and listening only to commentary about them.

Your first speech will be written after we analyze and identify specific sources of style in Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and John Kennedy's Inaugural Address. You will rewrite the Gettysburg Address, as Ted Sorensen might have helped John Kennedy write it. This assignment will improve your flexibility as a stylist. For your third speech, which praises a person for whom you have great love or admiration, you *must* write for an actual occasion when that person will hear or read your statement (you will earn many "points" from that person as well as other people attending the event). For the fourth speech, praising an institution or ideal, you will write in praise of some ideal or institution that you are likely to address in later life, perhaps as a professional person (I predict that years later many of you will take that text from your files and use it again for part—if not most—of a speech that you likely will give). The second speech that you write in the course, exactly 100 words long (no contractions), will be explained when the theory behind its persuasive function is explained in detail.

How a draft is presented, vocally and physically, has *no* bearing on your grade (for help with delivery skills other courses are appropriate; in a scheduled lecture I will make suggestions about how to improve your platform presence, however). This important point merits restatement: Speechwriting is an *advanced composition* course, wherein you read drafts aloud as bases of discussion by which *all* students understand how and why some word choices (lexicon) and word arrangements (syntax) in sentences are better than others. For initial and final drafts, I *require* computer word processing. Revision is easier; spelling is accurate; word lengths of drafts are easily known.

From past experience, I know reasonably diligent students will achieve *some* of the stylistic skills taught in this course. Final grades are higher, however, as you (1) demonstrate refined prowess as competent stylists in final drafts submitted for a grade at the end of the semester, (2) fully understand course precepts derived from readings *and* lecture materials, as tested by *three exams* during the semester (the course has no final exam), and (3) produce final research papers about style as defined in this course (research paper options are explained during a lecture early in the semester and will require additional Web and library reading). In combination, initial drafts, exam answers wherein you demonstrate stylistic prowess, final polished drafts, group projects, and your research paper will total well over 6,000 words evaluated and graded by me for Gordon Rule credit (if you wish to make that claim).

Final grades, which reflect your mastery of writing skills and knowledge of course content, are determined one-half by the average of your three exam scores and one-half by your final notebook with *polished* drafts of writing assignments and the research paper—all typed, double-spaced, and turned in at the time and date listed in the *University Timetable* as the course final exam period. Please know that although this is a writing course, I am impressed—for purposes of grades—by how much you *know* about style as defined in this course. Moreover, please

appreciate that this composition course is unlike virtually all other persuasive writing courses at the University of Florida. The expertise and confidence in the precepts being taught are derived from your professor's own published research in six books, several book chapters, and numerous research journal articles (all of which informed my writing of your textbook).

In conclusion, teaching you to be eloquent stylists gives me great personal satisfaction. From my experience as a communications consultant for organizations outside the university (such as corporate executives, lawyers, civic leaders, hospital administrators, public relations professionals, CPAs, judges, and officers attending the U.S. Naval War College), I *know* that skills acquired in this course will be useful for the rest of your life, no matter what your later profession is. The only prerequisite for the course is ability to write grammatical sentences that are spelled and punctuated correctly.

CLASS SCHEDULE

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topic and Assignment</u>
1	Course overview
2	Style in discourse, Lincoln's style, read Chapters One and Five
3	Kennedy's style read Chapter Two; assign Speech #1
4	Assign Speeches #3, #4, and term paper
5	Exam #1 (Tuesday); in class writing, Thursday
6	Present initial draft of Speech #1 (750 words in <i>final</i> draft for notebook)
7	Stylistic Redundancy, Chapter Six, Assign Speech #2
8	Speech #2, Tuesday; in-class writing on Thursday
9	Metaphor, Chapter Four; read assigned metaphor sentences Thursday
10	Exam #2 on Tuesday; progress report Thursday on possible research paper topics
11	<u>I</u> nitial draft of Speech #3 (1000 words in <i>final</i> draft for notebook)
12	Exam #3; form "bake-off" groups on Thursday
13	In-class writing assignment (T); "bake-off" speech (R)
14	Present initial draft of Speech #4 (1000 words in <i>final</i> draft for notebook)
15	Review contents of final notebook; evaluate course; "bake-off" winners dine

N.B. This syllabus specifies meetings for 15 weeks rather than the customary 16 weeks of normal semesters. I invariably am called upon to make off-campus presentations at various conferences during the semester, and I thus may have to miss a meeting or two, and the syllabus will be adjusted. No assigned topics, tests, or readings of drafts for "prior feedback" will be affected. As these events occur, the syllabus will be amended with sufficient advance notice.

