

Sp Cm 212 Fundamentals of Public Speaking  
Preparation Outline  
Lecture 9F  
The Ethics of Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns

The 3 appeals—logos, ethos, and pathos—are not just for public speeches. They are basic methods of persuasion that exist all around us. For example: in junk mail. I invited you to consider that the purpose of your persuasive speech is not so much to instantly convert people, as to induce them to think, and to give them something to think about. The purpose of junk mail may be similar: whatever is on the outside of the envelope is intended primarily just to get you to open it up. Consider these samples:

### EXERCISE

Today we are going to continue the discussion of the 3 appeals by looking at them in presidential campaigns and asking which is the most ethically appropriate. We'll continue the discussion of speech ethics on the campaign trail with another issue. But first, let's discuss the upcoming test.

### REVIEW

- I. Campaign ads use the same appeals of logos, ethos, and pathos as your speeches will.  
A. Pathos and Ethos appeals are quite common in tv ads for candidates.

### EXAMPLES

- B. But are those appeals ethical? Why or why not?  
C. And what could logos look like in a 30 second "spot" (campaign ad)?

### EXAMPLES(?)

[Transition: but there are other significant ethical responsibilities on the campaign trail.]

- II. Candidates' use of religious appeals raises significant ethical questions.

A. As we've been discussing in this class, ethics is central to the public speaker's task.

1. Your own responsibilities as a speaker include saying something worth hearing, and answering all your audience's doubts and objections.
2. But the responsibilities of speakers can go beyond this core set, especially when the speaker is addressing important matters.
3. Even if you are never a speaker on the national stage, you participate as a member of the audience, with the responsibility to judge well whether or not the speaker has met his/her ethical obligations.

B. One significant ethical question facing national candidates is the appropriate use of religion in their persuasive speeches.

1. Are presidential candidates responsible for avoiding religious appeals?
  - a. Religion is a powerful motivator.
  - b. But as world history clearly demonstrates, it also has the power to divide communities.

c. So: Should presidential candidates draw from religion when trying to persuade voters to support them?

d. This is not a question of free speech. Candidates are certainly free to use religion—there is not, and never will be, a law against it. The question is whether they ought to avoid doing it. This is similar to other ethical issues on the campaign: for example, that candidates ought to avoid misstating their own or their opponents' records or avoid appeals to base emotions or prejudices.

2. Let's start by setting some ground rules for this discussion.

a. First off, we need to recognize that people's views on this issue do not necessarily run in parallel with their views on religion. I have taught this issue a lot, and found that there are devout evangelical Christians who believe that religion has no place in politics, and also fervent atheists who think that there's no problem with religious problems.

b. Secondly, let's exercise the same civility towards each other as we've been practicing in giving feedback.

c. Finally, it's worth remembering that in my experience, everyone thinks they're in the minority on this issue. Everyone thinks that the general culture is against their view, and that they aren't being heard. This means that everyone starts the conversation sort of defensive. Don't be! In fact, this issue divides this class, Iowa and the nation; I don't think there is a majority view.

C. So: what are the reasons for and against the ethics of religious appeals?

EXERCISE

D. Candidates themselves have confronted this issue over the years.

A. John F. Kennedy gave his views about it in his famous "Address to the Houston Ministerial Association" in 1960."

B. Other presidential/vice presidential hopefuls who have addressed the issue include Mario Cuomo, Joe Lieberman, Barack Obama and Mitt Romney.

C. This year, the issue was raised in pressing form during the candidacy of Mike Huckabee (Republican), former governor of Arkansas and Baptist pastor.

EXERCISE

[In sum:] Public speakers have important ethical responsibilities, to use the strong appeals of logos, ethos, pathos and religion in an appropriate fashion. If these issues interest you, or if you'd like to get more practice for your communication skills, consider further courses, or even a minor or second major, in Speech Communication.

Meanwhile, have a great break!

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