



University of North Carolina at Wilmington
 Department of Communication Studies
 Communication 276: Argumentation and Debate
 Fall 2006 section 001



Course Information

Professor: Rick Olsen	Office: 231 Lakeside Hall
Phone: 962-3710	Office Hours: 11-12 MWF; 9-11 am TR
Email: olsenr@uncwil.edu	Feel free to drop by or schedule an appointment.
Class Time: TR 2:00-3:15	Class Location: LH 139

Syllabus

argue (verb): 1. give reasons (for or against a proposal, etc.) 2. to dispute (with a person or about a thing) 3. to present objections.

*debate (verb): 1. to consider 2. to discuss opposing reasons 3) to argue a question formally. (noun)
 1. a discussion of opposing reasons 2. a formal contest of skill in reasoned argument with two teams taking opposite sides of a specified question.*

Course Description

The ability to communicate through symbols allows us to make sense of our world, build meaningful relationships with others and present our positions on issues important to us in ways that might encourage others to join with us. This ability has made possible society, commerce, and virtually everything that is distinctly “human.” Communication is verbal and nonverbal. It involves both intention and perception. It occurs in every dimension of human life. This class focuses on a particular type of communication and context: argumentation and debate. As noted in the definitions above, debate is both an act (verb) and a context (noun). In order to be successful in a debate, one must understand the principles of argumentation and critical thinking. These principles are critical in both the crafting of arguments and the understanding and evaluation of the arguments of others. There will be some lecture, but your active participation is essential for this class to work. Please come in with questions from the reading! What does it mean? What does it look like? How does it apply? How do we do it? These are all good questions and will help make the class meaningful for you.

Course Objectives

This course is intended to:

1. foster critical thinking in the crafting of effective and ethical arguments,
2. foster critical thinking in the evaluation of arguments made by others
3. improve student research skills
4. improve student oral and written communication skills

Course Competencies

After completing this course the successful student will:

1. distinguish between sound and unsound arguments
2. identify basic logical fallacies
3. craft arguments that are clear, ethical and effective
4. effectively express arguments orally and in writing
5. be able to carry out principled debate on a significant topic

Course Policies

Attendance: You are expected to attend every class period. However, since life happens, you are allowed a number of “personal days.” Use them wisely if at all.

Number of Absences Recorded	Highest Grade You Can Earn (regardless of grades earned on assignments)
No absences up to three absences	A
Four or five absences	B
Six Absences	C
Seven absences	D
More than seven	F

If you must be absent, handle it responsibly: communicate with your teammates and me and be prepared for the next class session.

Participation: The class participation is a function of your active involvement in class discussion and activities as well as your attentiveness and feedback during debates by other teams.

Assignments: All work must be handed in on time unless *prior* arrangements have been made. No make-ups will be given unless there are extreme circumstances and you handles those circumstances responsibly. Do not wait until you are out of school to begin behaving professionally.

Honor Code

“It shall be the responsibility of every faculty member, student, administrator and staff member of the university community to uphold and maintain the academic standards and integrity of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington” (1997-1998 *Student Handbook and Code of Student Life*, p. 91). All student work and conduct must be in accordance with the academic honor code and other codes informing the university community. Any plagiarism will result in failure for that assignment and additional work by the student on all future assignments to prove that the work is the student’s own: Cite your sources folks!

Course Materials

Required Texts: Verlinden, J. (2005) Critical thinking and everyday argument. Belmont CA: Wadsworth. *This text will provide our philosophical framework and much of the basic vocabulary necessary to carry out construct argumentation in real life settings.*

Ericson, J. M, Murphy, J. J. & Zeuschner, R. B. (1987). The debater’s guide (revised edition).

Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University. *This text will provide concrete advice for how best to succeed in the debates we will engage in during class. At times the texts will agree with one another and at times they will disagree. Whenever possible, we will discuss these points of disagreement and their implications for the class debates and beyond.*

Recommended Text: Corbett, E. P. J. & Eberly, R. A. (2000). The elements of reasoning (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Required Materials: It is also expected that students will do significant photocopying and downloading of materials appropriate for constructing arguments necessary for the debates. Therefore a copy card, 3 X 5 or 5 X 7 note cards and media storage (thumb drive, etc.) are also required. File folders may also prove useful.

