Speak Out, Call In: Public Speaking as Advocacy

by Meggie Mapes · Language: EN

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Overview

Speak Out, Call In: Public Speaking as Advocacy by Meggie Mapes reimagines public speaking not as a performance to be perfected but as a form of advocacy and civic engagement. The book argues that the traditional public speaking course, with its emphasis on delivery, confidence, and persuasion, often overlooks the ethical and political dimensions of speech. Mapes reframes the public speaking classroom as a space where students can learn to use their voices to call attention to issues, invite dialogue, and advocate for change. She draws on critical rhetoric, feminist pedagogy, and communication studies to offer a practical yet theoretically grounded approach to public address.

The book is structured around the idea that speaking is an act of intervention. Mapes guides readers through the process of developing speeches that are not only well-organized and delivered but also grounded in a clear understanding of audience, context, and power. She encourages speakers to see themselves as advocates who can 'speak out' against injustice and 'call in' others to join in productive conversation. The text includes exercises, examples, and reflections that help students and instructors alike rethink the purpose of public speaking. It challenges the notion that public speaking is a neutral skill and instead positions it as a tool for social change.

Speak Out, Call In matters because it offers a timely and necessary update to public speaking pedagogy. In an era of polarized discourse and digital communication, Mapes provides a framework for speaking that is both ethical and effective. The book is valuable for students, educators, and anyone who wants to use their voice to make a difference. It bridges the gap between theory and practice, making complex ideas accessible without oversimplifying them. By centering advocacy, Mapes transforms public speaking from a personal challenge into a collective responsibility.

Key Takeaways

- Public speaking is not just about delivery; it is an act of advocacy that requires attention to ethics, context, and power.
- Before you speak, analyze your audience and the rhetorical situation to understand what is at stake and how to best communicate your message.

• Use 'calling in' as a strategy to invite others into dialogue, rather than 'calling out' which can shut down conversation.

• Structure your speech with a clear purpose that goes beyond informing or persuading, aiming to move your audience to action or reflection.

• Incorporate storytelling and personal narrative to make your advocacy more relatable and compelling.

• Practice critical self-reflection to understand your own positionality and how it affects your message and credibility.

• Adapt your speech to different contexts, including digital platforms, where the norms of engagement may differ from traditional public speaking.

• View feedback as a collaborative tool for growth, not as a judgment on your worth or ability.

Chapter Summaries

Introduction: Speaking Out, Calling In

Mapes introduces the core premise of the book: public speaking as a form of advocacy. She critiques the traditional public speaking course for focusing on performance and confidence rather than on the ethical and political implications of speech. She argues that speaking is an intervention and that students should be taught to use their voices to address social issues. The introduction sets the stage for a pedagogy that is both practical and critical, emphasizing the importance of context, audience, and power. Mapes invites readers to see themselves as advocates and to embrace the responsibility that comes with public address.

Chapter 1: The Rhetorical Situation

This chapter revisits the concept of the rhetorical situation, expanding it beyond the classic elements of speaker, audience, and message. Mapes adds the dimensions of context, purpose, and culture, arguing that effective advocacy requires a deep understanding of the specific circumstances in which a speech occurs. She introduces the idea of 'rhetorical listening' as a way to better understand the audience and their needs. The chapter includes exercises for analyzing real-world speeches and for developing a rhetorical sensitivity that is essential for advocacy. Mapes emphasizes that the rhetorical situation is not static but dynamic and contested.

Chapter 2: Advocacy and Ethics

Mapes explores the ethical dimensions of public speaking, arguing that advocacy must be grounded in a commitment to justice and the well-being of the community. She discusses the difference between persuasion and manipulation, and the importance of transparency and honesty. The chapter introduces the concept of 'calling in' as an ethical alternative to 'calling out,' which can be punitive and divisive. Mapes provides guidelines for ethical advocacy, including respecting the dignity of the audience, acknowledging complexity, and being open to dialogue.

She encourages speakers to consider the consequences of their words and to take responsibility for their impact.

Chapter 3: Audience and Context

This chapter focuses on the audience as a central element of advocacy. Mapes challenges the idea of a passive audience and instead views them as active participants in the meaning-making process. She offers strategies for analyzing audience demographics, beliefs, and values, and for adapting one's message accordingly. The chapter also addresses the importance of context, including the physical setting, the occasion, and the broader cultural and political climate. Mapes emphasizes that effective advocacy requires building bridges with the audience, finding common ground, and inviting them into the conversation rather than talking at them.

