Topic Selection Paper Assignment Description

Description
Since the persuasive and advocacy speeches ask you to do something specific with your topic, a bad speech topic can significantly hurt your performance in this course. As such, this assignment is designed to help you select a topic that interests you, fulfills the requirements for a public forum topic, works for both the persuasive and advocacy speeches, and has generated enough published research to support your claims. In this essay, you will select TWO potential speech topics. For each potential topic, you must address each of the sections below.

Section 1: Explain how this topic operates in the public forum.
In this section, you should explain how it satisfies each of the four criteria for a public forum topic as discussed in class and in your textbook on p. 442.

Section 2: Demonstrate that sufficient research exists to support a good speech.
For this section, you must provide a bibliography with 2 recent credible sources on each topic, and for each source, provide a brief summary (1-2 sentences) of what it says about your proposed topic. These sources must be cited appropriately. See the library website for help on proper citation (http://www.lib.washington.edu/research/wri.html).

Section 3: Write an appropriate draft thesis statement for persuasive speech in this class on this topic.
The thesis statement should not be too narrow or too broad, and it should be worded so that upon hearing it (but not yet hearing your speech), an opposition audience would exist in the class. I assume that your argument will change as you conduct more research and revise the speech, but develop a working thesis that gives the reader a sense of what you might argue.

Section 4: Identify potential opposition arguments.
For this section you must identify and briefly describe two of the most important and challenging arguments that you think will be persuasive to your target audience. Remember, you are trying to persuade that section of your audience that disagrees with you, but can be moved. You will get a much better sense for what these arguments are as you conduct more research, but get down what some of the existing reasonable arguments are against your position.

Evaluation
A topic paper will receive a √ if:
1. the paper completes examines two different public forum topics
2. the paper completes all four sections as listed above for each topic
3. the sources are recent and credible (avoid questionable internet sources. For example, Wikipedia, a great research tool, cannot be a source for your speech)
4. the paper explains the content of the source clearly
5. the paper identifies reasonable arguments that might be persuasive to their target audience and not straw arguments

A topic paper will receive a - if:
1. the paper only examines one topic
2. one or all of the sections do not satisfy the requirements
3. a couple of sources are questionable
4. the description of the sources is overly vague
5. the paper is turned in after the due date
Sample Topic Selection Paper

Name: Jane Doe
Section: AA
TA: ML Veden

Topic 1: Same-Sex Marriage

Section 1: The Public Forum
Affects people collectively: This issue affects us as a collective—the legal recognition of same-sex marriage by the state would impact all those who seek such unions as well as those who oppose them in the sense that they see such unions as a violation of the state’s moral obligations.

Cooperative action is necessary: Cooperative action can change the status quo in either way, either insuring that the state recognize same-sex marriages or further protecting the state against them as with the Defense of Marriage Act.

A Matter of Controversy: Same-sex marriage is a matter of public policy with some opposing and some supporting it; there can be no uncontested scientific proof demonstrating that only one argument should logically prevail.

Decision must be made: In the U.S., it has take on new importance in light of recent efforts to establish a Constitutional definition of marriage. Also, the recent move on the part of Canada to legalize same-sex marriages has raised the issue again. Legislation in California calling for marriage equity was halted only by a gubernatorial veto. At the state, regional, and national level, this is an issue that is in the process of being debated and decided.

Section 2: Annotated Bibliography


Section 3: Thesis
The state of Washington should recognize same-sex marriages.

Section 4: Arguments potentially persuasive to my target audience
Legally recognizing same-sex marriage is unnecessary. Same sex couples are denied a few economic privileges, but these are minor. Same sex couples have all the same basic rights as heterosexual couples and thus do not really need to title of marriage.

Legally recognizing same-sex marriage is too divisive right now. So many people in the population still have a problem with homosexuality that recognizing same sex marriages would divide the community. While same sex marriages may be a good idea, we, as a country and as a state, need to wait until it is more broadly accepted. It simply isn’t worth it to extend all marriage rights to a small minority of the population right now; the costs outweigh the benefits.

Note: This is the write up for one topic. You must do this twice for your Topic Selection Paper.