

## **COMM 171: Argumentation and Debate**

Fall 2021 – Evan Jones | patlabor@live.unc.edu

Class time: MWF 11:15 AM – 12:05 PM

Class location: Phillips 0222

Office hours: Weekly by appointment

### **Purpose of the Course**

Public debate is a political and educational tradition with roots in Ancient Greece and in the earliest European universities. Advocates of public debate stress its importance to democracy and good decision-making, while detractors argue that it is a practice in sophistry and nihilism. (It can be both!) The purpose of this class is to explore the theory and practice of argumentation and debate as instruments of democratic discourse, methods for improved deliberation and decision-making, and as templates for skills which may prove useful in other academic and professional pursuits.

**This course is split into two “parts.”** The first part is dedicated to readings and lectures which will provide you with an idea of how argumentation and debate function, and the second is devoted to debating and related activities.

**Please note:** As we are obviously dealing with a public health issue this syllabus is likely to change. Moreover there is a good possibility certain activities and class sessions may have to be held online or drastically changed so as to maintain certain standard health protocols. Your consideration and your flexibility is appreciated!

### **Course Objectives**

1. Learn fundamental aspects of argumentation and debate.
2. Familiarize ourselves with foundational theories of argumentation and debate.
3. Work collaboratively to research topics and argue for or against them.
4. Utilize lessons, ideas, and thoughts in participatory discussions and activities.

### **Mask and Social Distance Policy**

All enrolled students are required to wear a mask covering your mouth and nose at all times in our classroom. This requirement is to protect our educational community — your classmates and me – as we learn together. If you choose not to wear a mask, or wear it improperly, I will ask you to leave immediately, and I will submit a report to the Office of Student Conduct. At that point you will be dis-enrolled from this course for the protection of our educational community. Students who have an authorized accommodation from Accessibility Resources and Service have an exception. For additional information, visit Carolina Together online.

We will be practicing social distancing in this class. Your health and well-being is important.

### **Textbook and Class Readings**

You are required to read all of the assigned readings. There is no textbook. All course materials will be posted on Sakai, accessible through UNC library, or available online. **It is essential that you come to class having read all assigned material** as classes will be focused on discussion and exercises.

You may also want to consider regularly reading **The Daily Tar Heel** for the sake of class discussions and for your own edification.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

Ballots (2):	10%	10 points
Policy Debate Research Assignment	20%	20 points
Debates (2)	50%	50 points
Final Exam	20%	20 points
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100 points</b>

#### Ballots (10 points, 5 each)

In this class you will participate in two different debates (crafting the controversy debate and a policy debate). After the class has completed each debate, you will write a 500-750 word ballot in which you evaluate your own performance and those of your peers. Ballots should demonstrate how you carefully considered and weighed the main arguments presented in the debates and demonstrate a mastery of class concepts. **Due dates for the ballots may be adjusted as the semester continues.**

#### Policy Debate Research Assignment (3 parts, 20 points)

You will collaboratively produce **evidence briefs** in preparation for your final policy debates. This is a research-intensive course, which means a substantial portion of your final grade will be determined by your contribution to your group's research efforts. Receiving full points for these briefs requires following the proper format, finding evidence that is well qualified and pertinent to the topic, and working collaboratively to match the needs of your research group. **Each group** will be expected to produce **one 10-12 page research brief reflecting your position, be it positive or negative.**

I. Everyone will turn in a draft of their research brief on **October 25.**

II. The revised set of briefs is due on **November 8.**

III. The second set of briefs is due on **November 12.**

### **DEBATES (50 points)**

#### Crafting the Controversy Debate (20 points)

! In this assignment, students will break into two person groups. Students from each group will be assigned either Pro or Con for their resolution on the basis of a coin flip, and will debate their group's controversy in front of the class. The debate format will proceed as follows:

- ! 3 minute pro first speech
- ! 3 minute con first speech
- ! 2 minute pro rebuttal
- ! 2 minute con rebuttal

#### Policy Debates (30 points)

The main project that this class builds toward is **policy** debates where you argue for both sides of an issue. Receiving full points for your participation in these debates will require:

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- ! Active and engaged participation during the debates
- ! A willingness to work cooperatively and productively with your group
- ! Good use of your preparation and research time before the debates
- ! A rudimentary command of public speaking (we will work on this during class)
- ! A basic grasp of the policy debate format
- ! An ability to execute argumentative strategies discussed in class and in the readings

Format for debates will be TBD; we may do them online or we may do them in a more distanced, acoustically viable environment than our assigned classroom.

### Final Exam (20 points)

Your final exam will be derived from your daily participation quizzes. Please inquire if you have any other questions.