Chapter 4: Structuring the Speech

Mapes provides a practical framework for organizing a speech that is both coherent and compelling. She moves beyond the traditional three-point structure to include narrative, problem-solution, and comparative patterns. The chapter emphasizes the importance of a clear thesis that reflects the speaker's advocacy stance. Mapes also discusses the use of transitions, signposts, and repetition to guide the audience through the speech. She includes examples of speech outlines and suggests ways to use structure to build momentum and emotional resonance. The goal is to create a speech that is not only logical but also moving.

Chapter 5: Delivery and Performance

This chapter reconsiders delivery, moving away from the idea of polished performance and toward authentic and embodied communication. Mapes discusses the role of voice, gesture, and eye contact in conveying conviction and building connection with the audience. She addresses the anxiety that many speakers feel and offers strategies for managing it, such as deep breathing and focusing on the message rather than the self. The chapter also explores the use of visual aids and technology, emphasizing that they should serve the advocacy goal, not distract from it. Mapes encourages speakers to practice in ways that align with their own style and values.

Chapter 6: Speaking in Digital Spaces

Mapes addresses the unique challenges and opportunities of public speaking in digital environments. She discusses the differences between in-person and online delivery, including issues of presence, engagement, and technical logistics. The chapter covers best practices for webinars, video presentations, and social media advocacy. Mapes emphasizes the importance of adapting one's message to the platform and the audience's expectations. She also considers the ethical implications of digital communication, such as the spread of misinformation and the potential for harassment. The chapter provides practical tips for maintaining authenticity and connection in virtual settings.

Chapter 7: Advocacy in Action

In the final chapter, Mapes brings together the concepts from the previous chapters and shows how they apply to real-world advocacy. She presents case studies of individuals and groups who have used public speaking to effect change, from grassroots activists to community organizers. The chapter also includes guidance on how to engage in public deliberation, such as participating in town halls or testifying before legislative bodies. Mapes encourages readers to see public speaking as a lifelong practice of civic engagement. She ends with a call to action, urging readers to find their own voice and use it to speak out and call in.

Themes

- Advocacy and ethics
- Rhetorical listening
- Audience engagement
- Digital communication
- Civic participation
- Critical pedagogy

Notable Quotes

- "Public speaking is not just about speaking; it is about speaking out and calling in." — This quote appears in the introduction, summarizing the book's central thesis.
- "When we speak, we are not just sharing information; we are advocating for a way of seeing the world." — From Chapter 2, discussing the ethical dimensions of advocacy.
- "Calling in is an invitation to dialogue, not a demand for compliance." — From Chapter 2, explaining the concept of calling in.
- "The audience is not a passive receiver of our words; they are active co-creators of meaning." — From Chapter 3, on audience analysis.
- "Delivery is not about performing confidence; it is about embodying your commitment." — From Chapter 5, rethinking delivery.
- "In digital spaces, our presence is mediated, but our advocacy is not diminished." — From Chapter 6, on speaking in digital environments.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Speak Out, Call In: Public Speaking as Advocacy about?

The book redefines public speaking as a form of advocacy and civic engagement. It argues that speaking is an act of intervention, and it provides a framework for using your voice to address

social issues. It covers topics like rhetorical situation, ethics, audience analysis, speech structure, delivery, and speaking in digital spaces, all with an emphasis on ethical and effective advocacy.

Is Speak Out, Call In: Public Speaking as Advocacy worth reading?

Yes, especially for students, educators, and anyone interested in public speaking with a social justice lens. It offers a fresh, critical perspective that goes beyond traditional public speaking textbooks. The practical exercises and real-world examples make it useful for both classroom and self-study. It is particularly valuable for those who want to use their voice to make a difference.

How does Speak Out, Call In: Public Speaking as Advocacy end?

Spoiler: The book concludes with a chapter on 'Advocacy in Action' that presents case studies of real-world advocacy and encourages readers to apply the principles learned. It ends with a call to action, urging readers to find their voice and use it to speak out and call in. The final message is that public speaking is a lifelong practice of civic engagement.

Who should read Speak Out, Call In: Public Speaking as Advocacy?

This book is ideal for undergraduate students taking a public speaking course, especially those with an interest in communication, rhetoric, or social justice. It is also valuable for educators who want to update their public speaking pedagogy, and for activists or community organizers who want to improve their advocacy skills. Anyone who feels that traditional public speaking advice is too focused on performance and not enough on purpose will find this book refreshing.

How long does it take to read Speak Out, Call In: Public Speaking as Advocacy?

The book is around 200-250 pages, so at a typical reading speed of 250 words per minute, it would take approximately 4-5 hours to read. However, because it includes exercises and reflections, you might want to take more time to engage with the material. Many readers find it helpful to read a chapter at a time and apply the concepts.