

LESSON PLAN: Focus on The Earth Charter in a Speech Class (SPC 1026)

Rationale: Using The Earth Charter (United Nations) as a focus, students will learn to incorporate their understanding of this prescient document into a speech presentation wherein they will Speak Their Truth using concise and essential language and demonstrate their appreciation for the interdependency between the human and the natural world. The purpose of this assignment would be to connect the human voice, with nature, and the tension between bio-centric and anthro-centered awareness. Terry Tempest Williams writes in her forward to *A Voice For Earth—American Writers Respond to the Earth Charter*: “We are at our highest evolutionary state of being when we exercise respect and regard toward another.” The Earth Charter encourages the reader to extend our caring beyond our species. It is the hope of this assignment that students will extend their voices, and their caring, on behalf of other species—thus extending the reach and range of their communication skills.

Lesson Plan: 1) Ask students to read The Earth Charter. 2) Discuss with students the language of the charter, the themes, the principles, and so on, and find out what parts of the UN Charter on Earth speak to them. 3) Ask students to compose a speech in which they select a Principle, and then craft a Seven Line Speech that elucidates the text, and allows them to Speak Their Truth, thus extending their voices on behalf of others. 4) Finally, after their speech, students will take time for feedback and commentary from the class audience and the professor. If these speeches turn out to be very effective, we may decide to record these in the Speech Lab, creating a Class CD of their Earth Charter Speeches.

Assessment: I am interested in several areas of student development. 1) I want to assess their understanding and appreciation for this precious document, The Earth Charter. 2) I want to experiment with a different kind of speech presentation for the students—one which is limited to Seven Lines, Seven Sentences, Phrases, or Words—thus emphasizing conciseness, pauses, tone, significance and presence. 3) So, in addition to the normal criteria of content, delivery, and overall effect (plus ethos, logos, and pathos), I would add originality, creativity, and profundity. 4) I would classify this speech as Other Kind—more as a Special Events Speech or a Ceremonial Speech—perhaps with an emphasis on mood and a kind of poetic precision because of the economy of length. 5) Finally, I would ask students, both speakers and audience, to consider how much impact and Presence, was communicated by the Speaker, and assess the depth of communication by their non-verbal effectiveness as well as verbal. 6) In conclusion, this assignment could add to students’ General Education Outcomes, especially the ones that include natural systems, ethics, and communication.