COM 334: Essentials of Argument
Fall Quarter 2004

Instructor: Matt McGarrity
Course Website: http://faculty.washington.edu/mcgarrit/COM334/index.shtml
Meeting Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30-4:20 in CMU 326
Matt’s Office Hours: noon to 1 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays in CMU 143
Office Phone: 543-7854
E-mail: mcgarrit@u.washington.edu
Online Reserve Reading available at: http://www.lib.washington.edu/services/course/

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The term argument comes with much baggage. Arguments are often perceived to be mean and nasty (and often loud); sometimes this perception proves accurate, but often it does not. This class is designed to improve your ability to develop and critique arguments in a robust and civil manner. Improving such argumentative skills will aid you in most facets of your life. As such, this course advances the mission of the Department of Communication to teach students to think critically, respect diversity, and communicate effectively. By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. identify and classify arguments
2. evaluate and critique different types of evidence and reasoning
3. develop sound and convincing arguments and counter-arguments
4. argue more confidently and effectively

While some background in communication may prove helpful, it is not essential to the completion of this course.

ASSIGNMENTS

Exams: There is both a midterm exam (October 26, in class) and a final exam (December 14, 4:30-6:20 in CMU 326) over the course material. Each exam is worth 75 points. The final exam is cumulative. The questions on the exams will be a mix of multiple choice, short answer, and essay. The exams test your comprehension of essential principles of argumentation and your ability to apply argumentation theory to practical situations.

In-class Debate: Each student will engage in one in-class debate on a matter of public policy. At the beginning of the quarter, we will decide on six controversial subjects as a class. These subjects may range from campus issues, to local, national, and international issues. The main criteria for selecting a controversy are: (1) is the subject of genuine public concern? (2) is the subject controversial enough to support opposing policy arguments? (3) has enough been written on the subject to support debate research? We will hold two debates on each subject (for a total of 12 debates). In each debate, one student will argue the affirmative case and one the negative case. These are not team debates; each debater will argue head-to-head against their opponent. We will discuss the debate format in class, but the basic model involves both the affirmative and negative sides making cases, cross-examining each other, and critiquing the cases of their opponents. Students will be assessed based on their ability to construct sound and compelling arguments, critique their opponents fairly, decorously, and effectively, and demonstrate a strong knowledge of policy debate.

Written Debate Brief: As you will find, preparing for a debate requires much research and forethought. In order to help you prepare, you will turn in your debate brief. In this 5-6 (1300-1800) paper, you will make your case and prepare your responses to possible counter-arguments. Your brief is due at the beginning of class on the day you speak. This paper provides you a space to craft some of the arguments and counter-arguments that you will use in the debate itself; however, you cannot simply read this paper during the debate. This paper is designed to help you prepare for an extemporaneous debate; it is not a substitute.
**Peer Critiques:** Debates can be tricky since they often move so fast. Being able to watch and critique a debate proves useful in identifying effective and ineffective strategies. Critically examining the practices of your peers provides you another venue for thinking about how to adapt to the complexity of policy debate. Additionally, individual debaters benefit immensely from articulate feedback from their audiences. Over the course of the quarter, you will be required to critique your classmates’ debates. These peer critiques will be assigned before the debate rounds begin. You will be required to provide oral criticism immediately following a peer’s debate followed by written comments to be handed in during the next class meeting. I will grade these written comments and then pass them on to the speaker. Your written critiques will be assessed based on your ability to provide clear, insightful, accurate, and constructive feedback.

**Papers:** There are three assigned papers designed improve your ability to analyze and critique arguments. Each paper asks you to analyze some specific oral or written debate and identify and critique the argumentative strategies used. All papers should be 4-5 pages (or 1000-1500 words) in length. You papers will be assessed based on your ability to answer the assignment specific questions and your ability to satisfy the general conditions for a good paper (see below). When writing your papers, do not simply list these questions, and reply to them in turn; the assignment questions are designed to guide your discussion and evaluation of the debate. When answering these questions, you should quote specific statements from the debates in support of your claims.

