



## SPEAKING UP IN CLASS

### Outside of Class:

Some of the most effective things that you can do to improve your participation in class can be done outside of class.

#### Oral preparations:

- Form a study group. It will provide opportunities to exchange perspectives, discover confusions or flaws in your thinking, and develop your abilities to express your own ideas. This practice will make you less nervous when you speak in class.
- Go to professors' office hours.
  - You will become comfortable speaking in front of the professor in a situation where you can get individual feedback and your participation is not being graded.
  - This allows you to let professors know about your speaking concerns so they can make suggestions about how to increase your class participation.
- Talk to yourself about class material.
  - Practice articulating comments.
  - Get used to the sound of your own voice.

#### Written preparations:

- Take notes and write down questions while you read. This may help you overcome the fear of a wrong answer. (ASCs or Reading Tutors can teach you the Cornell note taking method, an excellent way to take brief notes that you can refer to easily during class.)
  - Bring your book to class so that you can refer to it and your notes in it.
  - Write out comments or questions that you could use to participate in or start a discussion.

Set reasonable goals and meet them. Decide that you will speak in class once during the first week. Then increase gradually and with the help of your professor.

## **In Class:**

### **Forms of Participation:**

- Comments:
  - Answer a question posed by the professor or a student. Often if you comment early in the class period you will feel less pressured to speak up towards the end.
  - Add to a statement made by another student, give an example or develop an idea.
  - If the class is engaged in a discussion of personal opinion or sharing reactions, contribute your point of view. You can't be wrong
  - You might use phrases like "I took that to mean..." or "my understanding of what you said is..." This may help to avoid an argumentative tone, as opposed to debate.
- Questions: We often think of class participation as commenting on ideas, or offering new perspectives, but asking questions can be an excellent way to participate. They count as class participation!
  - Ask for clarification or explanation.
  - Ask a follow-up question based on a student's question or a previous lecture.
  - In a math/science class, answer a problem or write an answer on the board.

### **Be assertive:**

- Don't take too much time to plan out your thoughts. Push yourself to become comfortable "jumping into" discussions.
- Start discussions yourself. This way you choose a topic that you are prepared to discuss.

### **Presentation:**

- Look and sound confident, sincere, and enthusiastic.
- Project your voice.
- Don't worry if you get tangled up, just keep going.
- Find a supportive audience. Make eye contact with people you know support you, but don't let the lack of one deter you from speaking again.