CMST 2063: Argumentation & Debate

Department of Communication Studies

Louisiana State University

Instructor: Evan Mitchell Schares Section: 2

Email eschar4@lsu.edu Time: T&TH 10:30-11:50

Office Coates 319 Location: Coates 111

Hours T&TH 9:30-10:30

Course Catalogue Description

Principles of argumentation and debate; analysis, briefing, evidence, reasoning and refutation, debating on vital questions.

Additional Description[[1]](#footnote-1)

We live in a world saturated with arguments and to be a competent communicator requires one’s ability to make a reasoned case for one’s beliefs, just as it requires one to be able to judge the case set forth by others. Therefore, this class introduces students to the basic concepts in argumentation theory, criticism, and practice. As a result, this class involves both the *production* and the *critical analysis* of arguments.

Course Readings

Readings are posted onto the course Moodle page.

Assignments & Grading Scale

Refutation Speech 5 points A+ 96.9 – 100

Debate & Briefs [x2] 40 points A 93.0 – 96.9

Argument Analysis Paper 10 points A- 90.0 – 92.9

Unit Tests [x3] 30 points B + 87.0 – 82.9

Participation/Reading Response 10 points B 83.0 – 86.9

Letter to the Editor 5 points B - 80.0 – 82.9

 C + 77.0 – 79.9

Assignments are worth a total of 100 points. However, for each assignment C 73.0 – 76.9

you can earn fractions of points. So think of the semester out of 1,000 or C - 70.0 – 72.9

10,000 points. You cannot pass the course if you do not complete any of the D + 67.0 – 69.9

debates or major assignments. D 63.0 – 66.9

 D - 60.0 – 62.9

F 0 – 59.9

Assignment Descriptions

Letter to the Editor*[5 points]*Draft a letter to the editor suitable for submission to *The Daily Reveille*, *The Advocate*, or *Times-Picayune*. An effective letter succinctly and effectively articulates a position ona matter of social importance. They are often, but not always, in response to material published bythe newspaper. Published letters will receive 3 extra points.

Refutation Speech*[5 points]*Refute a single argument of fact, definition, or value in a 3 minute speech to the class. Each speech will be followed by a 3-minute cross examination period where classmates are required to thoroughly examine and interrogate the speaker.

Value Debate & Brief &*[20 points each]*Each member of the class will partner with another mem-

Policy Debate & Brief ber of the class and debatea specific resolution. One person will represent the affirmative and one with represent the negative. You must follow the specific debate format and requirements, including submitting a brief prior to each debate.

Argument Analysis Paper*[10 points]*This is a 5-6 page essay analyzing an argument within a public controversy.You will receive a detailed assignment sheet describing this assignment later in the semester.

Participation*[10 points]*10 times throughout the semester you will come to class with a reading response illustrating a theoretical tension or concept in the reading for that day [min. 200 words, max. 500 words] Please come prepared to present your short response to the class and end with 1 or 2 questions. Design the questions to propel class in an engaged discussion of the readings. Avoid polarizing (yes or no) questions. It is your responsibility to track the syllabus to know when these are due. Additionally, this grade is composed of student contributions to class discussions.

Unit Tests [*10 points each*] There will be 3 unit tests throughout the semester.

Course Policies

Attendance, Participation, & Work Expectations

This class is discussion-oriented and practice-centered. Preparation for class and faithful attendance is directly correlated with success. In addition to missing vital information for successfully completing major assignments, you risk missing in-class assignments that will count toward your final grade. Attendance on debate days, even when you are not speaking, is required. Failure to attend all speech days will result in a ten-point deduction from your own debate grade for each day missed.

Once class has begun and you are not present, you are absent. The turning in, on time, of the reading responses is how participation will be counted. There is no other way to earn participation points than through the completion and in class discussion of the reading responses. If you are late, tardy, or absent from class the student will forfeit 50% of the available points. *Unless it is university excused, there is no need to email me about your absences or late arrivals*. Please refer to the LSU policy handbook for university-excused absences. Visits to the student health center are not university-excused absences. The documentation must prove you were too ill or sick to attend class.

Further, though your attendance is expected, your attendance does not constitute presence. Students who are constantly late, on their cell phones, or who are falling asleep are neither engaged nor present and, as a result, not able to earn participation points. Even if students have a reasonable cause to miss class, they are still responsible for demonstrating achievement of the learning goals and other course content and it is their responsibility to communicate any absences or other problems in a timely manner. In other words, you must assume responsibility for relaying any information that may hinder your participation/success in class beforehand.

