

SENIOR THESIS



What a great difference there is in persuasiveness between discourses which are spoken and those which are to be read...the former are delivered on subjects which are important and urgent, while the latter are composed for display and gain...when a discourse is robbed of the prestige of the speaker, the tones of his voice, the variations which are made in the delivery, and, besides, of the advantages of timeliness and keen interest in the subject matter...when it has not a single accessory to support its contention and enforce its plea...in these circumstances it is natural, I think, that it should make an indifferent impression upon its hearers.

Isocrates, "To Philip" 25-27

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Senior Thesis Topic

Your topic must be on a debatable, significant issue and you should take a stance for or against it. You will be presenting a well-reasoned and well-researched argument in favor of your stance, which will include presenting the opposing viewpoint(s) and refutation. You must also be able to support your stance biblically. If you cannot think of three arguments against your topic, it is probably not a good choice. If possible, you should offer a solution to your problem/issue. Select a topic in which you are most interested and one in which you think your audience will care about. Peruse the suggested topic list below to stir your own ideas.

When trying to narrow down a topic to an arguable claim, try asking questions about a topic. Example: *Welfare*. *Does welfare work? Does welfare discourage marriage? Does welfare enslave its participants and continue a cycle of poverty? Is welfare a tool used to maintain control over a voting block? What are the problems with welfare? Are they fixable? Is removing the stigma of welfare a good thing or a bad thing? Is welfare the government's responsibility as laid out by US constitution? What is the biblical description of welfare? Your answer to a particular question could help you form a rough thesis statement.*

Some possible topics:

- Is suffering necessary for true Christian discipleship and growth?
- Should the Internet be censored?
- Do children learn better in boys-only and girls-only schools?
- Is competition for grades a good thing?
- Should parents avoid vaccinating their children?
- Should schools require musical training as part of the curriculum?
- Should the church should take a greater role in social welfare?
- Are poor relationships with neighbors the beginning of a fragmented society?
- How are the fine arts “better” than pop culture?
- Is street evangelism effective? How does it compare to “relational evangelism”?
- Is satire more powerful than other means of persuasion?
- Should Christians all register their political party as “Independent”?
- Would giving artificial intelligence to humans be sinful?

Kinds of Persuasive Speeches:

- *Persuasive speeches on questions of Fact*—The speaker presents one view of the facts as persuasively as possible.

Ex.: Did Shakespeare write the plays attributed to him? Is sexual orientation genetically determined?

- *Persuasive speeches on questions of Cause and Effect (similar to questions of fact)*—Speaker determines **debatable** causal relationship and argues for one side.

Example: Are video games contributing to gun violence in society?

- *Persuasive speeches on questions of Value*—The speaker is trying to convince audience to agree with his or her value judgment (is it right or wrong, good or bad, moral or immoral, proper or improper, fair or unfair). Speaker must justify his claim. (Justify your judgment against some identifiable standards, and then show how your topic measures up against those standards)

Examples: Is cloning morally justifiable? What are the ethical responsibilities of journalists?

- *Persuasive speeches on questions of Policy*-deals with specific courses of action. May involve questions of fact and questions of value (you would make a moral judgment to decide if you thought the policy was wrong), but you go beyond to decide whether something should be done or not done. Speech purpose would be either passive agreement or a call to action. Establish a need and a plan for solving it. (organize as problem and solution or problem- cause,-solution)

Examples: Should marijuana be legalized? Should Obamacare be repealed? Should welfare be abolished or reformed? Should affirmative action be eliminated? Should euthanasia be legalized? Should there be restrictions on the use of executive orders?

Length of Speech

- **Length = 18-20 minutes**

- Minimum speech time is 18 minutes not including any outside media support. In other words, you may not count a 10 minute video clip as part of your 18-20 minute speech.
- Your actual speech plus any media support (video clip, demonstration, etc.) may not exceed 25 minutes.
- Length of written speech is typically around 9-13 pages. Since everyone speaks at a different pace, I can only give you an estimate of written pages that will make up your speech. Speakers can speak anywhere from 100 wpm to 150 wpm. You **MUST** time yourself while practicing your speech (or practice reading from any typed assignment from this year to see your pace)! Points will be deducted if your speech is not within the 18-20 minute time frame.

