COM 234 – Public Debate  
TuTh 2:30 p.m.-4:20 p.m. ARC 147

Professor
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Course Description:
This has been designed as a College Course, where students can achieve learning goals in the liberal arts. In particular, this course gives you the tools to critically scrutinize public debates. You will develop a rhetorical perspective on argument, learning to recognize what is at issue in a particular debate, analyze and identify types of arguments, spot fallacies, detect and evaluate language tools, and scrutinize the use of various appeals, topoi and value hierarchies. In the final weeks of class, distinguished speakers from the community will conduct live debates for the class on issues of current importance in the public sphere, and you will apply all that you have learned to the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of those debates. After completing the course you will appreciate the complexity of public debate and understand better how to assess public arguments.

Student learning goals
- You will learn to identify what is at issue in a debate.
- You will learn to identify argument types, fallacies, and tropes and figures in public arguments.
- You will learn how to evaluate public arguments, recognizing problems with the use of logic and evidence and critically scrutinizing the deployment of values and emotional appeals.
- You will improve your understanding of some contemporary debates on issues of public importance.

Course Website:
https://catalyst.uw.edu/workspace/cecc/29007

Purchases:
There is no required textbook for this class. However, it is strongly recommended that for the entire quarter, you read at least one local or national newspaper on a daily basis.
You are required to own and bring to class each day a clicker (also known as a Turning Technologies ResponseCard RF Radio Frequency keypad). If you do not own one already, you can purchase one at the University Bookstore.

Before the second day of class, make sure to register your clicker so that your quiz responses can be graded. Here are instructions on how to do that:

1. Go to the website student.turningtechnologies.com.
2. Enter your ResponseCard ID (found on back of unit); if a symbol could be either a number or a letter, assume it is a letter.
3. Enter your first name and last name in the appropriate fields.
4. You may include your student ID in the “other info” field to be sure we correctly match your device to you.
5. Complete security entry of image text that you see.
6. Press “Next.”
7. Enter instructor’s email address (cecc@uw.edu).
8. Select COM 234 Sp12 and add it to the list on the right-hand side of the page.
9. Click “Next” and confirm information. You may click “Back” if you find information you need to correct.

Grade Determination:

Exams: There will be a midterm and a final exam. Exams will be comprised of multiple choice questions. Each exam will be worth 25% of your final grade; together they total 50% of your final grade.

Quizzes: In each lecture, you will be asked questions that you will be expected to answer using the clicker. Some of these questions will be identified as “quiz” questions, to be graded. We will drop your lowest three days of quiz scores. Together, your quiz responses will be worth 20% of your final grade.

Theory Application Homework Assignments: On most class days, a theory will be introduced and examples will be given to demonstrate how to apply that theory to the study of public argument. Between the class in which a theory is introduced and the next class, you are expected to take that theory home with you and become better acquainted with it by finding an example of its application in current public discourse (i.e., editorials, public speeches, blogs, etc., from within the last two years). You will turn in a written description of that application to the course’s Homework Assignments Catalyst Dropbox at https://catalyst.uw.edu/collectit/dropbox/cecc/20610 before the beginning of the next class. A more detailed explanation of each assignment with an example of what is expected will be made available to you at the end of class on the day the theory is introduced. In all, there will be 10 of these assignments. We do not have the resources to evaluate all of these on the four point scale, so we will be checking most of them off as either satisfactory “S” or unsatisfactory “U”. If what you turn in appears to meet the purpose of the assignment, you will receive a satisfactory mark; if it appears to be completely off the mark, or if you do not turn it in at all, it will receive an unsatisfactory mark. We will be grading a sampling of these assignments on the 4 point scale. You will choose three of the ones that you want to be graded. You will do this by indicating on the assignment when you turn it in that it is one of the assignments that you want graded on the four point scale. We will also choose at random another assignment of yours to be graded. Additionally, there will be a completeness grade that will assess how many of the assignments you satisfactorily completed. The theory application assignments are worth 30% of your final grade. The breakdown of this grade will be as follows:

3 assignments chosen by you to be graded @ 5% each = 15%
1 assignment chosen at random to be graded @ 5% = 5%
completeness grade = 10%

The completeness grade will be determined as follows:

All 10 assignments completed satisfactorily = 4.0
9 assignments completed satisfactorily = 3.8
8 assignments completed satisfactorily = 3.5
7 assignments completed satisfactorily = 3.0
6 assignments completed satisfactorily = 2.0
5 assignments completed satisfactorily = 1.0
4 or less assignments completed satisfactorily = 0

Some Things to Keep in Mind About the Homework Assignment Catalyst Dropbox:

1. Any homework assignment that you turn in must be either a Word document or a pdf.
2. They should be electronically named as follows: Lastname.Firstname.HW#. E.g. Smith.John.HW1
3. When you want to select an assignment to be graded, include the words “To Be Graded” at the top of the assignment itself and in the comments box on the Catalyst Dropbox. Do not use the comments box for any other type of communication!
4. Catalyst is offline Wednesdays 5-7am PT, so please do not attempt to turn in your assignment during that time period.

