UNST 234: HEALTHY PEOPLE/HEALTHY PLACES
AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION SPEECH ASSIGNMENT:
SHOULD OBESITY BE CLASSIFIED AS A DISEASE?

Throughout this module, we’ve been considering the question: Should obesity be classified as a disease? There are pros and cons to both sides of this argument. In this assignment, you will imagine that you are a delegate attending the American Medical Association conference where you are going to vote on whether or not to consider classifying obesity as a disease. You will write a short speech to deliver on the floor of the AMA meeting to try and convince your fellow delegates to vote for or against classifying obesity as a disease.

The purpose of your speech is to try to persuade other delegates to vote with your position, therefore, you need to develop a strong argument about why obesity should or should not be considered a disease. You will need to support your ideas with evidence from our course materials and outside sources.

You will have no more than 3 minutes to deliver your speech, so it needs to be clear, concise and convincing. Unfortunately, in this class, we will not have an opportunity to actually deliver your speech, so you will instead turn-in a written transcript. A three minute speech comes out to approximately 725 words, or a page and a half of text.

Speeches are organized like any persuasive paper with an introduction, body and conclusion. Like essays, a speech should be organized in a logical fashion that clearly lays out your argument to your audience. As with essays, you’ll need to back-up your ideas with supportive evidence.

Unlike a written persuasive essay, a speech needs to appeal to your audience’s ear as well as their intellect. While written essay often rely on long, complex sentences, speeches tend to use shorter sentence constructions. Things that are off-limits in a traditional essay may be perfectly fine to use in a speech. Rhetorical questions and fragments are fine in a speech, not appropriate to use in an academic paper.

Speechwriters also use a variety of techniques to appeal to their listeners. Cadence (timing) is particularly important in speechwriting. A good speaker uses repetition of words or phrases to make a point. They may also use poetic devices like alliteration and rhythm to draw in their audience. The best way to figure out if you speech has auditory appeal is to read it out loud.

Finally, speakers have audiences. You must always keep your audience in mind whenever you are writing, but it is particularly important to pay attention to your audience when writing a speech. In this case, your audience is your fellow delegates at the American Medical Association. You are medical professionals who are members of a highly influential organization. The decisions you are about to make will have far-reaching effects on our nation’s health. You can make certain assumptions about what your audience knows (For example, they are most likely aware of the links between obesity and diabetes), as well as consider what is important to them. Every audience also has a particular culture and conventions. An angry stump speech might go over well at a political rally, but probably would turn-off a lot of AMA delegates.
Your speech must:

- Clearly state what your position is—Should obesity be classified as a disease?
- Provide strong arguments with supportive evidence to back-up your ideas
- Read like it is a speech, not an essay
- Demonstrate an awareness of your audience
- Be approximately 725 words (about a page and a half)—it’s okay to go over or under a little bit, but please don’t turn in five pages
- Have proper citations for any facts, ideas or quotes that are not your own. Use MLA format.

If you’d like, you can (but are not required to)…

- Record your speech and turn-in your spoken version to the Dropbox along with the written one.

For more information about…

- Your imaginary audience (the AMA): http://www.ama-assn.org/ama
- How and when to cite information: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/02/
- How to use MLA citation format: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/
- How to upload an audio file to the Dropbox: Call (503) 725-HELP