

Argumentation in Everyday Life

COM 304 • Section 01 • Spring 2017 • T/TH 11:00-12:15 P.M. • SK 208

Instructor Information

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Office Hours: T/TH 2:00-3:00 p.m.

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the formal study of argumentation. It is designed to help students be more sensitive to the arguments that surround them in their everyday lives, to develop greater skills in understanding and critically assessing arguments in various contexts, and to build competence in producing their own arguments. To achieve these goals, the course is structured to teach argumentation skills, theories, and experiences by engaging arguments about pressing political, social, and legal issues.

Course Objectives

The course objectives are threefold. First, students are expected to understand the basic structure of arguments. They should know how to diagram arguments following the Toulmin Model of Argumentation. Second, students are expected to use concepts from class to develop reasonable arguments that enhance their critical thinking and communication skills. Third, students are expected to critically appraise arguments and use course material to arrive to critical decisions. Students will use course concepts to analyze and assess arguments in both written and public speaking contexts.

Statement on Rigor

This is a challenging course. Students will encounter difficult reading material that pushes them to broaden their general conceptualization of argumentation and enrich their understanding of the *uses* of argument in everyday public, technical, and personal life. Struggling with theoretical, methodological, and practical components of argument is an important part of learning, and students should be willing to suspend preconceived notions of what argumentation is *believed* to represent and immerse themselves in the literature to grow as intellectuals and deliberative citizens. This class is difficult, but it is designed to foster a climate of critical thinking that may open spaces of thought and practice about the risks, challenges, and possibilities of argumentation in everyday life.

Course Expectations

I expect regular participation, close readings, and a fearlessness to struggle. I also have a very high expectation for writing at the college level, especially for this course because a key component to effective argumentation is applying its uses in written contexts, with precision and accuracy.

All essays, unless told otherwise, must be written in Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, double spaced, with 1 inch margins. All references must be cited in APA. Also, please know that **I do not accept any assignments via e-mail, and I do not allow any makeup work for assignments and exams.** All assignments must be turned in through blackboard to check for plagiarism.

Other rules and expectations:

- No computers or cell phones in class. All technological devices must at all times be off, on silent, or at home. Any student using a cell phone will lose full participation points for that day or week.
- Students do not ever have my permission to record lectures.
- Students **will not** have the opportunity to make up any late work, including exams.
- I do not accept any assignments via e-mail.
- Decorum is imperative for this class to work. I do not tolerate any actions that show disrespect, hostility, impoliteness, chattiness, ad-homonyms, or injurious speech. If this standard is ever breached, the involved student(s) will fail and be asked to leave my class.
- I will not respond to e-mails that do not include your full name, what class you are in, the section number or time of class, a signature, or basic courtesy.

This syllabus may be regarded as a contract. If you attend class on January 11, 2017, then I will assume you adhere to these rigorous standards. Please carefully read the rest of this syllabus and know that I expect your best work at all times. Given these standards, I suggest that you immediately decide whether this course is right for you.

Required Texts

- Rieke, R. D. Sillars, M. O. & Peterson, T. R. (2013). *Argumentation and Critical Decision Making*, 8th Edition. New York, NY: Pearson. (RSP)

Suggested Texts

- *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th Ed.) Allyn & Bacon.
- Strunk, W. & White, E. B. *The Elements of Style* (4th ed.). Penguin Press.

University of Louisville Policies

Title IX/Clery Act Notification

Sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, and any other nonconsensual behavior of a sexual nature) and sex discrimination violate University policies. Students experiencing such behavior may obtain confidential support from the PEACC Program (852-2663), Counseling Center (852-6585), and Campus Health Services (852-6479). To report sexual misconduct or sex discrimination, contact the Dean of Students (852-5787) or University of Louisville Police (852-6111). Disclosure to University faculty or instructors of sexual misconduct, domestic violence, dating violence, or sex discrimination occurring on campus, in a University-sponsored program, or involving a campus visitor or University student or employee (whether current or former) is not confidential under Title IX. Faculty and instructors must forward such reports, including names and circumstances, to the University's Title IX officer.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is prohibited at the University of Louisville. It is a serious offense because it diminishes the quality of scholarship, makes accurate evaluation of student progress impossible, and defrauds those in society who must ultimately depend upon the knowledge and integrity of the institution and its students and faculty. At all times, you should document and be prepared to prove where you have retrieved research information — especially when drawing from that information to make your own argumentative conclusions. Willfully copying another's work and presenting it as if it were your own constitutes **plagiarism**, which is an offense that the University of Louisville, the Department of Communication and I take very seriously. If you are found to be in violation of this policy, you will receive a 0 on the assignment AND an E for the course. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the following:

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not limited to, intentional submission of someone else's work without credit either in part or as a whole, misuse of citations to conceal a source, use of other course work in this class, and other similar behaviors. I expect you all to write about something that you have not written about before, whether in high school or another college course. All major writing assignments will be checked for plagiarism through blackboard. If you have questions about the UofL's plagiarism policy, please refer to the Student Handbook or ask me.

