

Argumentation and Debate

Communication Studies 311 (COMM 311) 3 Units

*Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:00am-10:20am

Instructor: Prince K. White, Ph.D.

Classroom: CRC Main – CAC 138

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Office hours: TBA and by appointment M-F

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*Final Exam is Tuesday, December 16, 2014 8:00-10:00 am

Required Texts:

Hollihan, T. A., & Baaske, K. T. (2004). *Arguments and arguing: The products and process of human decision making*, 2nd edition. Waveland Press. ISBN:978157766362

Course description:

In many contexts the words arguing, arguments, argumentation and debating have negative connotations. In college, they have a special use and are integral to effective writing and speaking. This course focuses on argumentation and debate and you will receive some fundamental knowledge that will help you throughout college and your career. This semester you will spend a significant amount of time learning theories about arguments and effective techniques of persuasion, as well as, gaining practical “hands-on” knowledge of argumentation by engaging in oral debates in class and completing written assignments.

From the College Catalog:

Prerequisite: ENGWR 300 with a grade of "C" or better

General Education: AA/AS Area II(b); CSU Area A3; IGETC Area 1B

Course Transferable to UC/CSU

Hours: 54 hours LEC

Description: This course introduces students to argumentation, critical evaluation of evidence, and reasoning in the context of debate. A series of writing assignments will focus on the skills of critical thinking, rhetoric, and the sophistication of argumentative skills. Intended as a practical course, the fundamentals of proposition analysis, case building and dissent are discussed and applied within written communication and oral presentation. Videotaping equipment may be used as an aid to the student’s self-analysis and improvement. Access to a computer with online capabilities may be required and computer access is available on campus. (C-ID COMM 120)

Learning Objectives:

- Compose ideas clearly in effective, appropriate and well-organized written messages.
- Analyze and formulate critical thinking within evidence and reasoning of spoken and written messages.
- Design and relate messages clearly for effective and appropriate oral communication.
- Apply effective listening skills to comprehend spoken messages, analyze information critically and consider multiple perspectives.
- Assess individual responsibility within one's ability to influence ethical, effective and appropriate communication among diverse settings and people.
- Define and identify various theoretical perspectives across the discipline of communication studies.

COURSE POLICIES:

The course policies were created in the hopes of providing a classroom environment where every student can learn and I, as the professor, can spend as much time and energy on teaching as possible. We will spend a significant amount of time discussing controversial topics and the course policies are designed to best facilitate class discussion and foster a productive, open, and welcoming environment.

Assignments: Assignments are due before the beginning of class on the date assigned and are to be submitted electronically via D2L (unless stated otherwise). Any assignment turned in after this time is LATE. For each weekday an assignment is late, it will drop one letter grade. For example, if an assignment would have earned an A- had it been turned in on time on Monday, it would receive a B- if you turn it in on Tuesday (one day late), and a C- if you turn it in on Wednesday (two days late). After three days you can a maximum of 60 percent of the total available points for a late assignment. NOTE: Computer or printer problems DO NOT constitute an excuse for late or incomplete work.

If an extenuating circumstance (emergency or illness) arises which causes you to miss a lot of class and/or assignments, it is your responsibility to notify me early on of the problem so we can discuss options. Assignments will not be accepted via e-mail.

Attendance:

Please attend every class session. Your participation in this class is a vital component to the success of our meetings. In addition, your involvement in classroom discussions is also important to the other members of this section.

If you do miss class, it is YOUR responsibility to make arrangements for making up what you have missed, including getting notes from a classmate, finding out about assignments or schedule changes, etc... Emailing me asking what you missed or if you missed anything important is not acceptable.

Notifying me that you will not be in class does not mean the absence is excused. Excessive absences from class (which I define as two or more) will lower your class activities grade and therefore your final class grade.

Chronic Tardiness/Leaving Class Early: If you are chronically tardy, or always need to leave early then drop this course and take it when your schedule allows you to be here the duration of class time.

