



## *iSpeak: Public Speaking for Contemporary Life*

Nelson, Paul E., Titsworth, Scott, & Pearson, Judy C.

[McGraw-Hill](#). 2008

352 pages

Paper: \$49.38

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*iSpeak* has two interesting tangents that make it compelling. First, the authors lace a strong sense of community involvement at both national and local levels. The authors address community issues on the environment, health, ethics, education, democracy, technology, and diversity. We have informally reviewed other textbooks which claim to take a social issues approach to public speaking. Most of these books tend to drop a chunk of text about the issue into each chapter without really incorporating the theme into the chapter. We find Nelson, Titsworth and Pearson have gone to great strides to weave the issues they address within and throughout providing a compelling agenda for their civic engagement focus.

Second, and the most unique aspect of the text, is the interesting angle it takes to the issue of students who do not read textbooks. The solution: try to make a textbook look like document students do read—a popular magazine. *iSpeak* The approach is novel within the public-speaking textbook genre. (In fact, the approach may be unique among all textbooks). We think the approach has potential. Visually, the text appears to model popular-culture magazines. Unfortunately, we find the magazine format is not effectively carried out in the textbook. Finally, all public speaking textbooks are laced with graphics and sidebar stories. These two characteristics do not make the book compelling. Second, the book has a flimsy back and front cover (similar to popular magazines). Unfortunately, the flimsy cover is a major drawback. We do not see now the text would survive the rough'n'tumble existence of an undergraduate backpack in any decent shape. Undergraduate students count on the availability of used textbooks for purchase each semester. A textbook with a cover beaten up beyond repair has little, if any, resale value. Use of the textbook would drive students to purchase new books each semester.

Finally, popular-culture magazines are effective because the stories are “fast reads” taking only a few minutes to work through any article. *iSpeak* follows a traditional public-speaking textbook format with chapters averaging 25-30 pages. Rarely does a pop culture magazine have such lengthy articles. If the authors are intent on modeling their text on magazines they should strive for the “fast read” approach to the content. An effective model for the “fast read” approach in public speaking texts are the popular handbooks found on the market. The handbooks break each subject/chapter in small sections averaging only 2-3

We think Nelson, Titsworth, and Pearson could have truly engaging textbook by providing a stronger cover (to enhance resale value), and by utilizing the “fast read” approach of the handbooks into their magazine-approach. The resulting textbook would really be something to see and use.