- **Paper #1** (due October 19): In this paper, you will examine the second televised presidential debate, which will be held and broadcast on most major networks on Friday, October 8 at 6 pm (9 pm E.S.T). Your paper should address the following questions: What argumentative strategies did the two candidate use? What fallacies were used? How did each candidate develop his ethos as a speaker/debater? Who had the better arguments and why? By this point in the quarter, you will have read and we will have discussed argument spheres, fallacies, language, and claims; you should integrate these concepts into your paper.

- **Paper #2** (due November 9): Should the University of Washington should establish a speech code prohibiting the use of hate speech on campus?

Read the articles listed for November 9th and use these articles to write a brief in favor of establishing speech codes and a brief opposed to establishing speech codes. Each brief should be about a page and a half to two pages long. Both cases should follow the stock issues outlined in chapter 11. In the affirmative brief you should demonstrate ill, prove blame, show why speech codes offer a cure, address the costs, and then highlight any additional benefits. In the negative case, you need to develop an argument to refute ill, demonstrate that any blame is not due to the status quo, refute the cure, emphasize the costs of a speech code, and refute additional benefits. You do not need to summarize the articles; they are simply here to provide you background reading and the evidence necessary to develop your cases. Bring your cases to class on November 4th since we will be debating the topic in-class. The paper (the two cases) will be evaluated based on you ability to develop an affirmative and negative case as well as you ability to follow the guidelines for a good paper outlined on the syllabus and restated below.

- **Paper #3** (due December 9): In this paper, you must analyze a debate of your own choosing. This should be a debate that appears in print editorials and letters to the editor. We will discuss suitable debates in class. Generally, you should select a recent and significant public policy debate. You should examine three (editorials/letters to the editor) arguments for the affirmative and three (editorials/letters to the editor) arguments for the negative. When you turn in your paper, please provide copies of these texts. In your analysis of this debate, your paper should address the following questions: What argumentative strategies are the different sides using? Who has the better arguments and why? Finally, spend about two pages reflecting on how this debate meets or fails the vision of argumentation advanced in the readings for today (Tannen, Chapter 9 and Mallin and Anderson). How could this debate be reconfigured to better satisfy their concerns? What would be the benefits and limitations of reconfiguring this debate in a more dialogic/constructive manner?

**Quizzes:** Good argumentation requires much practice, but it also requires some memorization. There are a number of concepts that you must simply know by rote before you can use them as aids for argument. Periodically, I will quiz the class on the readings. These quizzes are designed to encourage students to come to class having completed the readings, reinforce important class concepts, and provide me with a sense of the class’s comprehension of the material. These quizzes may be announced ahead of time or they may be pop quizzes. You should always come to class prepared to take a quiz on the assigned course readings. Your 5 best quizzes will be calculated into your final grade.
GENERAL GRADING CRITERIA FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Before each assignment is due, I will distribute a handout that clarifies the evaluation criteria for that assignment. In addition to the unique requirements for each written paper, I read each paper with the following questions in mind:

1. Structure: Does the essay have a clear thesis statement? Are the main points easy to follow and do they relate well to one another?

2. Content: How well does the essay address the assignment? How well does the author incorporate the concepts from the readings? Does the author demonstrate a clear comprehension of the assigned reading? How well does the author use evidence in support of his or her argument?

3. Presentation: Is the essay clearly written? Does the writer rely on passive voice? Does the essay seem to have been written from an outline? Does the essay seem to have gone through multiple drafts? I strongly recommend that students read Strunk and White’s *The Elements of Style* as a guide to both grammar and voice. You can now read *The Elements of Style* online at http://www.bartleby.com/.


GRADING SYSTEM

There are 500 total possible points in this course.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
<th>Percentage of the final grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Exams (75 points each)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Papers (50 points each)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-class Debate</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written Debate Brief</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Peer Critiques</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td>Total:</td>
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<td>100%</td>
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Grades will be assigned based on your final number of accumulated points.

