College of Arts and Sciences
Department of Communication and Performance

COMM 2055
Argumentation and Debate
Section 907
Fall 2021

Syllabus

Contact Information
Instructor: Melissa Nipper
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Instructor Availability
The best way to reach me is by email. I will be happy to meet with you virtually by appointment via Zoom or in person. Email me if you would like to meet, and we will set up a time.

Online Course Information
All material will be presented and turned in using the D2L platform. You will need to use Zoom to complete speaking assignments. You should have a Zoom account through ETSU and can access it on D2L.

All material will be available on a week-to-week basis. The course is not self-paced, and assignments will be due on designated dates.

Mission Statement
The Department of Communication and Performance advances the understanding of communication by focusing on the ways people communicate with each other personally and professionally, embracing the complexity of human diversity, and examining the ways in which identity and meaning are created through the stories we tell and are told.

Course Information

Credit Hours
This course is worth 3 credit hours.
Course Description and Purpose
An introduction to oral argumentation and debate, including case construction techniques, and case analysis and criticism.

Course Goals
The course aims to teach you to do the following things: (1) Demonstrate verbal and nonverbal communication competencies in listening, message construction, and message presentation; (2) Make responsible communication choices that are mindful of human diversity; (3) Develop critical thinking skills in the decision-making process as well as enhance listening skills; (4) Critically analyze the claims and arguments of other speakers; (5) Evaluate the credibility of evidence; and (6) Analyze and adapt to audience needs, motivations, expectations, and diversity.

Course Objectives
Through course assignments and lectures, you should be able to do the following by the end of the semester: (1) Use logic and reasoning to construct and critique arguments; (2) Locate, evaluate, and cite research; (3) Create and critique fact, value, and policy claims; (4) Respectfully and analytically respond to others’ arguments; (5) Prepare and deliver effective oral presentations.

Major Topics
This course will focus on basic argument building, crafting formal argumentation speeches, presenting ideas in opposition to others, and effective listening and critiquing of others’ arguments.

Course Requirements

Textbooks and Readings
The textbook for this course is optional.


Technical Requirements
You should have computer access to Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, and an Adobe PDF program to view some documents. You should have access to a webcam and microphone, as well as a video player such as Quicktime, and speakers. You will also be accessing your ETSU email and D2L regularly and will need know how to work your Zoom account.

Course Policies and Expectations

Email Communication
All emails should be sent from your ETSU email address, as stated in ETSU policy. Emails should be professional. They need to include a greeting, your course and section number, and a signature. I will not respond to emails that do not include these things! Please check spelling and grammar prior to sending your message. Give me 24 hours to respond to your original email. If I have not
responded after that time frame, please email me again. **I check email from 8:00 AM-4:30 PM during the work week and periodically on the weekends.** Emails sent outside of that time frame will have to wait for a response until the next business day.

**Diversity in the Classroom**

I and this class environment recognize and affirm the importance of diversity. You will be interacting with people who have different thoughts, beliefs, and backgrounds than you. It is expected that you be respectful of these differences and that you truly listen to your classmates. Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and other identities **will not be tolerated**.

If you experience any discrimination in this class at the hands of a classmate, please let me know. I am here to listen to and support you.

**Attendance and Participation**

Attendance in this class is important. You are expected to check D2L regularly and complete your assignments on-time.

If you have any serious situations happening that will interfere with your attendance this semester, you need to let me know in advance. Please note the late work policy later in the syllabus.

**Departmental Presentation Day Policy**

You are expected to be present on Presentation Days. The absence policy for those days is as follows:

- Foreseeable absences should be arranged with me in advance. “Foreseeable” includes university-approved absences (athletic obligations) or court dates. These absences must come with proper documentation (e.g. schedule of classes to be missed signed by pertinent athletic director) and must be approved by me before the missed class.
- You will only be allowed to make-up a missed presentation if the absence was unforeseeable, unpreventable, urgent in nature, necessitated missing class, and for which documentation proving its occurrence can be provided by a professional relevant to the emergency (e.g. emergency room physician).

