

Communication 323: Argumentation, Theory and Practice—Convocation Syllabus

Education Justice Project, Spring 2013

Friday: 5:00-8:00 pm, January 18-May 10 (no class March 29)

Instructor: Peter Campbell

Office Hours: I will schedule office hours during regular Resource Room times. Office hours will coincide with at least one major assignment; I will let you know well in advance.

Resource Room: there will be opportunities for course-related work with tutors and myself in the resource rooms. I encourage you to take advantage of the RR as an excellent means of improving your writing, but RR attendance is not required to excel in this course.

Course Description:

This course is an advanced introduction to the study and practice of argumentation in U.S. public culture. The goal of this course is two-fold: first, to help students become more informed and critical evaluators of arguments from all manner of producers (peers, institutions, mass media, public figures, family, etc.) and second, to help students become more effective *arguers* themselves. To this end, we will read and discuss key scholarship in argument theory, and use this theory to critically evaluate arguments located in the public sphere. We will also train in and prepare for different forms of public argumentative practice, including debate, persuasive *writing*, and persuasive *speaking*. I loosely organize the class readings and discussions around a current events theme; given the present moment, many of our example readings will focus on immigration and marriage policy in the Central Illinois region, Illinois, and the United States.

Fundamentally, this course is designed to be an opportunity for you to practice persuasively advancing arguments concerning issues you are passionate about.

Course Materials:

Assigned and optional/recommended readings for this course will be accessible in one of four ways: through a course packet (marked CP); in John Sloop's *Disciplining Gender* (marked DG); through course reserves in the Resource Room (marked CR); and through me (I will periodically bring in additional readings, marked TBA).

If we decide that it would be beneficial for each student in the course to have simultaneous access to a portion of a reading on reserve, I will have copies made and distributed. Just let me know!

Part of the work in this course will be open-ended research on broadly defined topics. Some of these topics will be accessible through material available in the Resource Rooms and/or the Education Building Library. Some of these topics will require research beyond the scope of education building resources; part of the work of this course will be identifying targeted search areas that I will use to bring in 'research packets' and additional course reserves that we can work from in the classroom, Resource Room, and outside of class.

Assignments:

Participation (15%)	= 15 points
Weekly argument exercise (10%)	= 10 points
Planned-informal debates (10%)	= 10 points
Public argument assignment (15%)	= 15 points
In-class argument assignment (25%)	= 25 points
Debate assignment (25%)	= 25 points
Total (100%)	= 100 points

In this course you will have two major written/spoken* assignments: the in-class argument assignment and the debate assignment. These assignments will be challenging on a variety of levels, but you will be prepared for the challenge. The ‘lesser’ assignments are designed to provide practice and training for the major assignments. Class reading and class discussion will provide further theoretical and practical grounding for the assignments. You can think of this course as a ‘practicum’ in argument; for each thing that I ask you to do, we will invest time in preparing you to do that thing at a high level.

For the **in-class argument assignment**, you will advanced a detailed **critique (10 points)** of and **response to (15 points)** a recent and public (or semi-public, intra-organizational) argument or series of arguments produced by a person, group, organization, or institution. While the critique portion of this assignment will be written, the response portion will involve an oral presentation component—in addition to your paper, you will give an oral presentation to the class. Students will also have the option of presenting their response—in addition to the oral presentation—through any number of generic forms (written, performed, creative, etc.). This option may be especially appropriate if the argument you respond to takes the form of a performance or creative work.

The debate assignment will be carried out in groups of four. Each group will determine a resolution (we will learn about resolutions of ‘policy’ and resolutions of ‘value,’ and focus on one or both accordingly depending on interest), prepare a written **debate brief (15 points, assigned as a group grade)** based on open-ended research, and **perform a debate (10 points, assigned individually)** in two-person “cross-examination” inter-collegiate debate format. We’ll discuss different possibilities for the performance of the debates themselves on the first day of class.

