

COMM 322: Argumentation and Advocacy
Spring, 2006
(Class #20388D) 12:30-1:50 TTh, ASC 231

Professor: Dr. Randy Lake
Office: ASC 206C
Hours: 2:00-3:00 TTh, and by appointment (Typically, I will be in the office four days a week, so appointments will be fairly easy to obtain.)
Telephone: (213) 740-3946
E-mail: rlake@usc.edu (This is the most efficient way to reach me. I check my e-mail regularly during the weekday, when I am in the office. However, weekends and evenings are much more sporadic so, if you e-mail me at these times, please do not expect an immediate reply.)

Objectives:

- to understand the nature, functions, forms and contexts of argumentation as a communication event;
- to understand the history and evolution of argumentation theories
- to develop our abilities critically to analyze and evaluate the arguments of others; and
- to develop our abilities to construct and present sound arguments

Website:

There is a course website, located at USC's TOTALE portal at <http://totale.usc.edu>. Every student enrolled in this course has access to the website through her or his USC username and password.

This website is an official place for posting information relevant to the class, such as announcements, assignments, and grades, for discussing lecture materials, and so on. You are as responsible for knowing any material posted to the website as you would be responsible for material distributed or discussed during class. Because the University does not unequivocally recognize material placed on this website as the intellectual property of its creator, copies of my lecture notes, etc., will not be made available here.

Readings:

- Thomas A. Hollihan and Kevin T. Baaske, *Arguments and Arguing: The Products and Process of Human Decision Making*. (2nd ed.; Waveland Press, 2005) [REQUIRED]
- MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (6th ed.; 2003) [RECOMMENDED]
- Los Angeles Times*, daily [RECOMMENDED]
- Other readings as assigned

Readings should be completed *before class* on the day assigned. Lectures will not cover all portions of the assigned readings, and will cover additional materials not in the assigned readings; nonetheless, you are responsible for *all* materials, both in the readings and in lecture, on the exams.

Assignments: Detailed instructions for all assignments will be provided in due course. Assignments are underlined on the tentative daily syllabus, below, on the day each is due.

- Toulmin Exercises (2), 5% & 10%
- Collaborative Argument Project, 25%
- Panel Discussion, 10%

- Policy Debate, 20%
- Midterm Exam, 15%
- Final Exam, 15%

All assignments must be the original work of the student and cannot have been used previously or concurrently in any other course. **All assignments must be attempted and turned in to pass the course.**

Grading:

Letter grades will be given for each assignment; pluses (+) and minuses (-) will be used to indicate somewhat better- or poorer-than-normal performance, respectively. Final course grades will be calculated by converting letter grades to a numeric equivalent (using a scale where A+ equals 12, A equals 11, and so on, to F equals 0) and weighting each proportionally by the percentage worth of each assignment. All other things being equal, scores falling between whole numbers will be rounded up or down according to standard conventions; for example, 8.4 would be rounded down to 8, which is a B, while 8.6 would be rounded up to 9, which is a B+.

I generally do not “curve” grades on written or oral assignments; instead, they are assigned by applying the following criteria to the work being judged. My assumption is that each grade subsumes the requirements for the grade(s) below it, e.g, that B work meets and exceeds the requirements for C work, as follows:

- “A” signifies superior work that demonstrates original insight into the theories and materials presented in class, the application of these theories and materials, and comparisons among these theories and materials; an unusually clear and comprehensive understanding of course materials; and an articulate, polished, and correct communication style. This grade is difficult to achieve; it requires superior study habits and writing skills, and superior performance on all assignments and in attendance and participation.
- “B” signifies excellent work that demonstrates a better-than-average comprehension of the course material, as evidenced by greater detail and thoroughness in exposition, and by organized and solid, if flawed, writing or speaking. Even average students often can achieve this grade through hard work, such as utilizing a study group effectively, making a point in class of seeking clarification of difficult ideas or ideas they don’t understand, conferring with the instructor during office hours, writing and revising multiple drafts of papers, and so on.
- “C” signifies adequate work, and is considered to be average. It is given for work that demonstrates a basic familiarity and understanding of the course materials, as evidenced by an ability to summarize main points correctly, to identify key figures and main ideas from memory on examinations, and to convey understanding in basic, readable prose. This grade should be achievable by any student with decent study habits and good time management skills.
- “D” signifies deficient work that demonstrates an inadequate grasp of the course materials, as evidenced by unfamiliarity with, confusion about, or misunderstanding of key ideas, persons, and events on examinations, and hastily and poorly written assignments. This grade is often a sign of inadequate study or application, and also may be a sign of a problem in attendance or participation that contributes to inadequate study.
- “F” signifies failing work that demonstrates an unacceptably poor familiarity with or grasp of the course materials, as evidenced by an inability to identify even basic ideas, person, and events on examinations and seriously deficient writing. This grade may indicate an unacceptable lack of participation in the class, such as excessive absences would produce.

