

Syllabus COMM 2130 Argumentation/Critical Thinking
Fall, 2006 Dixie State College Department of Fine Arts/Communication

Instructor: Dennis L. Wignall, Ph.D. Office: 104, Eccles Fine Arts Building
Office Hours: M/W/F 1:00-2 pm; or By Appointment
Office Phone: (435) 652-7803
Email: wignall@dixie.edu

Required Text: Richard D. Rieke and Malcolm O. Sillars. Argumentation and Critical Decision Making, 6th ed. Longman. New York. 2001.

Suggested Reading: Vincent Ryan Ruggiero. The Art of Thinking, 8th Ed. Pearson/Longman. 2007.

Course Description:

This course will identify and explain the concepts you must know and the steps you must take when you construct an argument. The course will emphasize argumentation as a communicative activity in which you advance claims and their grounds, then strengthen and refine them using compelling evidence so that they will resist the refutation of others. Accordingly, the course stresses building performance skills in argumentation. The importance of decision-making and decision makers in creating arguments will be a major theme of the course. Real life application of the theories of argumentation will be stressed along with the importance of academic debate. Students will participate in informal debates and presentations designed to build their skills in argumentation. In addition, students will explore and enhance their personal critical thinking skills through the development of argument as well as refutation and rebuttal against arguments posed by others.

"If you are a student with a physical or mental impairment and would like to request accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center (652-7516) in Room 201 of the Student Services Center. The Disability Resource Center will determine your eligibility for services based upon complete professional documentation. If you are deemed eligible, the Disability Resource Center will further evaluate the effectiveness of your accommodation requests and will authorize reasonable accommodations that are appropriate for your disability."

Objectives of the Course: Our work this semester will achieve the following objectives:

1. Understand the characteristics of argumentation;
2. Understand how argumentation serves critical appraisal;
3. Identify and analyze issues;
4. Build argumentative cases;
5. Understand types of argument;
6. Understand and evaluate the evidence in arguments;
7. Understand the role of values and credibility in arguments;
8. Be able to attack and defend a claim;
9. Understand the role of argument spheres.

Attendance Policy:

Think mandatory! We can't debate if you're not here! Should you need to be absent please let me know in advance by leaving me a note in my office or via email. If you are scheduled for a presentation and are absent you will miss out on double points! That is, you won't get the attendance points for the day, and I will penalize you an additional 10 points. In addition, you will receive a grade of "F" for that assignment. *There is no makeup of any assignment or exam!*

You are allowed five absences per normal semester (16 weeks), on those days during which you are not scheduled to present or participate in a debate. ***The sixth absence incurs a grade reduction of one full grade level.*** Every third absence thereafter your grade is reduced one full level. Thus, if you otherwise have an "A" but you have missed 18 class days (out of a possible 45), you will have earned a grade of "F". There is no need to tell me why you were absent. You are an adult and are thus responsible for your actions because adults have the right to make decisions about their own lives. Of course, every decision results in consequences; some positive, some not so positive. There is no such thing as an "excused absence."

Exams: These will be a combination of scheduled exams (RE: later in this syllabus) and an occasional unannounced ***pop quiz***. These will be designed to test your understanding of the material presented in lecture, in the readings, and during class discussions. They are objective in design and are timed to deal with each successive 3-5 chapters in the textbook.

The Final Exam will be cumulative; that is, drawn from the final readings, lecture, etc. and from all previous exams. ***The type, style, format, length, etc. will be determined by you!*** Your proposition will be submitted to me as a brief, I will entertain oral argument in support of your proposition. I will make a decision about your proposal based on the merits of your case. In fact, you could even argue that a final exam is not necessary; but you had best be able to support that claim extremely well! To date, no one has constructed sufficient argument to support this option.

Note:

If at any time during the duration of the semester you experience difficulties with your studies, a particular assignment, a current significant other, or anything that impinges on your successful completion of the course, please talk to me as soon as possible. I am more than willing to assist you in any way possible to ensure your success in the class. But you have to talk to me!

Reading Assignments:

Week 1 & 2	8/22-9/1	Chaps 1, 2 and misc handouts.
Week 3 & 4	9/4-9/15	Chap 3. Argue! Labor Day: Sept 4. No classes!
Week 5 & 6	9/18-9/29	Chap 4; First Exam , probably the 29 th .

Week 7 & 8	10/2-10/13	Toulmin speech due. Semester Break, Oct 12-13. No classes!
Week 9 & 10	10/16-10/27	Chaps 5, 6. Argumentative Discussion.
Week 10& 11	10/30-11/10	Chaps 7, 8; Second Exam approximately here
Week 12 & 13	11/13-11/24	Chaps 9, 10, & 11; Advocacy Speeches Thanksgiving: Nov 22-24. No Classes!
Week 14 & 15	11/27-12/8	Wrap up the readings! Finish Advocacy Speeches
Week 16	12/11-12/15	Final Exam Week! Do not schedule your vacation, trips to Grandma's, etc., during this week!

Throughout the semester you will engage each other in informal debates, some more involved than others. The format, topic, and dates will be established as we move through the semester and the associated content material.

Grading: (percent of final grade)

Exams:	15% each (not including the final)
Pop quizzes:	5-10% each
Toulmin Speech*	10%
Advocacy Speech*	15%
Participation**	15%
Final Exam	25% (or as established by your proposition)
Extra Credit	10-15% Any number of possibilities: To Be Discussed in Class

*I will provide detailed instructions regarding both the Toulmin and Advocacy Speeches as the semester progresses. You will need to present a typed outline to me on the day of your speech(es).

**Participation is defined as maintaining perfect attendance, turning in all assignments on time, orally/verbally contributing to class discussions in constructively critical ways, and engaging the material contained in each class exercise.

Final Note:

The above information represents a general course of events and assignments for the next 16 weeks. I reserve the right to change things as we go along and will announce any change in sufficient time in advance of any due date or other constraint.

Good luck!