The **public argument assignment (15 points)** will ask you to identify a genre of and venue for your own public argument. For example: letter to the editor (genre), *Champaign News-Gazette* (venue); short story (genre), *Ninth Letter* (venue); Op-Ed (genre), *Daily Illini* (venue); guest sports blog post (genre), *Windy City Gridiron* (venue). The argument or arguments you make in your public argument piece can be on just about any topic—the goal is to be persuasive on whatever topic you might choose.

Part of the nature of making public arguments, of course, is that often what we write is *not* ultimately published in our intended venue. This assignment is accordingly more about the *method* than the result. We’ll brainstorm broad areas for genres and venues, and I will help

facilitate ideas for venues where I can. I'll also give you several examples of writing from both your *genre* and your *venue*: your task will be to write a high-quality argumentative piece that emulates the generic style.

The **weekly argument exercise (10 points for the semester)** will be a short, no-prior-knowledge needed argument practice in a variety of genres that you will prepare each week. Where we can, we'll take advantage of academic events on the UIUC campus (that also implicate our major course themes) as part of the basis for each week's prompt.

The **planned informal debates (10 points for the semester)** will be informal weekly debate practice: this is also no-prior-knowledge needed, but as the semester progresses, you'll become more and more expert at incorporating theoretical and practical knowledge of argument into these debates. Debate prompts will be based on course readings—some in the course packet, some TBA that I will periodically bring in—that speak to the major course themes.

As this is an argumentation class, a substantial portion of your grade is assigned to **participation (15 points for the semester)**. While you will be required to verbally participate in class discussions in order to get a good participation grade, participation does *not* mean talking as much as possible. Rather, I expect each student to come to class having read the readings and to be prepared to assist in generating a productive discussion. This includes facilitating the ability of other students to participate meaningfully in the course. Engagement with readings can also be non-verbal—I will grade participation weekly, and I will always welcome half page—one page written reading responses turned in at the beginning of class as participation. Your participation grade can also be negatively affected by actions that consistently hinder the ability of your classmates to participate (for example, dominating class discussion), and/or by lack of adherence to the classroom environment policy (see below).

As with most EJP courses, we will place a significant influence on **writing** throughout the course of the semester—although we will also engage in in-depth exploration of other means argumentative expression. This semester, the Resource Rooms will include formal writing workshops designed to help EJP students excel in the writing *process*, regardless of the subject of the course. We'll talk more about this opportunity in class.

Grades:

Grade percentage breakdowns are as follows. Remember that a “C” is average and is the grade earned for meeting the minimum requirements of an assignment/the class as a whole. A “B” is the grade earned for going above and beyond the minimum requirements of an assignment, and an “A” can only be earned through *superior* work.

A	93~100 %	C	75~77 %
A-	90~92 %	C-	70~74 %
B+	88~89 %	D+	68~69 %
B	85~87 %	D	65~67 %
B-	80~84 %	D-	60~64 %
C+	78~79 %	F	Below 60 %

I reserve the right to dock you one letter grade for each week you turn in a major assignment late.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the use of another person's work without adequate citation or with dishonest intentions. I will evaluate your work and respond to any instances of suspected plagiarism according to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign policy on academic dishonesty, which I will distribute.

ADA Statement:

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, cognitive, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities. Please contact me as soon as possible to discuss any such accommodations you feel you may need for this course.

Classroom environment and harmful speech:

For "argument" to be productive, it must be distinct from and devoid of abuse. Throughout the semester, we will be discussing and arguing about many controversial issues. Many of these will affect each of us personally in different ways. Because of this, it is important that the classroom remain a safe and welcoming environment for each participant. It is natural and productive for you to find yourself disagreeing, perhaps very strongly, with statements made by myself or by one of your peers, or by an author we read in the course—learning to articulate and participate in these disagreements productively and effectively will be one of our core goals.

