Course Goals

In this course, you will learn how to make and evaluate effective written and oral arguments. This course hopes to teach you how to both construct and deconstruct arguments in all their forms. When we are finished, you will be a more thorough and efficient communicator and a more informed observer of arguments made by media outlets, family members, and political pundits.

Course Schedule

Tuesday, August 31: Syllabus discussion, introductions, observing an argument
Thursday, September 2: What is argumentation? Distinguishing it from persuasion and exploring types of argumentation (written, academic, competitive) + introducing arg theory
Tuesday, September 7: Stock issues intro + claiming position statement topics
Thursday, September 9: Using evidence
Read: Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing Revisited

Tuesday, September 14: Analyzing context/audience
September 14th Due: Excuse letter

Thursday, September 16: IPDA Debate: Structure and Speaker Roles
Tuesday, September 21: Competitive debate: watch and analyze
September 22nd Due: IPDA flow

Thursday, September 23: IPDA Debate Discussion
September 28th Due: Position paper #1

Tuesday, September 28: Significance
Thursday, September 30: Inherency + Topicality
Tuesday, October 5: Harms
Thursday, October 7: Solvency
Tuesday, October 12: Discussing long-form arguments

Thursday, October 14: Introducing and discussing course book
October 14th Due: Stock Issues quiz

Tuesday, October 19: Voting Issues
Thursday, October 21: Political debates - how are the rules different? How are they the same?
Tuesday, October 26: Watch and discuss a presidential debate


Thursday, October 28: How political argumentation has changed over time

**October 28th Due: Long article response**

Tuesday, November 2: Toulmin model + argument diagramming

Thursday, November 4: Written argumentation - differences, similarities, and types

Tuesday, November 9: Argument diagram discussion and assignment

Thursday, November 11: Fallacies review

Tuesday, November 16: Position statement 1 due, position statement discussion

**November 15th Due: Fallacies quiz**

Thursday, November 18: Breakout groups: IPDA “practice” case

**November 19th Due: Argument diagram**

Tuesday, November 23: Thanksgiving break, no class

Thursday, November 26: Thanksgiving break, no class

Tuesday, November 30: Argumentation for life: family debates, letters to the editor, etc.

**December 2nd Due: Position paper #2**

Thursday, December 2: Bringing it all together

Tuesday, December 7: Final debate pairings and topic assigned

Thursday, December 9: Course debrief and lessons learned

**December 15th Due: Final debate and flow**

Assignments and Tests

**Question of the Day (Due each class day, 25 points total)** Each class day, there will be a one-question quiz that you must answer. It will be a fairly simple question based either on the previous class day’s lesson or the reading - it should be easy to answer correctly if you came to class, and you may use your notes. There are 28 class days in the semester, but the overall Question of the Day grade will be scored out of 25 points to give you some leeway. This means that you could get some extra credit. I reserve the right to give occasional freebies or double points.

**Excuse Letter (due September 14th, 15 points)** Your first assignment is meant to introduce you to the art of making a good argument. Using the principles learned in class, you will write your professor/boss a note explaining why you missed class/work. Your note should be no longer than 75 words long and should include proper terms of address, at least one piece of evidence with a source/support, and at least one pillar of rhetoric. Then, in 200-250 words, explain why your evidence and rhetoric make a compelling argument and how you tailored your argument to the context and audience. This is meant to be a relatively informal assignment, and you should feel free to have some fun with it - what’s important is good rhetorical choices and analysis.

**Position Papers (due September 28th and December 2nd, 20 points each)** There are two of these, one toward the beginning of the semester and one toward the end. These will consist of
providing background information and then writing down the pro and con arguments for an issue. A sample will be provided in Canvas and discussed in class. Each statement should have a title that makes a statement. This will be followed by 5 arguments for and 5 arguments against your statement. Give some facts and numbers to support your claims - each argument should have an accompanying source dated within the last 2 years. Make your points unique. You will need to do research to fulfill the assignment. Each position statement must fit on one page. You choose the topic. Each person’s topic must be different. We will spend a partial day in class choosing topics - make sure to come prepared with a few in case someone else takes your first choice. They must be a full page, no shorter and no longer, and 12 pt Times font. They must have a file name that has your name and the number of position statement, such as Tom Worthen #1- Law Suit Abuse or Tom Worthen #2 – Civil Asset Forfeiture. These will be graded on the quality and uniqueness of your arguments, spelling, and format. Have sources for the support for your points. The first is due on September 28th and the second on December 2nd. These will be worth 20 points each for a total of 40 points.