Assignments:

Exams (15% each): There will be two exams this semester, one midterm and one final comprehensive. Both exams will be administered through blackboard, and they will draw from assigned readings and in-class lectures. Exams will consist of 30 multiple choice questions over 60 minutes. These exams are designed to assess your comprehension of course material and your ability to apply its content to various argumentative situations. Since exams are on blackboard, it is your responsibility to make time for these examination periods, which will be available for a period of three days per exam. These exams are individual experiences. This means that students must complete each exam without the aid of textbooks, notes, or internet research. Each exam is worth 150 points.

Argument Diagram (10%):

Using diagramming methods to examine arguments provides a clear picture of the structure of arguments. For this assignment, students are required to evaluate an argument in a *New York Times* opinion editorial using the Toulmin model of argumentation described in RSP chapter 4 and outlined by Toulmin in *The Uses of Argument*. The assignment consists of two parts. The first part is a visual diagram where you identify all the elements of argumentation in the op-ed argument. This includes the claim, grounds, warrants, backing, data, and if applicable, the modal term. You can utilize any creative design skills to map these arguments so long as each element of argument is clearly and precisely identified. You may cite the op-ed, but the diagram itself **should not simply consist of quoted material**. You should summarize the essence of each element in your own words. The second part of this assignment is a critical analysis of the argument's substantiveness. Ask yourself, is the argument forceful, effective, and well warranted? What would Toulmin say about this particular argument based on your visual diagram? This assignment is worth 100 points and should be 2 pages (1 page for the diagram, 1 page for the analysis). See Assignment Guidelines (posted on bb) for more detail.

Argument Analysis (20%):

For this assignment, you will write an argumentative analysis that evaluates a contemporary social or political controversy and takes a clearly defined argumentative position. In doing so, you are charged with developing a central claim supported with your own research that seeks adherence from your intended audience on an argumentative issue relevant to everyday public, personal, or technical life. The essay will be guided by discussions of case-writing and issue selection reviewed in readings and lectures and should therefore reflect effective grounds, backing, and warrants for your argument. We will also have a peer review day where you provide constructive feedback for another student, which means that a full draft of your paper is due weeks before the final deadline for submission. 5-7 double spaced pages.

Persuasive Letter to the Editor (10%):

Write a 2 page (single spaced) Letter to the Editor in which you make a persuasive argument in response to an article or editorial that addresses a controversy in the public sphere. Then, write a truncated version that fits the word limit of the paper to which you have chosen to address your letter (typically around 150 words). **You will submit two letters** and will be required to send your truncated letter to the editor of the appropriate newspaper. If the newspaper publishes your letter, you will receive extra credit on this assignment. The focus of this assignment is to construct a written argument appropriate for the public sphere. You will be evaluated based on the quality of your argument, use of evidence and reasoning, **adherence the Letter to the Editor genre**, and writing style. More details will be provided in class.

Complaint Letter (5%):

This assignment asks you to write a 1 page (single spaced) complaint letter to a company about a product that you are dissatisfied about. After selecting a commodity, find the company's contact information and write a letter that expresses your disapproval or censure using the skills for argumentation and rhetoric that you have acquired in this class. After submitting the letter for class credit, send the letter (or e-mail) to the company with your contact information on the return label. You may have to write a truncated version to fit the requirements for submitting your comment. Also bear in mind that you will have to consider acceptable forms of evidence when crafting this letter, which will most likely include proof of purchase and an image of the product. You will be evaluated based on the quality of your argument, use of evidence and reasoning, **adherence the Letter genre**, and writing style. More details will be provided in class.

Impromptu Speech (10%)

At the end of the semester, students will demonstrate the utility of argument and critical thinking by delivering an impromptu speech about a controversial topic in the public sphere (e.g., gun control, protectionism, healthcare, minimum wage). Each student will draw a topic with one of the key terms from the study guide and be asked to prepare a 2 minute argumentative speech that makes a well formulated argument about your topic. Speeches should include an attention getter, a thesis statement, a preview of main points, two main points supported with reasons, and a conclusion that summarizes the speech. Students will have 60 seconds of preparation time before beginning the each speech. Students can bring all notes and texts to class to prepare the speech. Technologies such as laptops, cellphones, and tablets are not permitted. I will distribute two 3 x 5 inch note cards to students at the beginning of the hour, and **only these note cards can be used during the presentation**. The speech should engage the audience on the subject matter, can be entertaining as long as the content is relevant without being flippant, should develop the assigned topic without engaging in repetition, and demonstrate the student's basic understanding of the concept. Speeches will be timed. 1 point will be deduced for every 5 seconds over or under your allotted time. I will distribute a short list of **possible** topics before speeches are due. More details will be provided in class.

