

Tree of Life School

*"Wisdom is a tree of life to those to those who embrace her."
Proverbs 3:18*

Persuasive Writing and Speech Course Outline

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Introduction

In the art of persuasion, the classical trivium comes into its own, as grammar, logic and rhetoric harmonize in the achievement of a winning argument. In this course, you will put to use all the logic and writing skills learned up to now plus some new ideas that will enrich your writing and speaking.

In the past you have learned the basics of writing narrative, expository, descriptive, and persuasive compositions. In this course we will concentrate on the persuasive essay and speech. Certainly all the forms are equally valuable, challenging, and creative, but there will be times when much will depend on your powers of persuasion whereas your skill in description for example may not have so much at stake. Some day you may need to persuade an interviewer to hire you, an admissions officer to accept you to university, a organization to pull together on a project, a constituency to elect you, a community to take a stand against injustice, or a Bible Study group to reject heresy. Would you be able to persuade them?

As you work through this course, a dozen different techniques of classical rhetoric will be explained and practised. You will be asked to read and recognise the techniques being used by other authors, practise them in short paragraph assignments, and eventually put the tools to use in one essay and two short speeches.

How to Work Through The Course

This course has been divided into a **100 day schedule**. You could work on it three days a week for thirty-three weeks to finish by the end of May. One day's work may take anywhere from half an hour to an hour. The textbook is *A Rulebook for Arguments* by Anthony Weston, which is supplemented by tutorials, reading of essays and speeches, and a few videos. The daily schedule will tell you when to study the textbook, a tutorial, or a reading, when to watch a video, and when to work on an assignment.

Assignment Expectations ~ Read this please

We have prepared seven assignments which may be found on-line at the Tree of Life website page for this course. They do not have to be completed in one hour like a test. You may take several days to do each one.

Most of the assignments require you to write a paragraph using the persuasive tools that you have learned. There is a list of topics from which to choose on page 9 of this study guide. The topics are framed as thesis statements. You may support a given statement, or change it to say the opposite and argue that side. For example, if the

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suggested topic is “NATO should bomb Iran into a pile of rubble”, you may alternatively argue “NATO should continue to use peaceful means to prevent Iran from provoking war.”

When you write these paragraphs, treat them as if they were a portion of a larger essay or speech. It will be understood when we mark the assignments that the paragraph does not constitute the entire argument, but that you have theoretically already made an introduction and other paragraphs about your subject. If you stick to the list of suggested topics, we will know generally what you are writing about.

Toward the end of the course, there are one essay and two speeches to submit. In these assignments, you will frame an entire argument using as many of your newly acquired tools as are suitable. Topics are suggested on page 9. They will require research and contemplation. Opposing views will need to be considered and dealt with. The essay should be around 1000 words, and the speeches about the same, as long as they last about 5 minutes. The speeches will need to be spoken aloud to a gathering of your family and friends, recorded, saved as an mp3 and e-mailed as an attachment to Tree of Life for evaluation. Also send the full written version, or if you spoke from an outline, send a copy of the outline.

Typing and Saving

Use Times New Roman or Arial 12 point black font. Save documents as .doc rather than as .docx or .pages to enable people with other computers to read them.

The Title Page

Each essay and speech should have a title page with the title, student name, course name, and date clearly displayed.

Title of Essay
Name of Student Course/Subject Assignment

Footnotes

There are too many situations that need to be footnoted to show here, but below you will find some examples that will show up frequently. Use the “Insert Reference” or “Insert Footnote” feature of your word processor to automatically insert the footnote number as well as place the citation correctly at the bottom of the page.

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Book	¹ Tom Smith, <u>Skating to the Music</u> (Hogtown: Ice Palace Publishers, 2010) 45.
Magazine	² Sally Smith, "Skating Is My Life," <u>Skating Magazine</u> 12 May 2009: 20-24.
Newspaper	Same basic format as that of magazine.
TV or Radio	⁴ "An Interview with Zeke," Skaters' Forum, CBC, Toronto, 12 March 2010.
Personal Interview	⁵ Bill Jones, personal interview, 23 August 2011.
Internet	⁶ Tom Camelspin, "Jumping for Glory," www.skate.com, 10 January, 2010.
Course Outline	⁶ Israel Zangwill, "To Die in Jerusalem," World Literature Course Outline: 138-148.

Citing the Bible

The usual procedure is to place the reference in parentheses immediately following the quotation (either direct or indirect) right in the text of your essay, rather than in a footnote. Example:

It is good to remember the importance of hard work, as we learn from the wise King Solomon, "Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in slave labour." (Proverbs 12:24 NIV) This lesson is easily seen in the life of Joseph who rose from slavery to prime minister of Egypt (Genesis 39-41).

You should note the version you are using the first time you quote, but after that it is not necessary unless you switch versions.