- If you speak at 100 wpm, a 20 minute speech is 2000 written words which is 8.3 pages.

- If you speak at 130 wpm, a 20 minute speech is 2600 written words which is 10.7 pages.

- If you speak at 150 wpm, a 20 minute speech is 3,000 written words which is about 13 pages.

With that being said, you should turn in a paper that is anywhere from 9-13 pages (**a minimum of 9 pages** and a maximum of 13 pages). Note that it is MUCH easier to reduce your speech than to add to it so you may want to aim for 13 pages.

- Check out the link on Weebly (Q2, week 8) for instructions on how to calculate your wpm
- After your speech you will have 5 minutes for a Question and Answer session (See Q&A section).

Resource Requirements

- You should include *at least 9-10* sources
- When using the internet, you must use reliable and scholarly internet sources (use the database!!)
- You must have at least 2 book sources
- You must include 1 primary source through an interview (see Interview Section)
- Your support for your argument CANNOT come solely from your opinions and personal example; you must support your argument with research (studies, documents, charts, graphs, scholarly articles, etc). This does not mean that you cannot use personal example or personal opinion; it just means that it cannot be your only source of support for your argument.

Interview Requirements

An interview provides you with a “primary” source of information. You will need to interview someone who has knowledge and expertise in your research area. You may conduct your interview in person, via phone, via email, etc. **Incorporate the most pertinent information from your interview into your speech—this may be much or very little; however, you must include *at least one* reference to your interview in your speech.** *You will be turning in a transcript of your interview including a brief bio on your interviewee.*

Some things to keep in mind:

- Know the purpose of your interview. What is it that you hope to learn?
- If interviewing in person, dress appropriately and professionally. Do not be late and make sure to be respectful of your interviewee’s time by being well prepared. Let your interviewee know your purpose and the amount of time that your interview will take.
- If using some type of recording device, let your interviewee know as it is illegal in some states to secretly record an interview.
- You may choose to film your interview and use clips from it for your power point-- if your interviewee is willing.
- Have a list of prepared questions for your interview, but be prepared to make up new questions during the interview if interesting information is brought up that you had not prepared for. Avoid questions that could be answered with a “yes” or “no” as these could be difficult to incorporate into your speech. Open-ended questions only!
- Be careful that direct quotes are accurately recorded.
- Ask for permission to call or email for further clarification, if necessary.

- Some question/suggestions to consider:
 - a. How are you involved with...? and How long have you...?
 - b. How do you envision the future...?
 - c. What do you think can be done about...?
 - d. If you could change one thing about...?
 - e. What is most challenging about...?
 - f. What should we know about...?
 - g. What are the implications of?

Worldview Component

At some point in your speech, you must use Scripture as a proof (common topic of Testimony). This should be carefully and thoughtfully integrated into your attempt to persuade your audience. Ask questions such as these:

- Does Scripture comment on my topic directly? What is the larger context (chapter, book of the Bible) of the passages that comment on my topic? How does that context influence the interpretation of each passage? How do these passages relate to one another (do they support each other, give different angles on the topic, seem to contradict each other? How do they relate to my argument) affirm it, contradict it, qualify it?
- If Scripture does not comment on my topic directly, what Scriptural/theological principles apply to my topic?
- What do Bible commentaries and theology books have to comment on my topic?

You may choose to include the Scripture component as a particular proof of your paper, or you may choose to weave it throughout your other proofs. **Citing other theological works and commentaries to support your Scripture interpretation is STRONGLY encouraged.**

Rhetoric Component

- You must clearly appeal to all the modes of persuasion—ethos, pathos, and logos
- You must develop your argument by using at least 3 of the topics of invention: Definition (genus and division), Comparison (similarity, difference, and degree), Relationship (cause/effect, antecedent/consequence, contrary, contradiction), Circumstance (past fact/future fact, possible/impossible)
- You must demonstrate an understanding of your audience (PEP students, tutors, and families) by appropriate choice of topic, diction, content, visual aid, etc.