Homework and Participation (10%):

Throughout the semester, you will be required to complete various homework assignments that may or may not be submitted, depending on level of in-class engagement. Submitted homework will be graded on a 1-4 point system. Those demonstrating weak effort and minimal thought earn 1 point. Those demonstrating effort earn 2 points. Those demonstrating much effort and demonstrate clear thoughtfulness earn 3 points. 4 points are given to papers demonstrating excellence. All homework assignments and essays, unless told otherwise, should always be printed off before class begins. Additionally, to understand theories of argumentation, it is essential that you engage in the practices

of argument construction and criticism. Active participation in class lectures, discussions, debates and activities is therefore an essential element of your learning in this class. You will be evaluated based on your active presence and participation in class lectures, discussions, and activities. This means being physically present, being on time, doing your readings before class, being prepared to comment on the readings (I may “cold call” you), asking questions when you have them, responding to questions posed by me, actively engaging in classroom discussions and activities, and staying for the duration of class time. Simply being physically present in class does not constitute participation.

Attendance Policy: Because participation and cooperative learning are essential to the design of this course, you are expected to attend class and participate. If you are not here, you cannot participate, and this compromises your participation grade. I will allow each student one excused absence for the entire semester. After that, without an excused absence for curricular or extra-curricular activities, each additional absence will cost you 25 points from the homework and participation category. If a serious illness or emergency keeps you from attending class and/or completing assignments, you must do everything you can to contact me as soon as possible. Prompt consultation with your instructor (within 24 hours) and documentation of the unavoidable event (e.g. a note from your doctor, a copy of the accident report, etc.) might result in accommodations.

Point Distribution and Grading Scale:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Value (%)</u>
Exams (2)	300	30%
Argument diagram	100	10%
Debates	100	10%
Argument analysis	150	15%
Letter to the editor	100	10%
Complaint letter	50	5%
Impromptu speech	100	10%
<u>Homework and Participation</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>10%</u>
Total	1,000	100%

Grading Scale	
A = 100-93%	C = 76-73%
A- = 92-90%	C- = 72-70%
B+ = 89-87%	D+ = 69-67%
B = 86-83%	D = 66-63%
B- = 82-80%	D- = 62-60%
C+ = 79-77%	E = 59% ↓

Course Schedule

Week 1

January 10 Course expectations

January 12 Defining Argument, RSP Ch. 1

Week 2

January 17 Appraising Argument, RSP Ch. 2

January 19 Making sense of arguments, RSP Ch. 3

Week 3

January 24 The elements of argument, RSP Ch. 4
TH HW: Bring read NYT op-ed to class

January 26 Op-ed exercise

Week 4

January 31

Evidence, Credibility, and Values RSP Ch.'s 7, 8, and 9
Case Study: Colin Powell's address to the United Nations

February 2

Argument Analysis and Case Building, RSP Ch.'s 5 and 6

Week 5

February 7

Refutation Strategies, RSP Ch. 10

TH HW: Come to class with five different fallacies from everyday life argument

February 9

Fallacies, RSP Ch. 11

Argument Diagram Due

Week 6

February 14

Debates

February 16

Debates

Week 7

February 21

Midterm Exam

February 23

Rubbertown

Week 8

February 28

"The public, technical, and personal spheres of argument," Goodnight

TH HW: Come to class with an example of a cross-sphere controversy that supports or opposes Goodnight's thesis

March 2

"From Public Sphere to Public Screen," DeLuca and Peeples

Week 9

March 7

Asen and Brower, "Public Modalities"

March 9

Sphere Discussion/Exercise

Week 10

March 14

Spring Break

March 16

Spring Break

Week 11

March 21

Argumentation in Government, Politics, and Business (RSP Ch.'s 15, 16):
The 2016 Presidential Debates
Letter to the Editor Due
Complaint Letter Due

March 23

"Bowling Alone," Putnam

Week 12

March 28

APA Day

March 30

Peer Review Day
Draft of Argument Analysis Due

Week 13

April 4

Zagacki and Gallagher, "Rhetoric and Materiality in the Museum Park at the North Carolina Museum of Art"

April 6

Museum Day
Can museums make arguments or produce image events?
HW: Respond to discussion question on blackboard by 11:59 p.m.
Argument Analysis Due

Week 14

April 11

Impromptu Speeches

April 13

Impromptu Speeches

Week 15

April 18

Impromptu Speeches

April 20

Final Exam