



Your First Speech

Helpful Hints to Receive a Waiver for PT410 Oral Communication

WESTMINSTER SEMINARY CALIFORNIA



As an incoming MDiv student you must enroll in PT410 Oral Communication unless a waiver is granted. You obtain a waiver by delivering a short devotional speech (during New Student Orientation) that demonstrates adequate oral communication skills (in preparation, structure, and delivery). See “Public Speaking Requirement” in the current Academic Catalogue for more details. Below are some tips to help you prepare for that speech.

GUIDELINES

The speech will be evaluated according to the following guidelines:

1. The speech will be from a brief passage of Scripture—ordinarily a few verses.
2. The speech will be 3–5 minutes in length, including the reading of the text. (Please be aware that we will stop you at 5 minutes.)
3. The speech should have an interesting introduction, clearly organized main points, and a compelling conclusion—all tied together by thoughtful transitions.
4. The content should be relevant and interesting to the speaker’s audience of choice. If you have a particular audience in mind, you may state that prior to your speech.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

It is important to have one central idea or theme from which everything else flows. Since this speech is brief, your main ideas need to be focused and clear. Use vivid language and relevant illustrations. Be sure to answer the “so what” question and show why your observations are important. Do not try to cover too much material. That may produce points that are too general or superficial, and it may cause you to go over the time limit.

Be sure to practice your speech for delivery. We recommend using a brief outline to guide your train of thought. We advise against using a manuscript, so that you are not tempted to read it like an essay. Such speeches are not enjoyable to hear. On the other hand, we warn against not preparing adequately or at all. Such speeches are disorganized in form and short on content. Practice your outline a sufficient number of times so that you know its content. This will give you the confidence you need. It is also important to practice your speech out loud so that you will have an accurate sense of its length. Remember that people tend to talk faster when they’re nervous.

Last of all, please know that we are not looking for perfection. We want you to present yourself in the way that God has gifted you. We hope to gain a glimpse of that. So do not be afraid to let a little (not too much!) of your personality come through. We always enjoy this exercise, and you may be surprised by how much you enjoy it as well.