This policy applies to video submissions of speeches as well. Documentation necessitating an extension for the assignment must be provided to the instructor. See the late work policy in the syllabus.

**Assignments and Submission Guidelines**

**Fact Case Topic: 5 points**

You and your partner will be assigned a group D2L Dropbox. Together, you should brainstorm and determine at least three topic ideas written as a fact proposition. One person from the group should submit them to the appropriate D2L Dropbox. You will both receive the same points for this assignment.

**Fact Case Rough Draft Outline: 10 points**
Individually, submit a rough draft of your speech outline to the appropriate D2L Dropbox. To receive full credit, you should have at minimum an introduction, conclusion, transitions, and the basic ideas for your stock issues written. Use the template on D2L to assist your writing.

**Fact Case Speech: 100 points**
Using the feedback from your rough draft, construct a final draft of your speech and rehearse it. You and your partner will coordinate a time to host a Zoom meeting and do your fact debate. The format of the debate will be posted to D2L. Your individual speech in the debate will be 5-6 minutes long and will verbally cite four sources. Once the Zoom debate is over, the host of the meeting must submit the link of the meeting to the D2L Dropbox. One submission for both members will work. A prepared outline of your individual speech and a works cited page of your sources in APA format should also be submitted to the appropriate D2L Dropbox. Further details will be provided on D2L.

- Speech: 70 points
- Outline: 20 points
- Works Cited: 10 points

**Value Case Topic: 5 points**
You and your partner will be assigned a group D2L Dropbox. Together, you should brainstorm and determine at least three topic ideas written as a value proposition. One person from the group should submit them to the appropriate D2L Dropbox. You will both receive the same points for this assignment.

**Value Case Rough Draft Outline: 10 points**
Individually, submit a rough draft of your speech outline to the appropriate D2L Dropbox. To receive full credit, you should have at minimum an introduction, conclusion, transitions, and the basic ideas for your stock issues written. Use the template on D2L to assist your writing.

**Value Case Speech: 100 points**
Using the feedback from your rough draft, construct a final draft of your speech and rehearse it. You and your partner will coordinate a time to host a Zoom meeting and do your value debate. The format of the debate will be posted to D2L. Your individual speech in the debate will be 5-6 minutes long and will verbally cite four sources. Once the Zoom debate is over, the host of the meeting must submit the link of the meeting to the D2L Dropbox. One submission for both members will work. A prepared outline of your individual speech and a works cited page of your sources in APA format should also be submitted to the appropriate D2L Dropbox. Further details will be provided on D2L.

- Speech: 70 points
- Outline: 20 points
- Works Cited: 10 points

**Policy Case Debate Topic: 5 points**
You and your debate group will be assigned a group D2L Dropbox. Together, you should brainstorm and determine at least three topic ideas written as a value proposition. One person from the group should submit them to the appropriate D2L Dropbox. You will all receive the same points for this assignment.

**Team Debate Rough Draft Outline: 10 points**
One member of your team will submit a rough draft of your team's opening policy case to the appropriate D2L Dropbox. At a minimum, you should have an introduction, conclusion, transitions,
and the basic ideas for your stock issues written. Use the template on D2L to assist your writing. Your group will receive the same points for this assignment.

**Team Debate: 150 points**

Two teams (each consisting of 2-3 people) will argue the advocate and opponent sides of a policy case. The team debate will be completed using Zoom. Both teams will coordinate a time and date to have the debate. Each team must build a case together, verbally citing 3 sources. The debate will follow the format of NPDA (Parliamentary Debate). Each debate will be graded as a group (the advocate and opponent teams will receive separate grades). Once the debate is completed, the host of the meeting will submit the link to the meeting to the appropriate D2L Dropbox.

Each team will submit to me an outline and works cited page in APA format. Detailed information will be given in class and posted on D2L.

- Debate: 100 points
- Outline: 40 points
- Works Cited: 10 points

**Peer Ballots: 30 points**

You will complete a debate ballot of a classmate’s speech using the form provided on D2L. Debate ballots are used to assess and judge a debate, providing feedback to the debaters. When submitting your debate, you will also attach the link to a class Discussion Board so classmates can review your speech.

