Speaking is unique in political science because many of the people who must speak are public servants or they may work for a public servant. Our public servants are often elected by the people in order to bring the citizenry pertinent information about their government. One reason this is unique is because these people should be supplying the public with the most accurate information possible so that voters and citizens can make informed opinions about public policies. Many of our students have displayed an interest in becoming a public servant. Not only is it important for them to provide their "clients" with accurate information, but they must also be able to clearly articulate that information to the public. Bills, resolutions, and other acts of Congress are not easily deciphered by even the most educated people. Students must be able to accurately interpret what those bills mean and then relay that information to the public. Even if the student was not elected to public office, many of them may get internships or staff positions in a legislator’s office where many of the same skills will be used. Currently, there is an important health care debate being discussed. Many citizens are calling their congressmen to try and gather information on this historic piece of legislation. Members of Congress and their staffers must be able to speak accurately about these and other policies.

Politicians are likely to use certain “talking points” to get their message across. I would define these talking points as simple, easy to follow points that are repeated over and over. Politicians may change the anecdotes that they use for different audiences, but their messages remain basically the same. In other words, a politician who wants to promote health care reform may include a different personal story or account for each audience. For an audience of senior citizens he will tell a simple story of an elderly friend that couldn’t get insurance or care so that particular audience can relate while still discussing the basic talking points that support health care reform. On the other hand, a speech to a group of union-workers will include a story about a worker in the auto industry whose family is not covered.

The basics of speaking are, for the most part, consistent across disciplines. Knowing the expectations of a discipline is an important part of adapting to your audience, however. The papers in the “Speaking, in my opinion...” series do not represent an official statement from the department. They do, however, give you an introduction to different faculty opinions on effective speaking.
Another occupation that many of our students have thought of pursuing is that of an attorney. This occupation requires similar speaking skills to the politician. That is the attorney must be able to decipher difficult legislation or codes into a clear argument for a jury or their client.

Finally, many of our students may decide to become political activists working for non-profit agencies or advocating for some cause. These students, too, may have to speak truths to the public at some time. However, there may be a bit more passion in speaking involved with these careers. Many who go to work for a non-profit are brought there by their zeal for the cause. While it is important for them to also provide accurate information, they may also invoke emotion and empathetic feelings to sway others to see their point of view. This is not to say that politicians and attorneys do not also try to tug at people’s heart strings or emotions. However, the difference is that few, except the boss, are listening to every word that is spoken by the activist whereas everyone is listening and scrutinizing every word spoken by the attorney and the politician.