Arrangement Requirements

- **Introduction**-must gain audience's attention, introduce the topic clearly, and preview the body of the speech
- **Statement of Facts**-background information (definitions, questions, history) necessary to understanding the argument.
- **Partitio**- the 'division of points' previews the speech's arguments. May build on the narration (SOF) and also orient the audience to the structure of the speech, helping them to hear it more clearly (Partitio may also be placed after the introduction before the SOF)
- **Confirmation/Body/Proof**-focus on arguments that support your thesis. Your support must come from reliable sources. While you may use support from your own opinion and personal experience, that should not be the ONLY source of your support.
- **Refutation**-present the counterargument and refute it. (*You may place your refutation before your confirmation, after your confirmation, or sprinkle it throughout if you choose.*)
- **Conclusion**-Don't just restate your thesis and your main points. What is the implication or significance of your thesis? What do you want the reader to think or do as a result of your speech? Here would be a good place to put an emotional appeal-Pathos- in the form of a call to action or some inspirational statement or encouragement.

Style Requirements

- You may use first person judiciously.
- You should select your diction carefully. Make sure to consider your audience!
- You should strive for varied syntax, including simple, compound, and complex sentences; long and short sentences; active and (for occasional and intentional emphasis) passive sentences.
- You should weave elements of narration and description throughout your argument.
- **You must use at least 9 rhetorical devices/figures of speech. (3 strategy, 3 organization, 3 style/analysis).**

Memory Helps

You will be presenting your speech from memory. This means you may not have the written speech with you as you present. We have been working to learn the rhetorical canon of memory this year, and you should apply what we have learned to seek to memorize your speech.

You may, however, use speaking notecards or an outline to cue yourself through the main points, transitions, and evidence in your speech. The following suggestions should help you to create effective notecards/outline.

- What should go on the speaking notecards/outline? Short answer: Whatever you need to get through the

speech, short of writing out the whole speech. Consider some of the following:

- Try creating one notecard for each paragraph in your speech.
 - At the top of the notecard, write out the transition and topic sentence you plan to use for that paragraph.
 - Beneath this, list the evidence and illustrations you plan to use. Quotations and data should be written out word for word to ensure that you present them accurately.
 - Beneath this, include details from the paragraph you want to remember (jokes, analogies, images, etc.)
- In the margins of the notecard, write cues to yourself on what you plan to be doing at that point in the speech.
 - Note when you need to change slides or make comments on your PowerPoint presentation.
 - Make notes on how you plan to “block” the speech (see below).
- You might try color coding your notes or highlighting key words; whatever helps guide you as you present.
- As you practice your speech (see below), you might realize you don’t need as much information as you originally included on the notes. Create new notecards with fewer distractions.

Delivery Requirements

Dress:

- Formal dress is required. This means jacket and tie for men and dress or suit for ladies. Normal PEP dress code guidelines still apply, so please check your outfit beforehand! Please remember that you will have a microphone that will be attached to your outfit, so please choose something with a pocket or belt that can hold the weight of the microphone.

Voice:

- You should be loud enough to be heard by the person in the back row. Do not always depend on a microphone and sound system to work; sometimes that will not be available.
- The pitch of your voice is important as well. To avoid sounding monotone, vary your pitch.
- Do not speak too fast!!! You should not sound like a recording in fast forward mode!
- Use pauses effectively
- Avoid “ums” or other fillers
- Make sure to practice all of the areas of verbal communication that we have studied during Q3/Q4

Body language

- Contact with audience: Eye Contact! Make audience feel you are speaking to them and avoid too much time spent looking at your notes or PowerPoint!
- Make sure that you don't turn your back to the audience while interacting with a visual aid.
- Posture: no slouching; stand upright but not stiff. Stand with weight on both feet, not rocking back and forth or side to side, or up and down. Hands should not be in your pockets but comfortable at your sides or on the podium.
- Movement: do not weave or pace. Stand fairly still. You can shift from one foot to another when making a new point, lean forward or step back occasionally for emphasis. Have good posture when approaching the podium, not slouching or acting silly. Walk confidently but not arrogantly.
- Gesture: One gestures in a speech to emphasize a point. Refrain from fidgeting, pushing your hair behind your ear, adjusting your clothing, jingling coins in your pocket, etc. Flipping papers during your speech is also distracting. Try slide the paper over to the side instead of picking them all up to stack the used one in the back.
- Approach and depart from the lectern without rushing. Portray a calm, cool, and collected attitude.

