**Audience Analysis Reading Material 1 Audience & Topic Selection**

**Audience Expectations**

Your first goal is to meet audience expectations. Probably the most important of these is their time expectation for your speech. If you fall significantly short of that time, they will feel shortchanged. If you go significantly beyond that time, they will feel murderous. Make sure that you don’t violate the audience’s time expectation.

The second audience expectation to worry about is their tone expectation. Do they anticipate a funny speech? A deathly serious speech? Something in between? Once again, deviating significantly from their expectations will spell disaster for your speech.

**Audience Needs**

Once you know what your audience expects from you, you need to learn some more about them in order to ***customize the speech to their needs****.*Of course, the standard demographic information comes in to play here, characteristics like: age, education, gender, race, occupation, economic status, and religion. These characteristics are important to know and understand because they can greatly impact a person’s experience and perspective. You need to ***approach your speech with the audience’s experience and perspective in mind.***

At this point you also need to gather some additional information about your audience. You need to find out:

**How much do they know about your topic?** Will you be able to discuss advanced or technical information, or do you have to start with the basics? This can be tricky, you will lose the audience’s interest if you tell them what they already know or speak “over their heads”.

**What are the audience member’s attitudes and motivations?** Are they attending the speech by choice? If not, some extra motivation may be required. Are they against what you’re speaking about, neutral towards it, or for it? You must know all of this before you begin crafting your speech.

**3. Analyzing Audience for Selecting a Speech Topic**

In any speech situation it’s important to analyze your audience, naturally. This is never more important, though, than it is in a persuasive speaking situation.

There are a couple questions that you need to ask yourself after you’ve selected a persuasive speech topic:

***1. Does my audience agree or disagree with the position which I am advocating?***

If they already tend to agree with you, you’ve got things a little bit easier, of course. The only problem here might be that your topic and position may not be controversial or novel enough to hold the audience’s interest. It might be a fine topic, though, and it will be your goal to convince your audience that the position which they support is the correct position. If your audience disagrees with your perspective, you’ve probably got a little more work to do.

***2. How much does my audience care about my topic and how much thought are they willing to put into my speech?***

If the audience doesn’t really care a whole lot about your topic, it’s a double-edged sword. On one hand (or edge), they are going to be easier to persuade. On the other hand, you may not have picked a good topic if it isn’t an important issue to your audience.

If the audience really cares a lot about your topic, you’re not going to be able to win them over with flimsy persuasive tactics and logical fallacies. They are going to need to hear solid arguments and evidence in support of your perspective to be persuaded.