

## **Assigned Platform Topics (April 2026):**

Outline Due Date: Sunday, April 12, 2026 – before going to bed Sunday night.

Video Recording Due Date: Sunday, April 19, 2026 – before going to bed Sunday night.

### **Assigned Platform Topics (April 2026)**

1. **Deepfakes:** This topic is about fake videos, pictures, or voices that are made with technology so they look or sound real even when they are not. For example, a deepfake might show a famous person appearing to say something that person never actually said. This topic is important because deepfakes can confuse people, spread false information, and make it harder for us to know what is true. Potentially interesting ideas include how schools, families, or news reporters can check whether something online is real. Potentially interesting ideas also include how deepfakes may change trust in social media, celebrities, or public leaders.
2. **Lab-Grown Meat:** This topic is about meat that scientists grow from animal cells in a lab instead of getting it from animals raised in the usual way. For example, people may someday buy a hamburger that was made in a lab rather than from a cow on a farm. This topic is important because it connects to food, science, animals, and the environment, and it may change how people think about eating meat. Potentially interesting ideas include whether lab-grown meat could help reduce harm to animals or save natural resources. Potentially interesting ideas also include whether people will trust this kind of food and how it might affect farms, prices, and restaurants.
3. **Maps:** This topic is about tools that show where places are and help us understand location, direction, and distance. For example, we use maps to find roads, study countries, follow weather, and travel from one place to another. This topic is important because maps do much more than help people move around; they also shape how we learn about the world and how we see borders, land, and people. Potentially interesting ideas include how old paper maps are different from phone maps and GPS today. Potentially interesting ideas also include how maps can be used for travel, history, weather, war, or even arguments about who controls land.
4. **Microplastics:** This topic is about very tiny pieces of plastic that break off from larger plastic items or come from products that use small plastic particles. For example, these tiny pieces can end up in rivers, oceans, beaches, fish, and even the food or water people use every day. This topic is important because microplastics are now spreading through nature in ways that are hard to stop, and many people worry about what that may mean for animals, oceans, and human health. Potentially interesting ideas include how plastic clothes, bottles, wrappers, and trash slowly turn into smaller and smaller pieces. Potentially interesting ideas also include what cities, companies, or families can do to reduce plastic waste before it becomes a larger problem.
5. **Northern Lights:** This topic is about bright, colorful lights that sometimes appear in the night sky in places far to the north. For example, people in Alaska, Canada, or Norway may look up and see green, pink, or purple light moving across the sky in beautiful shapes. This topic is important because the Northern Lights help us learn about space, the sun, and Earth, while also showing how science can explain something that feels magical. Potentially interesting ideas include what causes the lights to appear and why they are seen more often in some places than others. Potentially interesting ideas also include why people travel long distances to see them and how different cultures have told stories about them.
6. **Rivers:** This topic is about large natural streams of moving water that flow across land and connect many places. For example, rivers can provide drinking water, help farms grow food, support animals and plants, and give people ways to travel or fish. This topic is important because rivers support life in many direct ways, and when rivers are polluted, damaged, or dry, entire communities can be affected. Potentially interesting ideas include how rivers shape land, cause floods, or help cities and farms survive. Potentially interesting ideas also include how dams, factories, and human activity can improve rivers in some ways but harm them in others.

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### **Assigned Platform Topics (April 2026): Continued...**

7. **Snail Mail:** This topic is about letters, cards, and packages that are sent through the regular postal system instead of by text, email, or instant message. For example, a handwritten thank-you card or a birthday gift sent through the post office is a form of snail mail. This topic is important because even in a fast digital world, regular mail still carries legal papers, packages, personal messages, and other items people depend on. Potentially interesting ideas include why handwritten letters can feel more personal and meaningful than digital messages. Potentially interesting ideas also include how mail services have changed over time and why regular mail still matters in some homes, schools, and communities.
8. **Street Art:** This topic is about art that appears in public places such as walls, buildings, sidewalks, bridges, and train areas. For example, street art may include murals, painted messages, stenciled pictures, or graffiti that people see while walking through a neighborhood or city. This topic is important because it can make public spaces more colorful and expressive, but it can also raise questions about rules, property, and who gets to decide what belongs in shared spaces. Potentially interesting ideas include when street art is treated as beautiful public art and when it is treated as vandalism. Potentially interesting ideas also include how street art can show local culture, community pride, protest, or the voices of people who feel ignored.
9. **Surveillance Capitalism:** This topic is about companies collecting information about what people do online and using that information to earn money or influence choices. For example, when a person searches for something, clicks on videos, or shops online, a company may track that activity and use it to decide what ads or content to show next. This topic is important because it involves privacy, technology, and power, and it affects how much control people really have over their own information. Potentially interesting ideas include how apps, games, websites, and phones gather data without people always noticing. Potentially interesting ideas also include whether stronger privacy rules are needed and how children, families, and ordinary users are affected by constant tracking.
10. **Urban Food Deserts:** This topic is about areas in cities where people do not have easy access to healthy, fresh, and affordable food. For example, some families may live far from a full grocery store and may only have nearby stores that sell mostly snacks, drinks, or unhealthy meals. This topic is important because food access affects health, fairness, energy, and daily life, especially for children and working families. Potentially interesting ideas include how money, transportation, and city planning can make healthy food harder to reach. Potentially interesting ideas also include how community gardens, better bus routes, new stores, or local programs may help solve the problem.

**IMPORTANT:** this month we need to make a three-minute speech about one of these topics and also make a five-minute speech. That's two video recordings for the same topic: one is 3 minutes long and the other is 5 minutes. The reason for this is because we need a five-minute speech for the championship tournaments. This will help us to accomplish that goal.

**MY ADVICE:** after reviewing people's work, it seems that many people are struggling to get their speech to last for three minutes. A lot of people are going over time because of the two evidence per body paragraph rule. My advice is to have three body paragraphs, each with one piece of evidence, to make a three-minute speech. For the five-minute speech, add one more piece of evidence to each body paragraph so that there will be six total pieces of evidence; two per body paragraph. Remember to time yourself delivering your speech in a normal speaking manner. Once you are able to speak it well without mispronouncing words or hesitating, that's when we should time the speech to see how long it is. That's when we decide whether or not to cut out some sentences or add sentences, depending on the situation. I recommend timing each paragraph separately and adding the times together to see how long it is. That way, you'll know which paragraph might be too long compared to the other paragraphs.

**DEADLINE** = Sunday, April 19th, 2026 (Please send it to me before you go to bed on Sunday night!)