

CMST 2063: Argumentation & Debate¹

Professor Bryan McCann, PhD

130 Coates Hall

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“Well, that’s just, like, you’re opinion, man.”

The Dude

The Course

CMST 2063 awards General Education Humanities credit because it addresses the achievement of the following General Education Competency:

LSU graduates will demonstrate an understanding of historical, cultural, and philosophical complexity, which supports sophisticated discourse.

CMST 2063 seeks to develop students' capability to construct, analyze and evaluate the competing claims, which characterize civic discourse in a contingent world. In other words we seek to increase awareness of the methods of interaction demanded by an open society and acquire a wider range of strategies for dealing with the possibilities, pressures, and responsibilities offered therein. Following Protagoras and Isocrates, we hold that the ability to use language to address practical problems while furthering the core values of freedom, self-control, and virtue is a hallmark of liberal education and a required skill for maintenance of a free society. This course is informed by our confidence that an understanding of the basic precepts of argumentation and debate along with their application is fundamental to the maturation of civic merit in the individual as well as society as a whole.

To this end we will seek pragmatic tools for use whenever we find ourselves summoned to the agora. Accordingly, we will mine classical as well as contemporary theory for concepts that can serve as those tools. At the end of the semester we should have access to a range of goal-directed strategies that will hone our critical competence and help everyone construct happier, more productive social lives. In sum, this course is about acquiring a bigger tool box in service of both self and community.

Course Objectives

Students will learn to become more effective critical thinkers and consumers of information and arguments. This will be accomplished by achieving the following:

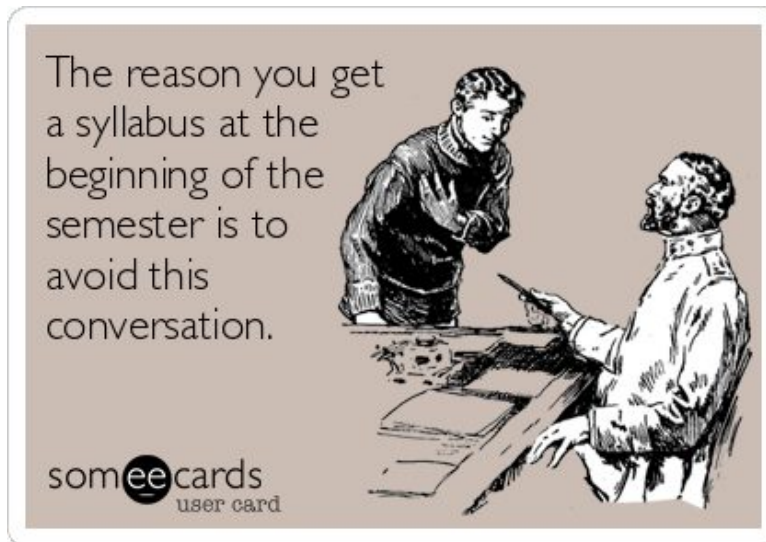
¹ I am very grateful to my colleagues Ashley Mack and Kelly Young for sharing their syllabi and ideas with me.

- Understanding, identifying and evaluating the types of arguments, reasoning processes, and logical fallacies
- Knowing what evidence is, how to use it to prove a claim, and how to evaluate the adequacy of your and opposing evidence
- Learning to organize arguments into a persuasive case
- Developing skills in refutation and cross examination
- Being able to use these skills in a variety of forums

Required Texts/Materials

- Heinrichs, J. (2013). *Thank You For Arguing: What Aristotle, Lincoln, and Homer Simpson Can Teach Us About the Art of Persuasion*. New York: Three Rivers Press.
- Additional readings/materials will be posted online.
- Access to and competency with online search engines and university libraries is essential for success in this course

COURSE POLICIES



Office Hours and Availability If, for whatever reason, my posted office hours do not work for you, please do not hesitate to contact me and arrange an alternative meeting time. I am also always close to email.

The Communication Environment The study of argument engages a wide range of philosophical, political, and ethical questions that cut to the very core of what it means to be a citizen, even a human. I am committed to ensuring that our classroom is a hospitable environment where we can

respectfully discuss and debate a wide range of relevant issues. Everyone should feel comfortable to speak their minds, but must do so in a way that enables others to do the same.

Participation and Attendance 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.

Group Work The success of this class hinges on your ability and willingness to be an accountable learning partner with your classmates. Every debate assignment relies on at least two people to show up on the designated presentation day and work together beforehand.

Few things can derail this course more than the failure of even one member of the class to fulfill their responsibilities by missing a debate, dropping the class the day before they are scheduled to debate, etc. It does a disservice to your partner, classmates, and professor. I will not tolerate it.