This grade may be assigned to any work that fails to meet the stated requirements of the assignment, no matter how well done this work otherwise might be. This grade **will** be assigned to any work that violates the academic integrity standards and policies of the School or University. A grade of “F” in any part of the course should be taken as a sign of a problem in need of remedy.

Exams may be graded according to the standard 90%-80%-70%-60% scale (which may be adjusted up or down as circumstances warrant) or, possibly, may be curved.

In my experience, the average in this course tends to be approximately a “B-,” although naturally any given class may perform well above (or below) this average.

Please bring any grade **discrepancies** (e.g., you were not given credit for a correct answer on an examination question) to my attention immediately. In the event of a grade **disagreement** (e.g., you believe that your answer should be counted as correct, or that you deserve a higher grade on an assignment), please: (a) wait 24 hours; and (b) submit your complaint/rationale to me **in writing**. Only those who submit an acceptable written justification will receive credit where credit is due.

Participation and Attendance:

Argumentation is a process of give-and-take. While the process of arguing involves disagreement, it need not—and should not—be disagreeable. Being a good arguer is not synonymous with being argumentative or quarrelsome. On the contrary, an effective arguer is open-minded, a good listener, respectful of the opinions of others, and able to fashion arguments in a way that others will find reasonable. Thus, it is very important that you be present and prepared to participate appropriately in each class not only as an advocate, but also as an audience.

Roll will be taken every period. Missing more than three classes for any reason (including medical emergencies or other so-called “excused” absences) may lower your course grade as much as one-third of a letter grade (e.g., from A to A-) **per absence**, and even may cause you to **fail the course**. Missing fewer than three classes may improve your course grade.

Arriving late and leaving early are extremely disruptive, and may be counted as absences.

Technology:

Cell phones and pagers also are extremely disruptive. Please leave them at home or turn them off before coming to class. “Off” means off, not some variety of “manner” or inaudible signal mode. Offenders may be asked to leave and marked absent for the day.

Laptop/notebook computers and hand-held devices such as Palm Pilots are to be used only for purposes related directly to each class, e.g., note-taking, and not for “multi-tasking,” e.g., completing a paper for another class, web-surfing, gaming, or IM’ing one’s friends. Since they already are absent mentally, offenders will be asked to leave and marked absent for the day, and also will forfeit the privilege of using such devices in the future.

No electronic devices of any kind will be needed on exam days, and none are permitted; leave them at home.

Writing Assignments:

All written assignments should be submitted in hard copy, and be an original ribbon or printer version; **no electronic files or photocopies will be accepted**. Spelling and grammatical correctness are fundamental requirements, and your writing also will be evaluated according to college-level standards of organization, clarity, gender-neutral language, and conformity to MLA style guidelines (6th edition). If you, like most people, use a word-processing program, be sure to

use the spell-check function of your program before proofreading, and remember that spell-checking is not the same as proofreading; you need to do both. Papers with errors will receive a lower grade than otherwise might have been achieved, and cannot be rewritten for credit.

Keep all notes and drafts so that you can present them if asked. An easy way to save a succession of drafts on your computer is to use the “save as” function of your word-processing program and add a unique number to the document’s filename (e.g., Essay.1, Essay.2, etc.).

