The women and men who study political science are often not only interested in the process and workings of our political system, but are also interested in the specific policy debates that are the substance of the political world.

**Types of Political Science Speaking:**

**Political Science Students:** Different faculty may utilize different types of speaking in their courses.

- **Class Discussions:** Many political science faculty encourage students to discuss some of the controversial issues of the political world. These are informal, though probably guided by the faculty member.
- **Debates:** Some faculty will organize formal debates on current policy questions.
- **Mock Trials/Moot Courts:** These are simulations that require students to play the roles of litigant, litigator, prosecutor, witness, judge or even juror.
- **Research Presentations:** These are usually 10-15 minutes long and are a report of a research project undertaken either individually or in groups.

**Academic political scientists:** The primary occasions for public speaking for academics would be research presentations, speeches to community groups, and radio and television interviews.

- **Research Presentations:** Political scientists engaging in research projects will report at annual meetings for state, regional and national political science associations. These are usually 10-15 minute presentations made with a panel of other researchers examining similar topics, often involving PowerPoint.
- **Speeches to Community Groups:** Often community groups such as the local political parties, business groups such as the Jaycees, Knights of Columbus, League of Women Voters, or any other groups ask political scientists to speak to their group about any variety of topics. These speeches can either be informative or persuasive, depending on the desires of the group.
- **Radio/television Interviews:** Political scientists are often called on around election time, when major court decisions are decided and when major legislation is passed.

**Politicians:** Politicians must be able to deliver several types of public speeches, including campaign speeches, inspirational/patriotic speeches, and speeches in support of or opposition to specific legislation.

- **Campaign speeches:** These speeches are designed to convince people to vote for the politicians and tend to be very general in terms of policy.
- **Inspirational speeches:** These speeches celebrate special occasions.
- **Speeches regarding legislation:** Politicians will both inform their audience about the legislation and try to persuade the audience of the benefits or costs of supporting the legislation.

**Public Servants:** For political scientist who work for federal, state and local governments, speaking would probably involve speaking to other governmental actors, probably in Congressional and legislative hearings, regarding public policy analysis/recommendations and program evaluations.

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.

Program Evaluations: Government agencies and departments are expected to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of their programs and report to the executive and legislative branches. These may or may not be reported in person in legislative hearings or in executive meetings.

Lawyers: Many political science majors also go on to law school and enter the legal profession.

Litigation: These women and men speak in the courtroom in the context of a case.

Mediation: Most disputes today do not go to trial, but are resolved through mediation engaged in by the parties to the dispute and their lawyers.

Political science speakers must possess knowledge of their subject. They must be able to provide current, relevant and accurate information. They must also make a strong argument, that is, one in which they provide empirical or normative evidence for their position and address and rebut counterarguments. Speakers must also be able to handle long, difficult and sometimes confusing questions.

Additionally, the wide variety of speaking experiences available to political science students and practitioners means that they must be able to adapt their speeches to the specific forum and different audiences. The forms/forums may be formal or informal. In a formal setting, they need to be aware of the format/process of the particular setting. For example, in a debate, there may be time limits involved in their answers to questions and their rebuttals. Testimony at hearings usually involves reading a prepared opening statement followed by questioning from the committee members. A research presentation should not be read. TV and radio interviews may be formal or informal, but usually involve no prepared statements and the speaker must be able to answer the questions quickly and concisely.

Audience adaptation is also important. Speaking to a community group is very different from speaking to a judge. A community group may ask you to speak simply to inform or they might ask you to argue in support of or opposition to a specific plan or policy. Speakers should be sure to clarify what the group wants. In terms of judges, there will be differences between trial and appellate judges. Trial judges expect the lawyer to build a case or defense using evidence and testimony. Occasionally at the trial level, lawyers will have to make a legal argument such as arguing for the exclusion of evidence or testimony or objecting to the other sides evidence or questioning. An appellate judge, however, is only expecting a legal argument supported by precedent.

In sum, because political science students and practitioners have such a wide variety of speaking opportunities available to them, they must be flexible and prepared.