Debate Flows (due dates specified in Canvas, 10 points each) When we watch in-class debates and when you debate on your own, you will be required to hand in a flow (debate notes). These will be graded based on detail and clarity and will be due by the class session after we watch the debate. Worth 10 points each for a total of 20 points.

Long Article Response - Choose 1 of the 2 below options. (due October 28th, 20 points) Stock Issues Analysis Write a 2-page, double-spaced analysis of the presence and use of stock issues in the assigned reading. Touch on at least 3 of the stock issues. Tell us how they are used, whether they are convincing and effective, and how you think they could have been used better or differently. Use evidence from the book, but do not use block quotes. Most of the essay should consist of your own analysis.
Rebuttal Write a 2-page, double-spaced argument against at least one of the arguments made in the assigned reading. Use your own evidence cited in APA style and analysis. Keep argument structure and stock issues in mind as you write.

Argument Diagram (due November 19th, 20 points) Using diagramming methods to examine arguments provides a clear picture of the structure of arguments. For this assignment, students are required to evaluate an argument in a New York Times opinion editorial using the Toulmin model of argumentation as described in class resources. The assignment consists of two parts. The first part is a visual diagram where you identify all the elements of argumentation in the op-ed argument. This includes the claim, grounds, warrants, backing, data, and if applicable, the modal term. You can utilize any creative design skills to map these arguments so long as each element of argument is clearly and precisely identified. You may cite the op-ed, but the diagram itself should not simply consist of quoted material. You should summarize the essence of each element in your own words. The second part of this assignment is a critical analysis of the argument’s substantiveness. Ask yourself, is the argument forceful, effective, and well warranted? What would Toulmin say about this particular argument based on your visual diagram? This assignment is worth 20 points and should be 2 pages (1 page for the diagram, 1 double-spaced page for the analysis).
Quizzes: Stock Issues Quiz (due October 14th, 20 points) and Fallacies Quiz (due November 15th, 15 points) These 2 quizzes will be based on reading material and class discussions. They will not look like a typical quiz. They are open-book and open-internet - they will rely on your ability to analyze and synthesize information rather than your ability to regurgitate memorized content. They will be short-answer but will require a good deal of thought, so I would advise you to set aside some time to complete them. They will each be open for 3 days; once you begin, you will have one hour to complete the assessment. They are worth 15 points each.

Final Debate (due December 15th, 25 points) As the final for the course, you will be required to submit a recorded, real-time Zoom debate in IPDA style with your assigned opponent. You will receive your topic one week before the submission date. Keep in mind that these debates are meant to be extemporaneous - I don’t expect your presentation to be perfectly polished or your argumentation to be flawless. What I will be looking at in terms of grading will be the structure of your arguments, effective use of stock issues, and competent integration of credible sources. Due December 15th and worth 25 points.

Grading Scale (200 total points available for the semester)

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A Note on 2021
These are highly unusual times. While I have high expectations of you for the semester, I recognize and understand the strange and difficult time we’re all living through. I plan on extending grace and leeway accordingly and hope you will do the same for me. Dates and requirements may change, and we may end up changing some of the course content based on your needs and interests. With regard to my expectations for you, please know that I understand life happens, and that life right now is particularly tough. If you are having trouble understanding the material or completing the course assignments, please contact me - the earlier I know about an issue, the earlier and better we can deal with it together.

Health: If you are experiencing ANY COVID-19 symptoms, please stay home and participate in the class via the Zoom broadcast. If special circumstances arise in your life due to COVID-19, please let me know as soon as possible so that I can help you plan and accommodate your needs.

Masks: Both the university and I personally strongly recommend and encourage that you wear a mask when in class. Mask wearing will help to maintain in-person classes, activities and events through the semester.

Distancing and seating chart: Please maintain a 6 foot distance from others whenever possible during class sessions. Additionally, we are required to use the new Seating Chart function in Canvas starting the second week of class. This new link will appear in the left-hand navigation window of your Canvas page beginning September 7. It will be critical for the case containment team to know where students are sitting in proximity to other students in order to manage the contact tracing process when a positive case occurs. This will help our class avoid going into Red status that will require us to move completely to remote teaching via Zoom. This is not a seating chart that will be created by me, the instructor - instead, students will need to track their seating. This may sound complicated, but essentially, you are required to specify your seat in the classroom and then stick to that seat for the rest of the semester.