All writing assignments should be double-spaced, in a 12-point font, with one-inch margins. Please use standard serif fonts like Times New Roman (the font I have used here) or Palatino; do not use extra-bold fonts like Chicago or exotic fonts; do not change fonts in headers or for emphasis. A title page is acceptable but unnecessary. Please fasten the pages of your paper with a simple staple or clip in the upper left-hand corner; **do not use a cover (plastic or other) of any kind.**

I will be happy to assist you with your written assignments before they are due, including giving feedback on rough drafts. You are encouraged to take full advantage of my help; rewrites of work already graded will not be accepted.

Deadlines and Late Work:

Turning in work late is strongly discouraged; you will only hurt yourself by getting behind. Late work may be penalized as much as one-third of a letter grade for each **day (not class period)** late (including weekends). Should you need to turn work in late, be sure to have a member of the mail room staff stamp it with date and time before delivering it to my mailbox. Because mailboxes are not absolutely secure and there is a small chance that your work could be lost, if you provide a duplicate copy of your paper or cover page the staff also will stamp it for your records.

Exams cannot be rescheduled for any reason except in those rare situations defined by University policy. Because panel discussions and debates will involve other students besides yourself in an interactive activity, it is essential that you be present on the day your activity is scheduled. If you anticipate a conflict, let me know **in advance** and I will try to modify the schedule accordingly. These activities **cannot** be made up under **any** circumstances.

Academic Integrity:

The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to upholding the University's academic integrity code as detailed in the *SCampus* guide. It is the policy of the School of Communication to report all violations of the code. Any serious violation or pattern of violations of the academic integrity code will result in the student's expulsion from the Communication major or minor.

If you have any doubts about what is and is not an academic integrity violation, please check with me. The University presumes that you are familiar with its standards and policies; should you be found to have committed a violation, ignorance of these standards and policies will **not** be accepted as an excuse.

Disabilities:

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please have the letter delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. DSP’s phone number is (213) 740-0776.

Tentative Daily Schedule:

It may be necessary to modify this schedule a bit. Assigned readings should be completed *before class* on the day listed.

T Jan 10: Introductions: Course, Instructor, and Students

Th Jan 12: Foundations of Argumentation; **Chapters 1-2**

T Jan 17: Foundations of Argumentation, cont.; **Combs, “The Useless-/Useful-ness of Argumentation”**

Th Jan 19: Types of Argument; **Chapter 6**

T Jan 24: Types of Argument, cont.

Th Jan 26: Types of Argument, cont.

T Jan 31: Argumentation and Critical Thinking; **Chapter 5**; Toulmin Exercise #1 Due

Th Feb 2: Argumentation and Critical Thinking, cont.; Collaborative Argument Project Topics Due

T Feb 7: Grounds of Argument; **Chapter 7**

Th Feb 9: Grounds of Argument, cont.; Toulmin Exercise #2 Due

T Feb 14: Fields of Argument; **Chapter 3**

Th Feb 16: Interpersonal Argumentation; **Chapter 15**

T Feb 21: Preparation for Panel Discussions (no formal class); Collaborative Argument Project, Round 1, Due

Th Feb 23: Panel Discussions

T Feb 28: Panel Discussions, cont.

Th Mar 2: Review

T Mar 7: Midterm Exam

Th Mar 9: Language of Argument; **Chapter 4**

T Mar 14: Spring break–no class

Th Mar 16: Spring break–no class

T Mar 21: Refuting Arguments; **Chapter 9**

Th Mar 23: Argumentation in Debate; **Chapter 10**

T Mar 28: Argumentation in Debate, cont.; Collaborative Argument Project, Round 2, Due

Th Mar 30: Argumentation in Law; **Chapter 13**

T Apr 4: Preparation for Policy Debates (no formal class)

Th Apr 6: Policy Debates

T Apr 11: Policy Debates, cont.

Th Apr 13: Policy Debates, cont.

T Apr 18: Policy Debates, cont.

Th Apr 20: Policy Debates, cont.

T Apr 25: Spheres of Argument; **Goodnight, “The Personal, Public and Technical Spheres of Argument”**

Th Apr 27: Review; Collaborative Argument Project, Final Round, Due

W May 10: Final exam (2:00-4:00)