### In-class discussion

Students are expected to participate thoughtfully and engage with the course material and their peers. We will be having a LOT of discussions and mini-activities in this class so as to prepare you for your debates and get you in the “modes” of argumentation and debate thinking; they both build upon and challenge the readings so you do not feel bewildered when you start debating in a more formal capacity.

Simply put: **Participate in the class. Keep up with course texts. Do the readings. Ask questions.**

### **Grading Scale**

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

### **What Grades Mean**

Grading is a form of communication between instructors and students. You should view each grade you receive as part of an ongoing learning process. With that in mind, a grade of **C** means you completed the assignment adequately and according to the given guidelines, demonstrating conceptual competence. A **B** means you executed the assignment thoroughly, using well-reasoned analysis, and demonstrated more than a cursory understanding of the concepts. An **A** means your work demonstrates a deep understanding of the concepts, attention to detail, and includes well-reasoned and well-executed analysis. **Ds** and **Fs** mean you did not complete the assignment, did not follow directions, and/or did not demonstrate competence, and/or employ the appropriate course-related language. We will need to have a serious heart-to-heart conversation if you are regularly producing **D** or **F**-level work.

### **Course Policies**

**Participation and attendance** are important in a class focused on audience persuasion. It is your responsibility to ensure you attend class (while practicing proper health protocols) and arrive on time, especially when we have to complete debates in the short time allotted

to us. Do **NOT** be late on debate days. Students are expected to attend each scheduled class meeting, be on time, and be prepared for each class session. The university attendance policy is as follows:

“No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences: 1. Authorized University activities. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by Accessibility Resources and Service and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC). 3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the Office of the Dean of Students, Gender Violence Service Coordinators, and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC).

**Assignments** must be turned in on time for you to receive a grade.

Be **polite** and **respectful** to other students. The class encourages argument, of course, but argument and fighting are most certainly not the same thing.

**Electronic learning devices** are permitted for note-taking and research during class **EXCEPT** during rebuttals, during exams and quizzes, and/or when the instructor says to put them away. Students should refrain from browsing social media, buying shoes online, or conversing on whatever chat platform is in vogue these days (yes, even ham radio users will need to say “73” when class begins). If the aforementioned uses of electronic devices becomes a problem I reserve the right to disallow their use. The Internet and Steam will be there after class is over. I promise.

The **UNC honor code** will be in effect for the duration of this course. In particular, students are expected to refrain from “lying, cheating, or stealing” in the academic context. If you are unsure about which actions violate that honor code, please see me or consult [honor.unc.edu](http://honor.unc.edu).

At UNC **plagiarism** is defined as the “deliberate or reckless representation of another’s words, thoughts, or ideas as one’s own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise.” Be sure you have read and understand the UNC-CH writing center’s handout on plagiarism. If you have any questions concerning this document or plagiarism in general, contact the Writing Center and get them answered. **As debate students it is important for you to know the difference between citing, referencing, and plagiarizing.** Please note **plagiarism is grounds for automatic failure of this course.**

<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/plagiarism>

As your instructor I will facilitate the accommodation of this course to make it more accessible for students who use **Accessibility Resources**. UNC-CH facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities. All accommodations are coordinated through the Accessibility Resources and Service Office. A student is welcome to initiate the registration process at any time, however, the process can take time. ARS is particularly busy in the run-up to final exams. Students submitting

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Self-ID forms at that time are unlikely to have their accommodations honored until the next semester. Visit their website at <http://accessibility.unc.edu> or email [ars@unc.edu](mailto:ars@unc.edu) for more information.

This course has a heavy emphasis on **speaking in public**. If a student requires assistance or accommodation due to any range of issues including speaking English as a foreign language, speech issues, and/or other problems please see me to ensure you receive necessary accommodations.

**CAPS** is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Visit them online at <https://caps.unc.edu/> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.

By enrolling as a student in this course, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the acceptable use of IT systems and services. You may be asked to participate in online discussions or other online activities that may include personal information about you or other students in the course. The rights and protection of other participants are protected under the UNC-Chapel Hill Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy, which covers topics related to using digital resources, such as privacy, confidentiality, and intellectual property. Consult the University website “Safe Computing at UNC” for information about the data security policies, updates, and tips on keeping your identity, information, and devices safe.

**Title IX Resources** - Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>. Please contact the University’s Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, interim – [titleixcoordinator@unc.edu](mailto:titleixcoordinator@unc.edu)), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office ([reportandresponse@unc.edu](mailto:reportandresponse@unc.edu)), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators ([gvsc@unc.edu](mailto:gvsc@unc.edu); confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at [safe.unc.edu](http://safe.unc.edu).