You will watch a debate in the Discussion Board, complete the peer ballot, and then submit it to the Discussion Board as a reply to the original debate link. All parts of the form must be completed and thoroughly answered to receive full credit.

All peer ballots are worth 15 points each.

**Exams: 150 points**

There will be three exams this semester. These exams will be worth a total of **50 points each**.

The tests cover the following chapters:

- **Test 1:** Chapters 1, 4, 5, & 6 (Argument & Claims, Evidence & Reasoning)
- **Test 2:** Chapters 3, 7, 8, 10, & 11 (Fact and Value, Responsibility and Fallacies)
- **Test 3:** Chapters 2, 3, 11, 8, 9, & 7 (Culture and Ethics, Co-Orientation, & Policy)

**Online Assignments: 25 points**

The following assignments are due on the designated due dates by 11:59 PM in the appropriate D2L Dropbox. They are meant to help you build your argumentation skills and are very important towards your understanding of the course material.

- **Plagiarism Module (5 points):** On D2L, there is a template in the Content folder listed “Citations and Plagiarism”. There is a PDF file in that template titled, “Training Presentation-PDF”. Before your first major speech (Fact), you will need to read that file and take a Citation and Plagiarism Skills Assessment, which can be found in the Assessment folder of our D2L page. **You must score 80% or higher on the module.** You will be allowed
multiple attempts. You will not get the points for this assignment unless you earn 80% or higher before your Fact Speech is turned in.

- **Identify Claims (15 points):** I will provide you with a list of claims. Download the document, and identify whether the claims are fact, value or policy. You must also identify what makes it one of the three. Turn it into D2L Dropbox.

- **Discussion Board Posts (25 points):** In the “Discussion Board” on D2L will be three discussion prompts during the semester. You must post an original post to the thread and respond at least two times to your classmates to get full credit, either on their post or on their comments to your original post. Only thorough responses will be eligible for full credit!

- **Syllabus Contract (5 points extra credit):** Virtually sign (or sign by-hand and scan to the computer) the syllabus contract after reviewing the syllabus and course materials on the first day of class. Submit to the D2L Dropbox.

**Group Work Policy**

When working with a group for the team debate at the end of the semester, it is critical that you participate so you and the group can be successful. If you are experiencing difficulties with a member of your group (i.e. not hearing back from them, no effort in helping create the speeches/projects, etc.), **your team may choose to fire the problematic team member at least 4 full days before your assignment is due.** Telling me about difficulties later than that or after the assignment has been done is not helpful and will not result in any action being taken.

If you decide to fire a team member, the following action must be taken:

1. You must provide me with evidence of the team member’s lack of participation (i.e. unanswered emails, text messages, group chats, etc.). Evidence should come from a series of events (i.e. missing one meeting, not responding to one message, having a circumstance that limits participation such as illness/death in the family/etc. is not sufficient enough for firing someone). You must document what events have happened leading to the group’s decision to fire the team member (i.e. meetings unattended, unanswered emails and other communications, etc.) and turn that into me.

2. If I deem the evidence to be sufficient for firing, you will contact the team member (copy me on the email), present the evidence to them, and let them know the group has chosen to fire them.

3. Any fired team members will have to organize an individual debate with me. It is the fired team member’s responsibility to set up this alternative debate. I will not reach out/contact them to set it up.

**Testing Policy**

All tests will be taken on D2L. They will be open for the duration of the week (Monday-Sunday) and will close at 11:59 PM on the Sunday they are due. Once opened, you will have one hour to complete the test. You will have one attempt to complete the test.

**Late and Missing Submission Policy**

1. All work can be made up with appropriate documentation.
2. Electronic issues happen. It is your responsibility to ensure you have the materials you need and that you have enough time to complete an assignment by the time it is due. **Electronic issues do not constitute an excuse for missing/not completing work.**
3. All assignments are subject to the following policy:
a. They must be turned in by the due date to receive full credit.
b. Anything turned in the day after it is due (without documentation/an extension) will receive a maximum of half-credit.
c. Work turned in after that deadline (without documentation/an extension) will receive 0 points.

