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Reflection: Goals for the Course

 I am surprised that I achieved nearly half of the goals I set for myself, mostly because I wasn’t constantly checking them off my list.

Unfortunately, I didn’t learn a new technique to combat stage fright - I was only comfortable giving speeches because I got used to the audience. My AP English teacher used to tell me that nobody will care about my nerve-induced mistakes after I speak, and if they do then that just means they have nothing better to pay attention to. I think that’s a sad way to view people, but it helps!

Based on my delivery on our last impromptu speech, I’d say I improved on memorizing concepts over content. I’ve realized that memorizing content is much more difficult because one mistake can throw me off.

I have definitely used words that I’m unfamiliar with in a couple of my speeches, helping me to expand my vocabulary.

I don’t feel like I learned any new ways to build rapport with my audience, but I think I’ve enhanced the skills I already know such as storytelling. I still need to improve on using concise statements rather than lengthy explanations - I still need to edit my sentences time and time again to shorten them.

So far, I’ve only made it through my “This I Believe” speech without saying “um” or taking long pauses unless they were necessary for dramatic effect. This was largely due to the fact that I had to finish within the given time limit and was reading off of my manuscript. I still say “um” when I lose my train of thought during impromptu or memorized speeches or presentations.

However, I have successfully delivered presentations in other classes thanks to the techniques I learned from this class. I just gave one presentation each for my Environmental Conservation class and Marine Biology. For both presentations, I used graphics, mostly photos and data charts, to convey my message. For example, I used one chart that looked all scrambled and crazy - looking at it stressed me out. I used this to emphasize that this is how everyone should feel about coral bleaching, why we should work to prevent it from happening.

I cannot say that I actively listened to every single one of my peers’ speeches - there were times I was too distracted by my nerves. However, I have learned picked up on most of their views and values. One perspective that surprised me and spoke to me was how annoying and pointless election billboards are. I agree with Amon that they would be more effective and helpful to new voters if the billboards gave us more information than what party the candidate is a part of and their slogan.

Overall, I think this class has improved my speaking and presenting skills. I could still improve on some things, such as ‘saying more with less’. I will try to accomplish my goal of raising awareness with my community issues speech. The typhoon definitely took me out of my comfort zone for a while and my skills were a little ‘rusty’ when we resumed classes. Still, this course has proven effective and Dr. Bunts’s techniques have been fun and helpful. I recommend her course to other students who learn best with constant practice.