## Course Schedule\*

### I. LET'S GET TO (PRE)ARGUING!

**W 8/18**— Course Introduction / syllabus review

**F 8/20**— Setting the Stage Workshop  
Cohen, “Reason Seen More as Weapon Than Path to Truth”  
Machan, Tibor R. "Arguments Versus Fallacies"  
<http://www.lewrockwell.com/machan/machan38.html>

**M 8/23**— Words with (and Against) Friends Workshop  
Argumentation Exercise 1

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O'Keefe, "Two Concepts of Arguments"

**Suggested:** Ellenberg, "There is no Such Thing as Public Opinion"

## II. KNOWING YOUR SURROUNDINGS

**W 8/25**— Situations and Spheres Conceptual Exercise  
Rieke, et al Chapter 1: Defining Argumentation

**F 8/27**— Situations and Spheres Cont'd  
Rieke, et al Chapter 2: Defining Argumentation

**M 8/30**— Pedagogical Innovation Exercise: Envisioning Technology, Space, and More via Various Situations and Spheres  
Jasinski: "Rhetorical Situation" (Brief review of important ideas, context)  
Lunsford, Ruskiewicz, & Walters, "Structuring Arguments" (Chapter 7)

## III. ARGUMENTATION: NUTS AND BOLTS

**W 9/1**— Style is Everything (\*except when it isn't)  
Lunsford, Ruskiewicz, & Walters, "Style in Arguments" (Chapter 13)  
**Policy Debate Topics Discussion**

**Fri 9/3**— Toulmin: Bringing it All Together  
Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument*, p. 1-15, 87-100  
**Policy Debate Topics Discussion Cont'd**

**M 9/6** — No Class

**W 9/8**-- Toulmin Cont'd  
Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument*, p. 1-15, 87-100  
Heinrichs "Fallacies" summary via <https://sourcesofinsight.com/7-deadly-logical-sins/>  
**Policy Debate Topics Finalized**

## IV. EXIT: ARGUMENTATION / ENTER: DEBATE

**F 9/10**— Debate and Democracy pt. 1  
Day, Dennis G. "The Ethics of Democratic Debate."

**M 9/13**— Debate and Democracy pt. 2  
Mitchell, Gordon R. "Pedagogical Possibilities for Argumentative Agency in Academic Debate."

**\*\*POLICY DEBATE RESEARCH GROUPS SHOULD BE FINALIZED BY 9/13!!\*\***

**W 9/15**— Debate and Democracy pt. 3  
Freely & Steinberg, "Applied and Academic Debate"

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**F 9/17**— Case Construction

Freely & Steinberg, “Building the Affirmative Case”

Jasinski, “Stock Topics”

**M 9/20**— The Negative

Freely & Steinberg, “Building the Negative Case”

**W 9/22**— More Negative Stuff!

Hollihan and Baaske, “Refuting Arguments” (whole chapter)

**F 9/24**— Evidence

Freely & Steinberg, “Evidence”

What is a brief, anyway?

## **V. DEBATES**

**M 9/27**— Freely & Steinberg, “Stating the Controversy” / In-Class Group Work

**W 9/29**— Freely & Steinberg, “Analyzing the Controversy” / In-Class Group Work

**F 10/1**— Freely & Steinberg, “Exploring the Controversy” / In-Class Group Work

**M 10/4**— Controversy Debates Pt. 1

**W 10/6**— Controversy Debates Pt. 2

**F 10/8**— Controversy Debates Pt. 3

**M 10/11**— Controversy Debates Wrap-ups / **Ballots Due for Controversy Debates!**

**W 10/13**— Work Period / Research Briefs

**F 10/15**— Work Period / Research Briefs

**M 10/18**— Argumentation Key Terms Review

**W 10/20**— Debate Key Terms Review

**F 10/22** – **No Class**

**M 10/25** – Work Period - **Briefs first drafts due by end-of-day.**

**W 10/27** – Debate Practice Workshop

**F 10/29** – Debate Practice Workshop

**M 11/1** – **Briefs returned** / Discussions

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**W 11/3** – Contemporary Issues Mini-Debates

**F 11/5** – Contemporary Issues Mini-Debates

**M 11/8** – **Brief revisions due**

**W 11/10** – Policy Debates Round One

**F 11/12** – **Final Briefs due**

**M 11/15** – Policy Debates Round Two

**W 11/17** – **No class (NCA)**

**F 11/19** – **No class (NCA)**

**M 11/22** – Policy Debates Round Three / **Ballots Due**

**W 11/24** ← **No class Thanksgiving**

**F 11/26** ← **No class Thanksgiving**

**M 11/29** – Policy Debates Round Four

**W 12/1** – Policy Debates Round Five / Wrap-up / **Ballots Due**

**FINAL EXAM – 12:00 PM, December 10, 2021**

\*Teaching, like everything in life, requires flexibility. For this reason there may be changes to this schedule depending on inclement weather, class interest, progress, and other contingencies.