- 485-500 = 4.0
- 475-484 = 3.9
- 465-474 = 3.8
- 450-464 = 3.7
- 445-449 = 3.6
- 440-444 = 3.5
- 435-439 = 3.4
- 430-434 = 3.3
- 425-429 = 3.2
- 420-424 = 3.1
- 415-419 = 3.0
- 410-414 = 2.9
- 405-409 = 2.8

- 400-404 = 2.7
- 395-399 = 2.6
- 390-394 = 2.5
- 385-389 = 2.4
- 380-384 = 2.3
- 375-379 = 2.2
- 370-374 = 2.1
- 365-369 = 2.0
- 360-364 = 1.9
- 355-359 = 1.8
- 350-354 = 1.7
- 345-349 = 1.6
- 340-344 = 1.5

335-339 = 1.4
330-334 = 1.3
325-329 = 1.2
320-324 = 1.1
315-319 = 1.0
310-314 = 0.9
305-309 = 0.8
300-304 = 0.7
Below 300 points results in a failing grade
POLICIES

Adding the Course: The use of debate pairing demands that this class enroll an even number of students. As such, add codes will not be provided for this course. All adds and drops will be taken care of automatically by the University registration system. Register at: https://sdb.admin.washington.edu/students/uwnetid/register.asp.

Attendance: Since debate teams and peer criticism are essential to the design of this course, your absence on a day when you are scheduled to debate or critique hurts your fellow students and interferes with the course schedule. For this reason, the following rule is in place: Failure to attend on a day when you are scheduled to speak will result in a 0 for that assignment. Failure to attend on a day when you are scheduled to deliver an oral critique will result in a 0 for that peer critique assignment. If an absence is unavoidable, you can take some actions to avoid these penalties:

- If you are traveling on a University trip (athletic competition, field trips, etc.), it is your responsibility to work with me to negotiate your speaking and critiquing schedule with your travel schedule.

- If a serious illness or emergency keeps you from performing your duties, you should do everything you can to contact me as soon as possible. Prompt consultation with me (within 24 hours) and documentation of the unavoidable incident (e.g., a note from your doctor, a copy of the accident report, etc.) might result in the scheduling of a make-up debating or critiquing assignment if the circumstances that caused the absence to be severe enough to merit rescheduling and if there is time in the schedule to accommodate a make-up assignment.

Late Assignments: For purposes of equity and fairness for all students, you will be given a reasonable amount of time to complete all written assignments. An assignment is on time when it is delivered to me at the beginning of the class session on the day it is due. In the event that you do not turn in your assignment in class on the day it is due, you will be assessed the following academic penalty: late written assignments will receive a 5% grade reduction for every full day they are late, and a 2% grade reduction for any portion of a day that they are late. You must hand in your work to me or my office box; do not send me assignments over e-mail.

Special Needs: To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disabled Student Services, 448 Schmitz, 543-8924 (V), 543-8925 (TTY), uwdss@u.washington.edu. If you have a letter from DSS indicating that you have a disability which requires academic accommodations, please show me the letter so we can discuss the accommodations you might need for the class.

Grievance Policy: If you have any concerns about the direction, content, or teaching of this course, please meet with me and we can work to identify some possible solutions. If you are not comfortable talking with me or if you are not satisfied with the response that you receive, you may contact the Chair of the Department of Communication, Gerald Baldasty, at 543-2662.

Academic Integrity: The University’s definitions of academic and personal misconduct are outlined in the Student Conduct Code (available in your University of Washington Student Planner pages 97-103 and online at http://www.washington.edu/students/handbook/conduct.html). It is your responsibility to read and understand the University’s expectations in this regard. Until you have read the Code, do not assume that you know what this University defines as cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct.