Bibliography

If you have used words or even the ideas of others to help you form your thoughts for your essay, you need to cite all your sources at the end of your essay in the bibliography. The format for the bibliography is different than for footnotes; merely copying and pasting your information will not be adequate.

Here are some common examples to help you.

Book	Smith, Tom. <u>Skating to the Music</u> Hogtown: Ice Palace Publishers, 2010.
Work from Anthology	Clark, Jim. "Working the Judges." <u>Anthology of Skating Poems</u> . Editor John Doe. Boston: Ice Palace Publishers, 2001. 354.
Article from Reference Book	"Figure Skating," <u>Big City Encyclopedia</u> . 1988 ed. Reference on CD-ROM Macrotuff Multimedia Encyclopedia. Computer Software. Hogtown, ON: Macrotuff Software, 2001. CD-ROM.
Magazine	Smith, Sally, "Skating Is My Life," <u>Skating Magazine</u> 12 May 2009: 20-24.

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Newspaper TV or Radio	Same basic format as that of magazine. "An Interview with Zeke," Skaters' Forum, CBC, Toronto, 12 March 2010.
Personal Interview Internet	Bill Jones, personal interview, 23 August 2011. Camelspin, Tom , "Jumping for Glory", www.skate.com, 10 January, 2010.
Oral Presentation	Champ, Ima. Speech. NB Figure Skating Convention, Fredericton, 21 May, 2002.
Course Outline	Zangwill, Israel. "To Die in Jerusalem," World Literature Course Outline: 138-148.
Bible	<i>The Holy Bible English Standard Version.</i> Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2001.

Submitting Assignments for Evaluation

Email:

This is our highly preferred mode of submission, due to low cost and faster return rate of graded assignments.

1. Save each assignment as a pdf, and each completed essay as a Microsoft Word or a Word Perfect document and each speech as an mp3.
2. Name the file with your name, the course name, and the assignment name and/or number. For example, "John Doe_Logic I _ Test 2"
3. Attach each assignment in a **separate email to evaluation@treeoflifeathome.com**
The subject line of your e-mail should be the same as the file name of your assignment. This helps us organise the work and be sure it gets to the proper evaluator. Don't forget: we need to know who you are and what you are sending us!

Regular mail:

Be sure *all* work is clearly labelled with your full name, course name, and assignment.

Address: Tree of Life
443 Weston Road
Weston, NB
E7K 1B1

Calculating Your Final Grade

Your final mark in the course will be based on the following percentages:

7 assignments	55%
1 essay	15%
2 speeches	30%

To help keep track of progress, there is an assignment mark sheet at the end of this course outline.

Evaluative Comments and Grades

At the high school level, students are given numerical grades for each of their tests and assignments. We try to be as objective as we can be, but much of what we do is subjective by nature and with several people evaluating work, some will give higher grades than others. (Example: If you happen to be taking four courses from us, you may have a different evaluator for each course.) We make every effort to be on the same page (so to speak) so that there is not a wide disparity in grades from subject to subject, especially in those areas where much written work is submitted. We also make every effort to communicate to the student what was positive about the assignment and what needs work. If there is a question about a grade or comment on an assignment, we encourage you to communicate this to us. The best way is to send an e-mail or return the assignment with a note attached the next time you send work by mail. This way we can make sure that the evaluator who can best answer your question is notified and can have the opportunity to review the question and assignment and get back to you with what will hopefully be a satisfactory explanation.

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Paragraph Topics

- The use of performance-enhancing drugs in sport should be legalized.
- The monarchy is a useful institution and should be kept.
- Assisted suicide should be legalized.
- Traditional fairy tales such as those by the Brothers Grimm are so violent and frightening and contain so many harmful stereotypes, that they should not be read to children unless they are revised.
- Young people should have a savings account and follow through with a plan to contribute to it regularly.
- A vegan diet is more healthy than an omnivorous diet.
- My town (or neighbourhood) needs a swimming pool / skate park / soccer field / playground / public library.
- Borrowing money from a friend damages the friendship.
- Children should receive a weekly allowance automatically, rather than only as a reward for doing chores or for good behaviour.
- Parents should not allow their children to play with toy guns.
- It is not an invasion of privacy but relevant to the job, that a politician's private life should be open to public scrutiny.
- Reading fiction is not a frivolous waste of time.
- Child beauty pageants are inappropriate and should not be allowed.