Furthermore, if your debate partner is able to indicate that you have been incommunicado during the lead-up to the debate and I cannot reach you either, I will automatically drop you from the debate and you will receive a zero.

Readings It is in your best interest to begin reading material early, take notes, underline content, and come to class prepared to ask any questions for clarification, etc.

Workload Students are expected, in addition to time spent in class, to spend a minimum of an additional 6 hours per week reading and thinking about material and putting forth effort toward the completion of course assignments. Thus, students are expected to devote at least 9 hours per week toward the successful completion of CMST 2063.

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 bibliography and a half to one-page narrative written by each member evaluating their experiences with their partner(s). 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 10% 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.

Make-up debates are not allowed.

Academic Integrity I trust students in this class to do their own work. Students are responsible for adhering to the college's standards for academic conduct. Even revising another student's work, collaborating to share research with other students, or adapting your own work from another class is academic misconduct. Failure to acknowledge sources in written assignments or oral presentations constitutes plagiarism. If you are ever confused about how these policies apply to your own work, please play it safe and consult me.

I will officially report all instances of academic dishonesty to the Dean of Students. Consequences can range from zero credit on the assignment in question to dismissal from the university. For more information on this important issue, please look online at <https://grok.lsu.edu/Article.aspx?articleId=17072>

Drops/Withdrawals If you wish to drop this class, you must do so by 4:30pm on January 22. After this point, you will be issued a withdrawal grade. If you fail to withdraw by 4:30pm on April 4, you will receive and "F" for the semester.

Religious Observances It is LSU's policy to respect the faith and religious obligations of students, faculty and staff. Students with exams or classes that conflict with their religious observances should notify me well in advance (at least 2 weeks) so that we can work out a mutually agreeable alternative.

Special Needs Louisiana State University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. The syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments is requested to speak with Disability Services and the instructor, as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. This publication/material is available in alternative formats upon request. Please contact the Disability Services, 115 Johnston Hall, 225.578.5919.

E-mail All students must obtain and regularly check an email account. Expect periodic updates from me about what's happening in class via Moodle as well.

ALL WRITTEN WORK MUST BE SUBMITTED VIA EMAIL.

E-mail is also the best and quickest way to get in touch with me outside of class.

I will not, under any circumstances, communicate grade information via email or over the phone.

Moodle Please check Moodle for updates to the class schedule, assignment guidelines, grade information, etc.

Commitment to Conversation I believe in the right and responsibility of students to take an active interest in their education. If there is anything inside or outside this class that you care to discuss with me, please do not hesitate to do so.

I understand that “life happens” and will work with you to make REASONABLE accommodations for issues that may be negatively impacting your performance in this class. The sooner you consult me on such matters, the better.

While I am happy to discuss grades on individual assignments throughout the semester (provided you do so no sooner than 24 hours after but within two weeks of receiving the grade), I do not respond well to having responsibility for your entire academic future thrust upon me. In other words, how your performance in this class will impact your GPA, ability to graduate, scholarship eligibility, etc. are not sufficient grounds for discussing a grade on an assignment. More generally, I will not entertain discussions about final grades once the semester is over. If you wish to challenge your final grade, you must do so through the proper university channels. Please visit this link for further information:

http://catalog.lsu.edu/content.php?catoid=1&navoid=27&hl=%22appeals%22&returnto=search#Grade_Appeals

Cell Phones, Laptops, etc. I am a technology junky and appreciate the important role smart phones, laptops, and the like play in our information society. That said, I also know they can function as a huge distraction in the classroom. If you have a cell phone, smart or otherwise, keep it in your pocket and on silent (vibrate is not silent). Failure to do so will result in my confiscating your phone for the duration of the class period. Please feel free to use your laptop to take notes and otherwise organize course material; however, if I notice you chatting on Facebook, visiting non-class related websites, etc., you must discontinue your use of the computer for the rest of the semester. In other words, technology is fine as long as it doesn't call attention to itself.

Contractual Agreement Your acceptance of these conditions, as well as the policies outlined in this document, is implied by your continuance in the class. To maintain the integrity of everyone's grade, and ultimately, degree, all course policies are non-negotiable.

Everything in this document, including the daily schedule, is subject to revision or modification due to unforeseen circumstances.

ASSIGNMENTS

Refutation Speech Refute a single argument of fact, definition, or value in a 3-minute speech to the class. A 3-minute cross-examination period will follow each speech where selected classmates are required to thoroughly examine and interrogate the speaker. The majority of your grade will be based on your presentation and response to questions, but you will also be evaluated on the quality of the questions you ask other speakers.