About Email: Be sure you have an active account and check it regularly. Email now constitutes official communication at UNCW. I will send out information and you will need to be able to email your topic groups and your teams with attached documents, etc. If you have an off campus account, be sure that you set up your on campus account to forward your mail.

Assignments and Grading:

I will be using a standard the following breakdown for final grades:

Percentage of points earned	Final Grade
92% or more	A
90-91%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C

The assignments are as follows:

Assignment	Point Value
Five Quizzes	100 (5 X 20 pts. each)
Sources Summary	50 (Shared grade among topic group)
Debate One	50
Debate Two	50
Analysis Paper	25
Final Debate	100
Summary Paper	20
Peer Evaluations	30 (3 X 10)
Final Exam	25 (attendance is mandatory—plan accordingly!)

I reserve the right to modify the schedule and assignments as needed. All work, unless otherwise noted, must be typed and adhere to the APA style guide. Clear, error-free writing is a big part of your success in this class: manage your time accordingly.

Portfolio Artifacts: One of the culminating experiences of a communication studies degree is the completion of COM 490 *Discipline Capstone*, a course that may include the preparation of a personal portfolio to organize and showcase your abilities. I encourage you to retain items from this class, whether produced independently or in groups, for inclusion as portfolio artifacts. Beyond the *Capstone* class, your portfolio may prove a valuable tool as you seek entry into a graduate program or employment in your areas of specialization.

Assignment Descriptions

I offer this overview of assignments not to overload you but so that you can manage your time accordingly. I realize that this is not the only course you are taking and want you to be able to take the lead in owning your education and managing your coursework. If you have questions about any of these assignments be sure to ask them. Really, go ahead and ask.

Quizzes: Things go better when we read the textbooks. Each quiz will offer a blend of objective questions that focus on recall of material and short answer questions that focus on application. Course vocabulary will be an important focus of the quizzes. Learn to love that glossary!

Debates: You will participate in three graded debates during the semester. Your debate grades will generally be divided among three areas: 1) an individual grade, 2) a shared grade given to your team, and 3) written materials that are required for each debate. These materials will include an outline of the case you will be presenting and peer evaluations.

Analysis Paper: You will critique one of the debates in class and offer the following analysis:

- 1) Identify the major issues in the debate and how each team handled the issue
- 2) Offer an overall assessment of who won that debate and a complete explanation for your decision that integrates course concepts.
- 3) Offer constructive suggestions for each team to do better in the next round.

This paper should be 2-4 pages in length double-spaced. It requires no cover page. It will be graded on both form and substance. One way to help your grade will be to integrate course vocabulary throughout the analysis and suggestions.

Peer Evaluations: Rate your teammates **and yourself** on a 1-10 scale. Then offer a sentence or two of rationale for your ratings. Ex: Paul: He was a good researcher and gathered a lot of sources that were helpful. I gave him a seven because he was unorganized and we ended having to “hold his hand” a lot in helping him present his section. In cases where I feel a team or individual has not been responsible in their peer evaluations I will discount the evaluations and award no peer evaluation points. Consider the following guidelines

10 = exceptional individual in both task and social dimensions of group work

9 = excellent individual in both task and social dimensions of group work

8 = above average in both areas and you would work with this person again

7 = solid contributor, some weaknesses in one or both areas but would work with person again

6 = consistent weaknesses in one or both areas and would not prefer to work with this person again

5-0 = obstacle to group success and definitely would not want to work with this person again

Summary Paper: Reflect on what you learned this semester about argumentation, debate and even such issues as group process, persuasion, life, etc. Don't just fill it with stuff you think I want to hear! Should be about 2 pages double-spaced.

Class Participation: Participation is a factor of two things: Did you attend class? Was the class better in some respects due to your membership? In the answer to these two questions lies your participation grade. I will use participation as a factor in determining +/- grades. For instance if you have an 87 and your participation is strong, you keep your B+. If it was poor, you would likely get a B. Conversely an 85 with exceptional participation would likely receive a B+.