Extra Credit: Those seeking to earn extra credit may choose to do an extra credit video clip assignment. You will need to find and edit a video clip example that effectively illustrates a theory from the course, and turn in a digital form of this video clip (in .wmv or .mp4 format) to the Extra Credit Assignment Catalyst Dropbox at https://catalyst.uw.edu/collectit/dropbox/cecc/20778. Accompanying your video clip should be a one page description (in the form of a pdf or Word document) of how the clip illustrates the theory, and an argument as to why this is a particularly good clip to illustrate the critical insights available through the application of that theory. I will select the best of these video clips to use in the review for the final exam, and I may incorporate some of them into lectures in the future. The score you receive on this assignment, if you choose to do it, will merit an additional 5% to your final grade. You may only turn in one extra credit assignment. Extra credit is due no later than 2:30p on Thursday, 5/17.

A note on the grading scale: To ensure that you understand what scores on the 4 point scale mean in this class, you should consider the following evaluative scale. This scale can be used to convert your scores into terms that are more meaningful to your own learning process:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>O.K.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Minimally sufficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Insufficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Very Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>Fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Policies:

Late Assignment Policy: An assignment is on time when it is delivered by the student to the Catalyst site during the time period established for the assignment. Late assignments delay the progress of learning in the class, and so they will not be accepted. If an emergency keeps a student from turning in an assignment on time, that student must contact the instructor immediately. Prompt and proper documentation of the emergency situation (e.g., car accident, serious illness, etc.) may result in a limited extension for that student.

Missed Exams/Quizzes Policy: Make-up exams and quizzes will only be allowed for official University events (e.g., travel with an athletic team) or an emergency situation. As with late assignments, you must inform the instructor immediately of the situation and documented verification will be required before a determination is made as to whether or not to allow a make-up.

Statement on Academic Integrity: You should know that cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct are serious violations of your contract as a student and will be treated severely. For more on university policies regarding these matters, see http://www.washington.edu/uaa/advising/help/academichonesty.php.

Classroom Behavior: Because our concern is learning, students who disrupt the class in ways that reduce the learning of others will be removed.

Special Needs: To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disabled Student Services, 448 Schmitz, (206) 543-8924. If you have a letter from Disabled Student Services indicating that you have a
disability which requires academic accommodations, please present the letter to your instructor so we can discuss the accommodations you might need in this class.

Schedule

Week 1
Tu 3/27: Rhetoric and the critically engaged citizen – Introduction to the course.

Week 2
Tu 4/3: Argument analysis part I – deductive reasoning. Assignment Due – HW#1: Stasis Theory/Stock Issues
Th 4/5: Argument analysis part II – types of argument. Assignment Due – HW#2: Argument Analysis Part I

Week 3
Tu 4/10: Fallacies part I. Assignment Due – HW#3: Argument Analysis Part II
Th 4/12: Fallacies part II. Assignment Due – HW#4: Fallacies Part I

Week 4
Tu 4/17: Language tools part I – metaphor. Assignment Due – HW#5: Fallacies Part II
Th 4/19: Language tools part II – other figures. Assignment Due – HW#6: Language Tools Part I

Week 5
Tu 4/24: Review for midterm exam. Assignment Due – HW#7: Language Tools Part II
Th 4/26: Midterm exam

Week 6
Tu 5/1: Ethos and pathos – evaluating the credibility and emotional power of evidence.
Th 5/3: Logos – the use and abuse of statistical evidence. Assignment Due – HW#8: Ethos/Pathos

Week 7
Tu 5/8: Topoi and value hierarchies. Assignment Due – HW#9: Logos
Th 5/10: Evaluating formal debates. Assignment Due – HW#10: Topoi and Value Hierarchies

Week 8
Tu 5/15: Debate #1, I-502 (live debate).
Th 5/17: Debate #2, affirmative action (video). Optional Extra Credit Assignment Due

Week 9
Tu 5/22: Discussion of debates #1-2
Th 5/24: Debate #3, college football (video).

Week 10
Tu 5/29: Debate #4, same-sex marriage (live debate).
Th 5/31: Review for final.

Final Exam: Tuesday June 5, 4:30 p.m.-6:20 p.m.