Debates Each member of the class will partner with another member of the class and debate a specific resolution. One person will represent the affirmative side while the other will represent the negative side. You must follow specific debate format and requirements, including submitting a brief prior to each debate

Briefs Don't let the name fool you. Briefs are this class' equivalent of papers, they consist of a logical outline and a series of evidence cards that each team will research and gather in preparation for their policy debate. Briefs will be typed and must be submitted electronically. No one will be permitted to participate in the class debates that have not turned in their briefs.

Argument Analysis Paper 5-6 page essay analyzing an argument. You will receive a detailed assignment sheet describing this assignment later in the semester.

Quizzes There will be six unannounced quizzes throughout the semester, four of which (i.e. the ones on which you score highest) will count toward your final grade. These will be based solely on the assigned readings for that week and will consist of multiple choice and/or short response questions. You may use any notes on the readings, but *may not* consult the readings at any point during the quiz. Quizzes begin promptly at the beginning of class and will last for fifteen minutes. If you arrive to class late, you still must hand in your quiz at the same time as everybody else. If you show up after a quiz has been given, you may not retake it.

Participation I will evaluate your participation on the basis of several factors, which include, but are not limited to, speaking in class, making use of my office hours, working effectively in groups, demonstrating improvement over the course of the semester, etc.

Extra Credit Over the course of the semester, I will make you aware of extra credit opportunities. They will typically involve viewing or attending an event relevant to course material and possibly completing a related assignment.

You may also choose to participate in the Department of Communication Studies's research projects that need human participants. These include surveys, experiments (no electronic shocks, I promise), or pilot tests of future texts or videos. For more information, please visit <https://lsuhumanresearch.sona-systems.com/Default.aspx?ReturnUrl=/>

Each full study is worth 1 credit and you may participate for a maximum of 2 credits. Each credit is worth 2 points.

AVAILABLE POINTS

Assignment	Actual Points	Possible Points
Refutation Speech		75
Debate 1		100

Assignment	Actual Points	Possible Points
Debate 2		100
Argument Analysis		150
Quiz 1		25
Quiz 2		25
Quiz 3		25
Quiz 4		25
Participation		25
Extra Credit		0
Total		550

REGARDLESS OF YOUR POINT TOTAL, YOU CANNOT PASS THIS CLASS IF:

- A) You fail to complete either of the research briefs
- B) You fail to perform a speech, debate and/or conduct yourself in such a way that seriously threatens your debate partners' performance in this class.²

Grading Key³

Outstanding achievement relative to requirements

532-550 = A+

512-531 = A

492-511 = A-

Above average relative to requirements

479-491 = B+

457-478 = B

437-456 = B-

² If you and your debate partner are struggling to work effectively together, I am happy to serve as a mediator. I will do so on the condition that you a) let me know well in advance of your debate date and b) are able to arrange a time for all of us to meet in person to discuss the situation. I am *not* interested in hearing about debate partner problems following a disappointing grade.

³ Everyone in this class begins the semester with *zero* points. All subsequent points are *earned*, not lost.

Meeting basic course requirements

424-436 = C+

402-423 = C

382-401 = C-

Worthy of credit without meeting full requirements

369-381 = D+

347-368 = D

327-346 = D-

Failing to meet basic requirements

326 and below = F

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

	Topic	Reading	Due
Jan 14	Course Introduction		
Jan 19	Argumentation Basics: Structuring & Supporting Arguments	Ch. 1, 2	
Jan 21	Types of Argument (Fact, Definition, Evaluation/Value, Causal, Policy)	Ch. 3	
Jan 26	The role of the Speaker	Ch. 4, 5, 6, 7	
Jan 28	Audience Centered Argument	Ch 11, 19, 20, 23	
Feb 2	Defining Terms & Controlling Arguments	Ch. 12, 13, 21	
Feb 4	Refuting Arguments	Ch. 15, 16, 17	Assign Refutation Speech
Feb 9			MARDI GRAS!
Feb 11	Fallacies, Errors, and Other Missteps	Ch. 14, 22	
Feb 16	Refutation Speeches		

Feb 18	Refutation Speeches		
Feb 22	Refutation Speeches		
Feb 25	Refutation Speeches		
Mar 1	Introduction To Policy Debate (Format, Resolutions)	Readings on Moodle	Assign debates
Mar 3	Workshop		
Mar 8	Workshop		
Mar 10	Workshop		Debate brief due
Mar 15	Analyzing Arguments		Assign Argument Analysis
Mar 17	Debates		
Mar 22 & 24			SPRING BREAK
Mar 29	Debates		
Mar 31	Debates		
Apr 5	Debates		
Apr 7			NO CLASS
Apr 12	Workshop		
Apr 14	Workshop		Debate brief due

Apr 19	Debates		
Apr 21	Debates		
Apr 26	Debates		
Apr 28	Debates		
May 5			Argument Analysis Paper due by 5:00pm