SPEECHES AND PRESENTATIONS

Most of us get nervous about having to present in front of a live audience. When you're in panic mode, you might forget that preparing speeches and presentations isn't altogether that different from writing a paper. Sure, the immediacy of interaction puts more emphasis on the audience, but you have to consider who you're "talking to" in any communication. There's the added element of the unexpected (audience questions and reactions), and you usually have to deal with technology for including visuals. But if you do your research and practice your presentation as many times as you can, there's no reason why you shouldn't have a good time showing off your talents to a supportive crowd.

Preparation:
- Ask yourself key **questions**: What are the parameters of the presentation? What does your rubric emphasize? Who is your audience and what do they already know about your topic? What organizational method works best for your topic?
- **Research** your subject matter thoroughly. Try to make sure you have a strong grasp of your topic, as this will help you field any unexpected questions from your audience.
- Use your own writing expertise! Most of what you know about written assignments (structure, flow, style, etc.) will apply to presentations as well. Pay particular attention to **clarity,** since a live audience will need to be able to follow along without being able to refer to a paper.
- Arrange your ideas in a **logical order** that will help your audience follow your train of thought. Consider beginning with an outline that you use to fill in more details as you work and then complete with relevant visuals and data.
- Choose a **presentation software** that you are comfortable with, whether it's Google Slides, Powerpoint, Prezi, etc. Consider choosing a simple template with high contrast so that your content is clearly visible to your audience.
- If allowed by your instructor, prepare note cards with short phrases to help jog your memory. Keep in mind that you will not be able to read full sentences without losing your connection to the audience.

Slide Design Tips:
- Try to ensure that each slide covers only one idea. Much as you would when writing paragraphs in an essay, each slide should have a clearly labeled purpose and should not try to combine information.
- Your slides are the focus of your presentation, but they will not contain all the relevant information you will share with your audience. Try to keep the amount of text on each slide minimal, and consider using phrases in bullet points rather than full sentences.
- Aim for consistency in design (including color, font, and size) and visual clarity in your choices.

Delivery tips:

- Don't just read off of your slides, as that may impact audience engagement. Instead, use the text of your presentation as signposts for the main points you want to make during each slide.
- Pause for effect or to solicit audience reflection/participation. If you want something to stand out, practice letting it stand out. Pause for emphasis or to give the audience time to process the information or instructions you've just given them. take pauses for effect

What to Practice:

- The timing of your presentation, especially if you have a specific time range to follow. You don't want to be surprised the day of to learn that your speech or presentation took far less time than you imagined!
- Speaking clearly, which includes maintaining a strong volume, keeping a consistent pitch, enunciating your words, and checking that your pronunciations are correct beforehand. This will also help you make sure that you aren't speaking too quickly due to nerves.
- Avoiding filler words (like, um, okay, right, etc.). These are sometimes unavoidable during a live presentation or speech, but practicing beforehand will help you feel more confident and comfortable with your material, thus making these instances less common.

How to Practice:

- Book a study room at the Library. The Library also has two rooms specifically for practicing presentations: 202 and 203.
- Record yourself. This may seem silly, but it's a great way to check your speed, body language, and timing before you present.
- Make an appointment with the WCC! We can help you by listening to your speech and providing feedback as well as giving you suggestions on how to improve the content or design of your slides.

On the day of your speech or presentation:

- Choose an outfit in which you feel comfortable presenting yourself.
- Remember that the nervousness you are still feeling is actually adrenaline that you can convert into positive energy, making your speech livelier and more persuasive.
- Talk TO your audience not AT them. Make them into participants instead of just passive listeners; this will help you feel like you are having a good conversation instead of being put on display.
- Most of all, trust yourself and the work you already invested, and enjoy the ride!