(4) There is an “Emergency Dropbox” on D2L available for you to use to turn in something late. Submit late work here instead of emailing it to me. I will not accept emailed work.

(5) Extenuating circumstances (i.e. serious illness, family emergency, etc.) for not submitting an assignment on-time will be considered by the instructor if you complete the following procedures:
   a. Email the instructor at a minimum of 24 hours prior to a deadline, informing her of your emergency.
   b. Provide any documentation to assist in verifying your emergency (i.e. obituaries, doctor’s notes, etc.).
   c. If documentation cannot be provided, the instructor reserves the right to refuse offering an extension on an assignment. All extensions are at the discretion of the instructor.

(6) All late work must be completed within 7 days of when it was due, whether you are turning it in with documentation or with an extension granted by me. Work will not be accepted after that 7-day period.

**Academic Misconduct**

Plagiarism, misrepresentation, fabrication, and/or cheating are not tolerated at any academic institution. This class is no exception. Any such infraction will result in an automatic 0/F on the assignment, as well as a report to the Dean’s Office. You can read more about ETSU’s Academic Misconduct Policy [here](#).

**Grading Policy**

Your points will be added at the end of the semester and divided by 600, the total amount of points you can earn. That percentage will then equate to a letter-grade. Averages that end with a decimal of .5 or higher will be rounded up to the next whole number.

A grade of FN applies when zero attendance is involved.

**Grading Scale by Percentage**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82%</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66%</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>0-62%</td>
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Student Services and Technical Resources

Student Services
The ETSU Services webpage includes a comprehensive list of services available to all ETSU students.

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
It is the policy of ETSU to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal law, state law and the University’s commitment to equal educational access. Any student with a disability who needs accommodations, for example arrangement for examinations or seating placement, should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. Faculty accommodation forms are provided to students through Disability Services in the D.P. Culp Center, Room 326, telephone 423-439-8346. Visit the Disability Services webpage for more information.

Counseling Services
If you find yourself feeling weary, anxious, overwhelmed, or depressed during the semester, I highly encourage you to contact the Counseling Center. They can provide you with a variety of helpful options. Call them at (423)-439-3333, or visit their website.

Undergraduate Student Success Specialist
The USSS office can assist you in many of the stresses of being a student. They can direct you to many of our campus resources. Call them at (423)-439-5641, or visit their website for more information.

Technical Resources

Help Desk
The Information Technology Services (ITS) Help Desk is the best resource for most technical problems. Find answers to common questions on the Help Desk website, call, email, or stop in to see them on the first floor of the Sherrod Library. Phone: 423-439-4648 Email: itshelp@etsu.edu

Desire2Learn (D2L) Online Help
Many answers to D2L related questions can be found on the D2L Help Student Home. If you are still having trouble finding what you need, contact the Help Desk.

Microsoft Office Software
Microsoft Office productivity applications, including Word, PowerPoint, Excel, OneNote, and more, are available free for students through the University’s Office 365 campus agreement. For instructions on how to obtain the software, see the Office 365 page of the ITS Help Desk website.

Turnitin Plagiarism Detection
Turnitin is a plagiarism detection service available to students and faculty at ETSU. This tool compares student written work against a comprehensive database of other work as well as various internet sources. Faculty may employ this service for some or all written assignments, in order to help students learn to cite sources accurately and to ensure academic integrity. Learn more on the Turnitin home page.

ETSU Technical Resources
Many other technical resources can be found on the Online Help webpage.
University Information

Syllabus Attachment
The ETSU syllabus attachment includes important material such as permits and overrides, advisement, hours, dates and other ETSU information.

ETSU Catalogs
Current Undergraduate Catalog
Current Graduate Catalog

Inclement Weather Policy
In the instance of inclement weather, we will follow university protocol. Asynchronous courses are not affected by university schedule changes due to inclement weather.