Debate Days

On the day of your debate, you should arrive in appropriate attire (i.e. not in pajamas) prepared to give your speech. All teams must submit a folder with a copy of the professor evaluation form (which I will make available earlier in the unit) and a bibliography. You must also submit any notes you used during your speech once you have finished speaking. While you may use a laptop or other device to hold and reference material during your debate, you may not access the Internet while the debate is taking place. Your role as an audience member is equally important to a successful debate. As I indicate above, attendance on debate days is mandatory for everyone. You are also responsible for being a supportive audience member. This means that working on homework, typing on a lap top, text messaging, walking in late while someone is speaking, sleeping, or simply looking like anything other than engaged in your classmates’ work will result in a verbal warning from me, followed by a ONE LETTER GRADE DEDUCTION from your own debate grade.

Late Work

Written assignments are due at the start of class, as we will often use them that day. Late work will automatically receive a 50% point deduction for each day it is late. You may not, under any circumstances, miss a debate in which you are participating. Doing so is not only harmful to you, but also your debating partners and, because it complicates our semester schedule, the entire class. If you are simply unable to make it on the assigned day, regardless of the reason, it is your responsibility to arrange to switch days with another group. If you miss a debate day without prior notice or explanation, every effort will be made to proceed on that day without you.

Grade Appeals

**Students are welcome to discuss grade appeals with me on any assignment or test if you believe it to be graded incorrectly. However, you must submit your appeal in writing during the class period immediately following the return of the graded assignment. In the appeal, you must**

1. **Identify which assignment or test question you are appealing.**
2. **Justify why your answer or performance was correct or worthy of a higher grade and quantify the amount sought. To make your case compelling, you must cite course readings or lecture notes.**
3. If applicable, include the original test or assignment.

Technology Policy

The goal of all course policies is to help create a successful course experience for you as the student; this includes your ability to learn course material and to do so in an effective classroom environment. Generally, cell phones and other electronics are not to be used. Students who use these inappropriately will be considered absent. However, there will be times throughout the course where computers and other electronics may be used when explicitly stated such as for in-class workshops and other activities. Please see me if you have any questions or concerns.

Manage Your Time

Success in a three-unit college course is based on the expectation that students will spend, on average, three hours per week in class and 6 hours per week outside of class reading, writing, preparing, studying, rehearsing, discussing and otherwise engaging with course materials. If you find that you are spending significantly more time than this on the course, please come and see me as early as possible to discuss better study strategies. If you choose to spend significantly less time than this on the course, please adjust your expectations for your final grade accordingly.

LSU Code of Student Conduct & Plagiarism

To demonstrate my pride in LSU, as a member of its community, I will: (1) accept responsibility for my actions; (2) hold myself and others to the highest standards of academic, personal, and social integrity; (3) practice justice, equality, and compassion in human relations; (4) respect the dignity of all persons and accept individual differences; (5) respect the environment and the rights and property of others and the University; (6) contribute positively to the life of the campus and surrounding community; and (7) use my LSU experience to be an active citizen in an international and interdependent world.

Any student found to have turned in material not their own (either downloaded from the internet or written by another student) in part or in whole will immediately be reported to the Dean of Students.

Disability Accommodation

If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see the Office of Disability Services (112 Johnston Hall) so that such accommodations may be arranged. If you do have accommodations and receive a letter from ODS it is, of course, up to you to disclose them to me. However, per ODS policy*, “accommodations do not apply retroactivel*y. *Additionally, accommodation letters must be given to the instructor at least three business days prior to receiving accommodations.”*

TITLE IX & Sexual Misconduct Policy

In accordance with Title IX and other applicable law, Louisiana State University (“LSU”) is committed to providing a learning, working, and living environment that promotes integrity, civility, and mutual respect in an environment free of discrimination on the basis of sex and sexual misconduct which includes sex discrimination, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and retaliation. LSU prohibits sex discrimination and sexual misconduct. This policy applies to all persons without regard to sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression.

Sex discrimination and sexual misconduct violate an individual’s fundamental rights and personal dignity. LSU considers sex discrimination and sexual misconduct in all of its forms to be serious offenses. This policy has been developed to reaffirm these principles and to provide recourse for individuals whose rights have been violated.

Tentative Course Schedule

I will post any changes to the course on Moodle or will I will announce them in class. If I announce a change in class and you are absent, you are still responsible for any changes.

1. This syllabus is the product of many. I thank Dr. Catherine Helen Palczewski, Dr. Bryan McCann, and Dr. Ashley Mack whose own syllabi were instrumental in the making of this one. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)