Blocking the Speech:

“Blocking” refers to planning out the delivery element of your speech, similar to staging a drama. Print out a fresh copy of your written speech, arm yourself with highlighters and colored pens, and mark places to do the following:

- Pause for a moment to indicate a transition
- Pause for a moment to let the audience reflect on an important point or rhetorical question
- Speak more loudly or softly at a key point—either to emphasize the argument or create some pathos
- Make a gesture to illustrate a point (sweep hands to show expansiveness, point finger to make accusation, put up both hands to show exasperation or ask a question, bring fists together to show conflict, etc.)
- Step to the side of the podium to give the feeling of speaking directly to the audience, making an appeal, etc.

Visual Aid Requirements:

A PowerPoint presentation must be included with your speech. Included in the PowerPoint could be: charts, graphs, photos, video clips (individual clips should not exceed 1 minute; total visual aid time should not exceed 3 minutes), interviews. Keep in mind, less is more when it comes to visual aids. Phrases work better than sentences and images work better than words!

You must include a works cited on your last slide.

Question and Answer Session Guidelines:

- 1. What's the best way to prepare for questions?**
Start by anticipating questions that might come up. What questions are likely to be prompted by your presentation?
- 2. Listen to the entire question.** Listen to the entire question BEFORE you begin to answer any questions. Too many people start responding to a question before the entire question is even asked. Not waiting to hear the entire questions can result in you providing a response which had nothing to do with the question. Force yourself to LISTEN to the entire question and make sure you understand the question.
- 3. Pause** and allow yourself time to value the question and listener. REPEAT the question out loud so the entire audience can hear it. It is important that everyone "hear" the question or the answer you provide may not make sense to some of the people. By repeating the question, this will allow you some additional time to evaluate the question and formulate a response.
- 4. Credit the Person** for asking the question. You may say something like, "That was a great question" or, "Glad you asked that question" or even, "I get asked that question by many people". One word of caution. If you credit one person with asking a question, be sure to credit EVERYONE for asking a question. You don't want people to feel their question was not as important.
- 5. Respond to the Question** honestly and the best you can. If you do NOT know an answer to a question, do not try to fake it. Be honest, and tell them you do not know but DO promise to research the answer for them and DO get back to them.
- 6. Bridge** to the next question by asking them a question. "Does that answer your question?", "Is that the kind of information you were looking for?". This is critical.. Once they respond to you, "YES" you now have permission to go on to the next person. This also gives them one more opportunity to say, "No" and allow them to clarify their question more by asking it again.
- 7. Ask people to stand up when they ask a question.** This does two things: (1) It shows you more readily who is asking the question, and (2) It makes it easier for the audience to also hear the question.
- 8. Always repeat the question** - this does three things: (1) it makes sure you understood the question, (2) it gives you a chance to value the question and think of an answer, and (3) it assures the other people in the audience can hear the question since you are facing them.
- 9. Always take time to think "before" you answer all questions.** This allows you time to think, especially for those difficult questions. Do the same for those questions you readily know the answer for. Responding too quickly to those questions you are most comfortable with will only bring attention to those questions you do not.
- 10. If the question is totally irrelevant,** allow it if it serves your interest. But again, keep your answer short. If you would gain nothing by answering, state that you want to keep the discussion focused on the subject.
- 11. Be quick to correct a questioner who wrongly paraphrases something you said** or makes an assumption you don't share. Don't be led into giving yes-or-no answers if you'd rather put your answer in context.

12. What about hostile questions?

These pose a special challenge, and they can come in a variety of forms. Again, not every tough question is a hostile one, but some questions clearly are, and those are easy enough to spot. They may come as a challenge to something you've said, or even as an attack on you. The best way is to head them off. Consider what parts of your presentation could lead to disagreement. Your audience analysis, for example, might indicate certain biases or preconceptions among your listeners. You may be able to address these by embedding what amounts to a rebuttal in your presentation. Don't put the questioner on the defensive and certainly don't criticize the questioner. Get right to the issues. You may find an area of agreement that you can build on in your response. Stick to the facts and to what you know.