Plagiarism is a significant violation of the Student Conduct Code and will be dealt with severely in this class. It is important for you to know that plagiarism is any representation of another person’s words or ideas in a manner that makes it seem as if they were your own, in either oral or written form. This means that you may not copy another person’s paper. But it also means that you should not use another person’s unique phrases or arguments without making it clear to your audience where those words or ideas originated. For more on plagiarism, including a review of proper and improper paraphrasing practices, see http://depts.washington.edu/grading/issue1/honesty.htm.

Classroom Conduct: Good debaters understand the importance of decorum. This classroom must remain a tolerable space where reason through opposing arguments. No doubt, you will hear many opinions this quarter that are not your own (this is essential to the design of the course), but you must engage those opposing views in a respectful manner. When acting in your role as a critic, please be constructive in your comments. This does not mean that you should ignore the flaws in your classmates’ arguments; on the contrary, it is your responsibility to identify those flaws and communicate your suggestions for improvement to your classmates. Always treat your classmates with respect, framing your comments about their arguments in a manner intended to help them improve.
**OFFICE HOURS**
Please come by during my office hours if you have any questions about the course or the course material. Educational research has shown that students’ grades are directly related to their levels of engagement in classes. We also know that discussing class concepts contributes to higher levels of engagement. So, come by and discuss the class. Additionally, I am more than happy to look at early drafts of papers and provide you with some feedback. If you cannot make it to my office hours, set up an appointment.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**
Readings from the Inch and Warnick textbook are listed as TB
Online reserve readings are listed as OR

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<th>Week One</th>
<th>Introduction to the course</th>
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<td>September 30</td>
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<td>Readings: No readings</td>
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<th>Week Two</th>
<th>Argument: are you for or against it?</th>
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<tr>
<td>October 5</td>
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<td>Readings: TB- Chapter 1; OR- Tannen, Chapter 1</td>
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<tr>
<th>October 7</th>
<th>Arguments in contexts</th>
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<td>Readings: TB- Chapter 3; TB- Chapter 4</td>
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<th>Week Three</th>
<th>Language and argument</th>
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<tr>
<td>October 12</td>
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<td>Readings: TB- Chapter 5</td>
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<th>October 14</th>
<th>Claims</th>
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<td>Readings: TB- Chapter 6; OR- UW Letters to the editor</td>
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<th>Week Four</th>
<th>Claims</th>
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<td>October 19</td>
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<td>Readings: OR- Reagan, Remarks Accepting the Presidential Nomination; OR- Cuomo, Keynote Address</td>
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<td><strong>Assignment:</strong> Paper #1 due</td>
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<th>October 21</th>
<th>Evidence and reasoning</th>
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<td>Readings: TB- Skim Chapter 7; TB- Read Chapter 8</td>
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<th>Week Five</th>
<th>MIDTERM EXAM</th>
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<td>October 26</td>
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<th>October 28</th>
<th>Policy cases</th>
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<td>Readings: TB- Chapter 11; TB- Appendix A</td>
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Week Six
November 2
Fact and Value cases
Readings:
TB- Ch. 9
TB- Ch. 10

November 4
Practice debate on University Speech Codes
Readings: Use these readings as background for Paper #2


Assignment: Paper #2 (debate brief for the practice debate)

Week Seven
November 9
Cross-examination and refutation
Readings: OR- Debater’s Guide, Chapter 6 (Refutation) and Chapter 7 (Introduction to Cross-Examination)

November 11
NO CLASS (Veteran’s Day)

Week Eight
November 16
In-class debates
November 18
In-class debates

Week Nine
November 22
In-class debates
November 25
NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

Week Ten
November 30
In-class debates
December 2
In-class debates
Week Eleven

December 7  In-class debates

December 9  Argument: are you for or against it? (revisited)
            Readings:  Tannen, Chapter 9
            Mallin and Anderson, Inviting Constructive Argument
            Assignment:  Paper #3 due

Week Twelve

FINAL EXAM  DECEMBER 14, 2004, 430-620 in CMU 326