Students with Disabilities

USU welcomes students with disabilities. If you have, or suspect you may have, a physical, mental health, or learning disability that may require accommodations in this course, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) as early in the semester as possible (University Inn # 101, 435-797-2444, drc@usu.edu). All disability related accommodations must be approved by the DRC. Once approved, the DRC will coordinate with faculty to provide accommodations.

Many DRC accommodations, including extended time on tests, are already accounted for within Canvas. If you need further accommodations, please reach out to me either via your DRC representative or yourself.

Academic Integrity - "The Honor System"

The University expects that students and faculty alike maintain the highest standards of academic honesty. The Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State University (Student Conduct) addresses academic integrity and honesty and notes the following:
Academic Integrity: Students have a responsibility to promote academic integrity at the University by not participating in or facilitating others’ participation in any act of academic dishonesty and by reporting all violations or suspected violations of the Academic Integrity Standard to their instructors.

The Honor Pledge: To enhance the learning environment at Utah State University and to develop student academic integrity, each student agrees to the following Honor Pledge: “I pledge, on my honor, to conduct myself with the foremost level of academic integrity”. Violations of the Academic Integrity Standard (academic violations) include, but are not limited to cheating, falsification, and plagiarism.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism includes knowingly "representing by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one's own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials." The penalties for plagiarism are severe. They include warning or reprimand, grade adjustment, probation, suspension, expulsion, withholding of transcripts, denial or revocation of degrees, and referral to psychological counseling.

Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct

General Overview

USU strives to provide an environment for students and employees that is free from discrimination and sexual misconduct. If you experience sexual misconduct or discrimination at any point during the semester inside or outside of class, you are encouraged to contact the Title IX Coordinator in USU’s Office of Equity (Old Main room 161, 435-797-1266, titleix@usu.edu, equity.usu.edu). You can learn more about the USU resources available for individuals who have experienced sexual misconduct at sexualassault.usu.edu.

Responsible Employee Reporting Obligations

As a responsible employee, the instructor is required to share information about any instances of sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence (dating and domestic violence), or stalking) with the Office of Equity so they can help connect students to supportive measures, reporting options, and resources.

Bystander Intervention

Long Version: USU encourages students to be Upstanders when they witness problematic situations or behaviors. Bystander intervention can happen before, during or even after an incident occurs, and you can be an Upstander in four ways: (1) addressing the situation directly by talking to the individuals involved, (2) delegating by asking others to help or referring the individuals to a campus or community resource, (3) creating a distraction to disrupt or stop the
situation, or (4) delaying your response to the situation by waiting to address it until after it has happened. More information about being an Upstander is available at upstander.usu.edu.

Withdrawal Policy, "I" Grade Policy and Dropping Courses

If a student does not attend a class during the first week of the term or by the second class meeting, whichever comes first, the instructor may submit a request to have the student dropped from the course. (This does not remove responsibility from the student to drop courses which they do not plan to attend.) Students who are dropped from courses will be notified by the Registrar’s Office through their preferred e-mail account.

Students may drop courses without notation on the permanent record through the first 20 percent of the class. If a student drops a course following the first 20 percent of the class, a W will be permanently affixed to the student’s record (check General Catalog for exact dates).

Students with extenuating circumstances should refer to the policy regarding Complete Withdrawal from the University and the Incomplete (I) Grade policy in the General Catalog.

Assumption of Risk

All classes, programs, and extracurricular activities within the University involve some risk, and some involve travel. The University provides opportunities to participate in these programs on a voluntary basis. Therefore, students should not participate in them if they do not care to assume the risks. Students can ask the respective program leaders/sponsors about the possible risks a program may generate, and if students are not willing to assume the risks, they should not select that program. By voluntarily participating in classes, programs, and extracurricular activities, students do so at their own risk. General information about University Risk Management policies, insurance coverage, vehicle use policies, and risk management forms can be found at http://www.usu.edu/riskmgt/.

Mental Health

Mental health is critically important for the success of USU students. As a student, you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. Utah State University provides free services for students to assist them with addressing these and other concerns. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus at Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).

Students are also encouraged to download the “SafeUT App” to their smartphones. The SafeUT application is a 24/7 statewide crisis text and tip service that provides real-time crisis intervention to students through texting and a confidential tip program that can help anyone with emotional crises, bullying, relationship problems, mental health, or suicide related issues.