However: responses based on insults or ad-hominem (personal) attacks ("you're an idiot for saying that") are unacceptable; as are derogatory remarks of any kind that are directed at a person or group of people (whether they are present/members of the class or not), particularly if such remarks are related to a person or group's apparent race or ethnicity, gender or sexual identity, sexual orientation, or social/economic class. Remember that there is a difference between asking about and discussing the implications and impacts of certain potentially derogatory kinds of speech, and deploying the same forms of speech against another person. If I hear you engaging in speech of this nature, I will immediately respond and ask you to desist. This is not meant as punishment or ridicule; rather, I need to make sure that the class remains a safe environment for productive disagreement.

Please also be familiar with EJP (organization-wide) policies regarding appropriate classroom speech and conduct.

Class Schedule – all readings must be completed *by* the date that they are assigned (except for the first meeting). Note that this is the **convocation** version of the syllabus; there will probably be changes in the reading schedule between January 10 and January 18; I will bring an updated syllabus to the first day of class.

Date:	Focus:	Reading (due on day listed):
1/18	<p>Course introduction and syllabus</p> <p>Introduction to Argumentation pt. 1</p> <p><i>Introduce weekly argument, planned-informal debate, and public argument assignments</i></p> <p><i>Public argument assignment in-class brainstorm</i></p>	<p>(Read and discuss in-class): Zarefsky, “The Decline of Public Debate”</p> <p>Jasinski, “Argument” (selections)</p>
1/25	<p>Introduction to Argument pt. 2</p> <p><i>Public argument assignment genre and venue selection</i></p>	<p>Wenzel, “Three Perspectives on Argument”</p> <p>Brockriede and Ehninger, “Toulmin on Argument”</p> <p>Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation”</p>
2/1	<p>Modes, purposes, and effects of public argument</p> <p><i>Planned-informal debate #1</i></p>	<p>Selections from Perelman, <i>The Realm of Rhetoric</i></p> <p>Selections from Aristotle, <i>Rhetoric</i></p> <p>Finnegan, “The Naturalistic Enthymeme”</p> <p>McKinnon, “Citizenship and the Performance of Credibility”</p>
2/8	<p>Introduction to course themes</p> <p><i>Public argument assignment drafts due</i></p>	<p>Sloop, <i>Disciplining Gender</i>, Introduction</p> <p>Bruner, “Producing Identities”</p> <p>Cisneros, “Contaminated Communities”</p> <p>Chávez—“Exploring the Defeat of Arizona’s Marriage Amendment”</p>
2/22	<p>Fiat</p> <p><i>Planned-informal debate #2</i></p> <p><i>Introduce in-class argument assignment</i></p>	<p>Birdsell, “George W. Bush’s Signing Statements”</p> <p><i>Fox News</i>, “Obama Suspends Deportation”</p> <p>Janet Napolitano, “Exercising Prosecutorial Discretion for Persons who Came to the United States as Children”</p>
2/22 cont...	<p><i>Public argument assignments due 2/22 or 3/1</i></p>	

		Beisecker—"Rhetorical Situation"
3/1	Legal Argument—pt. 1 <i>Planned-informal debate #3</i>	Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion" Conley and O'Barr, <i>Just Words</i> , Ch. 4 TBA
3/8	Legal Argument—pt. 2 <i>In-class argument assignment rough draft due</i> <i>Planned-informal debate #4</i>	Bobbitt— <i>Constitutional Interpretation</i> , ch. 3 & 2 Mootz— <i>Rhetorical Knowledge</i> , selections <i>United States v. Wong Kim Ark</i> <i>Grutter v. Bollinger</i> , selections
3/15	Oppositional argument and case study <i>Introduce debate assignment</i>	Olson and Goodnight, "Entanglements of Consumption" Cohen, <i>GLQ</i> TBA Somerville, <i>Queer Loving</i>
3/22	<i>In-class argument assignment due; presentations</i> <i>Catch-up as needed</i>	TBA
4/5	Vernacular Argument <i>Introduction to debate: pt. 1</i>	Ono and Sloop, <i>Shifting Borders</i> Debate Handouts
4/12	Debate Prep	
4/19	Debate Prep	
4/26	Debate Prep	
5/3	Debate Prep	
5/10	Debates	