13. Are there other techniques that help?

Think of responding to questions as part of your presentation. In reality, you're still presenting. Hold eye focus with your questioner. Listen closely. Don't interrupt. Maintain a neutral stance. Refrain from nodding as if indicating that you hear or understand the question. That can be taken as a sign that you agree with what is stated in the question. During your answer, move your eyes to include others in the room. End your answer with your eyes focused on someone else. If you return your focus to the questioner, that can invite another question from that same person.

14. What's the best kind of answer?

Short. Simple. Concise.

What you will be turning in at various stages:

- Research note cards/note pages (checked weekly in class)
- Working thesis sentence(s) and formal thesis sentence(s)
- Outline-full sentence (both a rough draft and a final outline)
- Works cite page-working and final
- Worldview component-this is an informal paragraph or two detailing how you plan to incorporate a biblical worldview into your speech.
- Interview transcript (written or recorded) of the interview that you conduct including a brief bio on your interviewee (see details in Section IV)
- 9-13 page written speech. You will be writing your speech down in order to perfect your structure and timing. This allows me to help you with issues with content or organization. You may write this paper as you will speak it (i.e. citations should be "spoken" rather than just cited parenthetically – i.e. According to 2014 study by Harvard University...).
- Speech Note Cards or outline
- PowerPoint Presentation



PEP Senior Presentation Evaluation

Speaker _____ Topic _____

5 – Excellent 4 – Good 3 – Average 2 – Fair 1 - Poor

INTRODUCTION – 5% of grade

Gained attention and interest	5 4 3 2 1
Introduced topic clearly	5 4 3 2 1
SOF & Partitio included	5 4 3 2 1

BODY – 20% of grade

Main points clear	5 4 3 2 1
Main points fully supported	5 4 3 2 1
Well organized	5 4 3 2 1
Confirmation AND Refutation	5 4 3 2 1
Transitions effective	5 4 3 2 1
Interview Portion Included	5 4 3 2 1

BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW – 10% of grade

Clear statement of biblical basis	5 4 3 2 1
Explains biblical truth to topic	5 4 3 2 1
Articulates Christian response	5 4 3 2 1

RHETORICAL COMPONENT – 10% of grade

Appeal to ethos (authority)	5 4 3 2 1
Appeal to logos (logic)	5 4 3 2 1
Appeal to pathos (emotion)	5 4 3 2 1
Used 3 rhetorical devices	5 4 3 2 1
Diction appropriate to audience	5 4 3 2 1

DELIVERY – 40% of grade

Speech not rushed, good pace	5 4 3 2 1
Maintained strong eye contact	5 4 3 2 1
Avoided distracting mannerisms	5 4 3 2 1
Articulated words clearly	5 4 3 2 1
Used pauses effectively	5 4 3 2 1
Used vocal variety effectively	5 4 3 2 1
Used physical action effectively	5 4 3 2 1
Strong and clear voice projection	5 4 3 2 1
Formal Dress	5 4 3 2 1

CONCLUSION – 5% of grade

Reinforced thesis	5 4 3 2 1
Summarized topic & reinforced biblical truth	5 4 3 2 1

VISUAL AID – 5% of grade

Increased audience understanding/interest	5 4 3 2 1
Contributed to speaker credibility	5 4 3 2 1
Works Cited Included on last slide	5 4 3 2 1
No spelling or grammatical errors	5 4 3 2 1

OVERALL EVALUATION – 5% of grade

Topic well researched and communicated	5 4 3 2 1
Speech completed within time limit	5 4 3 2 1
Facilitated successful Q&A session	5 4 3 2 1

TOTAL POINTS: _____/175

Comments: _____

Grading Scale

A+ 175-168 A 167-164 A- 163-157 B+ 156-150 B 149-147 B- 146-140 C+ 139-133 C 132-131 C- 130-122