Plagiarizing/Cheating: There is zero tolerance for plagiarizing. If you are caught plagiarizing, I will personally seek the maximum punishment allowable by the department and the college. At the very least, anyone caught plagiarizing or cheating will fail the assignment at hand.

Laptop/note taking: Please do not use laptops for taking notes in class. I encourage you to bring your laptops to class because they may be useful for class activities but please do not have them open unless instructed to do so.

Cell phones: Students who are using cell phones to text or make calls during class will be asked to leave class for the day. On occasion using a smart phone during class will be acceptable.

Class discussions: An integral part of this class will be the discussions that take place about the reading material and news and media examples. Understand that we will be discussing controversial topics and perspectives and it is your job to approach our discussions in an informed and respectful manner. In small class I do not require you to raise your hand to ask question or make a contribution to the class but please be aware of each person's desire to be heard and contribute.

Grade Appeal: If you wish to contest a grade I will accept a written argument detailing the injustice. The appeal will be due one week from the day the assignment was returned to you. Turning in an appeal does not guarantee that you will receive a higher grade.

Completion of Speeches, Debates and Tests: You must complete ALL of the speeches and debates and both the midterm and the final. A zero or missing grade for either will result in a maximum class grade of a "C."

Grading Scale:

Midterm	150 points	15%
Final	200 points	20%
Dramatic Reading	50 points	5%
Persuasive Speech and Paper	200 points	20%
Parliamentary Debate 1 and 2 (15% each)	300 points	30%
Class Activities	100 points	10%
Total	1000 points	100%

A= 100-90
B= 89-80
C= 79-70
D= 69-60
F= >59

Assignment Descriptions:

Exams: There will be two exams based on the readings, lectures and class activities. Exams may take varying forms but will generally include identifications (IDs), essays, short essays and possibly oral responses.

The Dramatic Reading: The dramatic reading, also known as the oral reading, is a three to five minute presentation that focuses on the “reading” of a piece of literature, prose, poetry, plays, or song lyrics. You will practice a delivery style that demands the use of vocal variety and an effective use of nonverbal communication in an effort to bring the “character” to life.

The Persuasive Speech and Paper: You will deliver an eight to ten minute speech in support of a position on an issue. Your goal will be to persuade your audience to change its attitudes, values, beliefs, and/or actions about a controversial issue. You should attempt to get your audience to act on a proposed policy change. An outline is also required for this speech.

Debates: The debates will require you and a partner to spend a significant amount of time preparing to face off against a pair of your classmates in a parliamentary style academic debate. You will be given three topics areas to study. The day of the debate, you find out your topic. You will need to turn some preparatory work, which we will discuss in detail.

Class Activities: Activity points will be distributed at nearly every class session. You will not be able to make up Class Activity points with extra credit.

Week /Date	General Topic	Textbook	Projects/deadlines
1. 8/26, 8/28	Introductions/Comm theory	Ch. 1	
2. 9/2, 9/4	Foundations	Ch. 2	
3. 9/9, 9/11	Audience Analysis	Ch. 3	Dramatic Reading
4. 9/16, 9/18	Language	Ch. 4	
5. 9/23, 9/25	Critical Thinking	Ch. 5	
6. 9/30, 10/2	Types of Arguments	Ch. 6	
7. 10/7, 10/9	Grounds for Arguments	Ch. 7	
8. 10/14, 10/16			Midterm 10/16
9. 10/21, 10/23	Building Arguments	Ch. 8	
10. 10/28, 10/30	Refuting Arguments	Ch. 9	Debate 1
11. 11/4, 11/6	Academic Debate	Ch. 10	Speech Outline 11/6
12. 11/11, 11/13	Academic Debate	Ch. 11	
13. 11/18, 11/20	Argumentation in Politics	Ch. 12	Speeches Due 11/18
14. 11/25, 11/27	Argumentation and the Law	Ch. 13	
15. 12/2, 12/4	Organizations	Ch. 14	Debate 2
16. 12/9, 12/11	Interpersonal Relationships	Ch. 15	Debate 2
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