

SPEECH COMMUNICATION 4220  
THEORIES OF ARGUMENT

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Tuesday and Thursday  
9:30AM – 1100 AM  
214 Terrell

I. Course Description

Every student is expected to acquire an understanding of the competing theories of argument. For the purposes of this class argument will be examined both as a mode of discourse and a means of inquiry. The first half of the class will emphasize the analysis of public argument in our culture. In the second half of the course, every student is expected to acquire competence in analysis of controversial policy questions, construction of argumentative questions, develop a debate case on one such topic and arguing these cases against his/her classmates. Students will be exposed to a wide range of argumentation theory and asked to apply it on a daily basis to public argumentation. This semester, the class will specifically utilize public discussion of the War on Terror and the military campaign in Iraq as a semester long case study. The in-class debates will not be limited to discussions of our Iraq policy; students will discuss a wide range of policy questions that are appropriate for argument, select one topic to work with, develop lines of argument, and engage in debates.

II. Course Requirements

It is expected that by the conclusion of the course each student will have acquired the basic argumentative skills necessary to assess public argument and to engage an opponent in academic debate. Effectiveness will be measured in terms of the degree of organization, analysis, refutation and critical evaluation demonstrated by the student. Specifically:

1. In Class Examination (2) - 40% of final grade

Each exam will cover material found in text and lectures. The format for the exams is some combination of long and short essay. The exams will be administered on February 14th and March 27th.

2. Debate - 25% of final grade

Each student will participate in a competitive debate on a controversial policy resolution. The format of the debates will be determined by the class size. Some of these debates may be scheduled during the final examination period and others may be scheduled outside of the regular class period.

3. Evidence - 05% of final grade

Each student will be required to turn in 50 quotation cards. These cards must be from at least ten (10) different sources. The evidence must be on 4x6 index cards, following the specific

requirements that will be outlined. The evidence cards will be due on March 20th.

4. Policy Analysis Manuscripts - 20% of final grade

Each student will be assigned to groups that will organize, prepare for, and conduct an in-class debate. Groups and topics will be determined by the midpoint of the semester. You will complete an essay that analyzes the argumentative dimensions of your debate topic. This paper should be approximately 10-12 pages and the final draft is due one week after your debate (a first draft is due a week before your debate). The paper will incorporate relevant research for the subject (it should draw on materials cited in class as well as outside materials) and conduct an analysis using appropriate techniques explored in class. Your goal should be incorporate observations from class as well as provide your perspective on this issue. You may choose to narrow the focus of the topic into a more specific essay. The paper should follow a consistent style manual (APA or MLA are the preferred options) and should reflect a writing style consistent with upper level college work. You may share research materials with your group, but this assignment is solely an individual project.

5. Debate Critiques - 05% of grade

Each student will write in-class evaluations of all debates in which he or she is not an active participant. The student will write an intellectual assessment as to who won the debate, giving justification and specific reasons.

6. Class Participation – 05% of grade

The success of this process depends on the willingness of students to read before class and be ready to discuss the readings. Students will be expected to conduct their own research and to be ready to share that information. Students who attend class without being ready to participate will receive a lower class participation grade. Students who accumulate excessive absences will receive a lower class participation grade.

III. Text

The student should acquire a copy of the following text:

Thomas A. Hollihan and Kevin T. Baaske, Arguments and Arguing: The Products and Process of Human Decision-Making (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 2005).

Additional readings will be placed on our WebCt page or in the University electronic reserve system.

IV. Class Policies

A. Attendance - Since the last segment of the course (beginning around April 3rd) centers on your oral performance in class and evaluation of your classmate's efforts, regular attendance is expected. During this period of the semester one absence with no penalty will be allowed for each student (unless the absence occur on a day you are assigned to debate). For every

absence beyond one, your final grade will automatically drop one letter. Exceptions will be made only in extreme and well-documented cases (you must be able to prove that every absence during the term can be justified medically). In the event that debates are scheduled out of class periods students participating in such debates will be allowed one additional absence.

B. Preparedness - Readings should be completed before class on the day listed, and students should be prepared to discuss the materials. When we begin the debates, four persons may take part in each debate. One person who does not show up affects the others and the entire class. Thus you must be present and ready to debate on the day you are assigned. If you are not present when you are to debate, you forfeit the grade on that assignment. There will be no makeup debates.

C. University Honor Code - All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty.”

<http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/acadhon.htm>

V. Grades

Debate	25%
Written Assignments	70%
Evidence Cards	05%
Manuscript	20%
Critiques	05%
Exams	40%
Class Participation	05%

Scale for Grades

A	100-94
A-	93-90
B+	89-87
B	86-84
B-	83-80
C+	79-77
C	76-74
C-	73-70
D+	69-67
D	66-64
D-	63-60
F	59-0

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

VI. Assistance

I will be more than willing to help students with questions or provide assistance with any of the assignments. If you are unable to make office hours, simply make an appointment.