

Coach Series:

ACTIVITY: Public Speaking (Social Issues)

This activity develops public speaking skills. It also introduces the students to talking about social issues in terms of problems, causes, and solutions. Students will identify controversial issues of interest to them and learn to break these issues into problems, causes and solutions. Each member of the class will present a short (3-5 minute) analytical speech on the significance of a problem, the causes of a problem, or a solution to a problem. This activity is a good way to introduce the concepts of the stock issues before introducing the policy debate jargon of solvency, significance, harms and inherency.

Time Allotment

The time allocation varies. On the long side, this activity might take up to eight days. It would include an in- class introductory lesson, a take-home assignment, and a series of in-class presentations and follow-up discussions.

Objectives

By the end of this activity, students will:

- be introduced to breaking a problem down into components in order to argue for a solution.
- practice public presentation techniques.

Materials and Preparation

A list of controversial problems. You could have students generate the issues they want to deal with.

Method

Introductory Session:

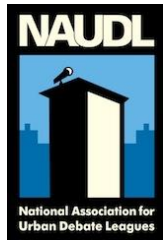
Divide the class into groups of three. Either assign or have students come up with a significant problem that will be the subject of a speaking assignment. Use class time (20 minutes or so) and have the group discuss together the problem that they will work with. Together, the group members should brainstorm and take notes about the following questions:

- Why is this problem significant? What social conditions and situations establish the do we know the problem exists?
- What are some of the causes of the problem?
What are some possible solutions to the problem?

At the end of the brainstorming session, each student should choose to prepare one of the following persuasive speeches. Each group member must select a different speech:

- Argue that problem is both real and significant (Problem Speech)
Identify 1-3 possible causes and argue that they are responsible for the problem (Causes Speech)
- Present a solution to the problem and argue that it will work (Solution Speech)

At the end of the class period, each group should tell you which group member is doing the problem speech, the causes speech, and the solution speech.



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Take-Home Assignment:

Each student will be responsible for preparing independently the speech they have selected. The speeches will be presented in class using only note cards on a specified date.

Set required speech length that seems reasonable for your class's experience level: maybe 3-4 minutes if it is early in the semester, longer if the class is more experienced.

Decide whether these speeches will be analytical or require some research. If you decide to require research, outline clear expectations of how research-intensive the assignment will be. However, because this is a speaking assignment, speeches should be primarily in student's own words with short quotations (not paragraphs of evidence) integrated into the speech.

In-Class Presentations:

Have groups present together in order (problem, causes, solutions). Groups do not have to work together to unify their presentations; the purpose of having all the students in a particular group present on the same day is to illustrate to the class the different ways of looking at a controversial issue. At the end of the three presentations about an issue, have the class ask questions of the speakers and allow members of the class to offer their opinions on the issue.

Follow-up:

This activity segues neatly into a discussion of the stock issues in an affirmative case. Any affirmative case must necessarily present a problem, argue that the problem entails a significant harm, and present a solution that addresses the causes of the problem. Once students understand this process of breaking down a problem, it will be easier for them to understand the importance of addressing the harms, inherency, solvency, and significance in a policy debate.

Alternately, the activity could take just two days. The first day, introduce the activity and allow students to begin writing out their speech. As homework, students would finish writing out the speech word for word. The next day, students would be randomly selected to give their speech. Only a portion of the class would present, although every student would by necessity have to be prepared. Students would also be asked to submit the written version of their speech.