Schedule of Sessions

There are two texts being used in this course the Critical Thinking chapters are designated CT. The numbers in parentheses are “Things to Think About” questions that I think are most important to consider when processing the readings. The readings from the Debater’s Guide are designated DG. Those from the optional text are designated ER. Be sure to bring the books to class each session since we will occasionally refer to them for class activities and discussion.

Date	Readings and Homework Due	Class Session
Thrs. 8-24	Welcome back! Go through EACH syllabus and put due dates on your master calendar. Really, do it!	Course overview “Alligator River” Defining argument
Tues. 8-29	CT 1 (4, 5, 6) and 2 (1, 2, 6, 8) DG 10	Key parts to the puzzle: critical thinking, dialogue and debate
8-31	CT 3 (1, 3, 7) DG 1	Quiz One Discussion of readings Good debate topics?
Labor Day: No Class on Monday		
Tues. 9-5	DG 2 Come in with five topics with evidence that you’ve done some research for at least two of them	Pick topics and form teams—do not miss this class! Basic parts of a debate
9-7	CT 4 (1)	Discussion of reading Activity Group Workshop time
Tues. 9-12	CT 6 (1, 2) DG 3	Quiz 2 Application of readings Group Workshop
9-14	CT 8 (2, 3) DG 5	Stock issues, Toulmin, and the role of research
Tues. 9-19	CT 9 (5, 6) DG 4	Conducting and using research In-Class Workshop
9-21		Quiz Three In-class Workshop and rehearsal
Tues. 9-26		Debate One (2 debates per session) Hand in copy of case outline to me before you present your case
9-28		Debate One (2 debates per session) Hand in case outline to me before you present your case
Tues. 10-3	DG 8 CT 11 (1)	How did we do and what’s next? Peer evaluation #1 is due
10-5	CT 13 (1, 7)	Out of class workshop
Fall Break No Class Monday and Tuesday		
Thrs. 10-12	CT 11 and 13 review DG 8 review	Discussion of refutation
Tues. 10-17	Work on revising case and planning for refutation	Revisiting the basics: definitions and values in debate

10-19	CT 10 (2, 3, 5) DT 9	Discussion of readings Application activities
Tues. 10-24	Finalize sources for Source Summary document. One per 6 person topic group	Work on debates outside of class Source summary paper due by 4 pm. in the box outside my door
10-26	Review readings for quiz Work on revising your case	Quiz 4 In-class workshop
Tues. 10-31	Finalize preparation for case	Debate Two Hand in revised case outline
11-2	Finalize preparation for case	Debate Two Hand in revised case outline
Tues. 11-7	Prepare peer evaluation and Analysis paper.	Peer evaluation #2 is due Analysis papers due Discussion of analysis papers
11-9		TBA
Tues. 11-14		Out of class work on final debates
11-16	Come in with questions from your review readings	Quiz 5: The Big Review In class workshop
Tues. 11-21		Final Debate
Thanksgiving Break: Go and Be Thankful		
Tues. 11-28		Final Debate
11-30		Final Debate
Tues. 12-5		Final Debate
Use the Reading Day Wisely		
Thursday Dec. 14th	Bring in ALL research materials, textbooks, case outlines Revise final draft of Summary Paper	Summary Paper due at beginning of exam period Final Exam 3-5 pm We will use it for final exercise. Must be present to pass course, exam activity will be pass/fail. It is fun, but it is "serious fun."

“ Debate requires conviction and reasonable confrontation
but it need not be viewed as competitive or antagonistic.” Unkown.:

“ Love unaccompanied by criticism is not love. . . . Peace unaccompanied by reproof is
not peace.”

Genesis Rabbah 54:3

“ If people fear to offer criticism lest it lead to a rupture of peace, that in itself proves
that the peace is false. Peace, if it is to last, must be based on truth and lack of fear.”

Jewish Wisdom by Rabbi Joseph Telushkin.