Full Essay or Speech Topics

- People should be allowed to keep chickens in their urban backyards.
- Midwives should be accredited by the Ministry of Health and paid by provincial health insurance plans.
- Our small town should not allow Walmart to build a store here.
- Many foods on our grocery store shelves are made with genetically modified ingredients, although this is not indicated on the label. Since consumers have a right to know what they are eating, manufacturers should be required to place a GMO (genetically modified organism) notification on the label.
- Surveillance cameras are often installed in public places, such as parking lots, to help ensure our safety. Nevertheless, these cameras violate our right to privacy and give law enforcement officials too much power.
- Canadians pay taxes based upon how much they earn: the higher their income, the higher the percentage of that income they must pay in taxes. A flat tax, in which everyone pays the same rate regardless of income, would be a better tax system.
- Governments should never negotiate with terrorists for release of hostages.
- Our congregation is now large enough that we should establish a daughter church in a neighbouring community instead of building a bigger building.

Daily Schedule

DAY 1 ~ Read the Introduction to *A Rulebook for Arguments*.

DAY 2 ~ Watch the video “Methods of Persuasion”, found on the “Videos” page for this course at the Tree of Life website.

DAY 3 ~

Ethos, Pathos and Logos

Before you can convince an audience to accept anything you say, they have to accept you as *credible*. Are you trustworthy? Do you know about your topic? Do you have anything in common with your listeners? This ability to connect with people on the basis of your character is called *ethos*. Much of your *ethos* is in place before you open your mouth or type a word, since you may already have a reputation or a position that gives you credibility. That’s no reason not to work on cultivating *ethos* in your life and in your essays and speeches. Good character is priceless for its own sake, as well as for its persuasive power. Whenever you write or speak, be honest, informed, and sympathetic. Show that you are educated by using good grammar and style. Establish something in common with your audience to make them well-disposed toward you. Let your appearance and your work be neat to show that you took care with your presentation. All these endeavors will help to establish your *ethos* and favourably influence your audience.

“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.” (Proverbs 22:1 ESV)

The power to evoke emotion in your audience is called *pathos*. Do not think of this as simply “manipulating” people. We are emotional beings as well as rational, and it is often emotion which moves us to action and change. You can use your words to elicit feelings of compassion, indignation, patriotism, courage, and optimism. Story-telling is your best means of employing *pathos* because stories appeal to our common lot as humans.

“The wise of heart is called discerning, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.” (Proverbs 16:21)

If your message makes logical sense, is based on facts and evidence, and leads to a reasonable conclusion, you are using the persuasive power of *logos*. The greatest part of your persuasive essay or speech will use logic in some manner. Definitely you should go beyond the formal syllogism. There are plenty of tools in the logic toolbox, and we aim to teach you some very useful ones. Your audience will appreciate being treated as sensible, thoughtful people as you use *logos* to persuade them of your position.

“I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say.” (1 Corinthians 1:15)

DAY 4 ~ Read “Short Arguments: Some General Rules” in *A Rulebook for Arguments*.

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DAY 5 ~ Read “Appendix II: Definitions” in *A Rulebook for Arguments*.

DAYS 6 to 8 ~ Do **Assignment 1** and e-mail it to Tree of Life for marking.

DAYS 9 AND 10 ~ Read “Generalizations” in *A Rulebook for Arguments* .

DAYS 11 TO 13 ~ Do **Assignment 2** and e-mail it to Tree of Life for marking.

DAY 14 ~ Read “Arguments by Analogy” in *A Rulebook for Arguments*.

DAYS 15 TO 17 ~ Do **Assignment 3** and e-mail it to Tree of Life for marking.

DAY 18 ~ Read “Sources” in *A Rulebook for Arguments*.

DAY 19 ~

Testimonial

There are more ways to appeal to authority than finding and citing current experts. Since testimonial is an effective persuader, don’t overlook these three additional sources:

1. Ancient testimony: Quote Plato, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, Shakespeare, the Heidelberg Catechism, Abraham Lincoln, anyone from the distant past who has something to say about your topic. Footnote your source!
2. Scripture: Obviously. Be sure to use Scripture with care and do not quote verses out of context or twist the meaning.
3. Proverbs: Either scriptural or oral proverbs are good. Bring God’s wisdom or folk wisdom to bear on your subject. “Two heads are better than one.”

These testimonials are more a source of wisdom than of bare facts and information. Nevertheless, such wisdom can be very persuasive.

Here is an example from the “Prince of Preachers” Charles Spurgeon:

“There is a great deal in the way in which a man walks in his house. It will not do to be a saint abroad and a devil at home. There are some of that kind. They are wonderfully sweet at a prayer meeting, but they are dreadfully sour to their wives and children. This will never do! Every genuine believer should say, and mean it, ‘I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.’ [Psalm 101] It is in the home that we get the truest proof of godliness. ‘What sort of a man is he?’ said one to George Whitefield, and Whitefield answered, ‘I cannot say, for I never lived with him.’ That is the way to test a man—to live with him.” 1894, Sermon #2362 ¹

¹ <http://www.spurgeongems.org/quotes1.pdf>

