

## **ARGUMENTATION AND DEBATE**

This course is designed to examine the nature of arguments, how they are constructed, and how they are verbally employed. Argumentation is “the art of influencing others, through the medium of reasoned discourse, to believe or act as we wish them to believe or act” (O’Neill, Laycock, and Scale). This class will specifically teach you to understand the place of argumentation in the history of Western philosophy and rhetoric; write and define clear propositions of fact, value, or policy, and argue for them successfully; design units of argument and test evidence for them; and identify examples of different types of argument and logical fallacies. The ultimate goal of this class is to introduce and develop tools that you can use to both make effective assertions, and effectively evaluate assertions made by other people. Skillful argumentation and debate can assist one in all endeavors, including career, interpersonal relationships, and above all, engaged and competent citizenship.

### **TEXTS**

Rottenberg, Annette, and Donna Haisty Winchell. *Elements of Argument*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008.

Weston, Anthony. *A Rulebook for Arguments*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub Co, 2009.

### **GRADING SCALE (200 POINT TOTAL)**

179-200	A	Excellent; exceptional, creative, professional work
159-178	B	Very good; highly competent preparation,
139-158	C	Acceptable; basic preparation, correct technique
119-138	D	Unsatisfactory, incomplete, unprepared
0-118	F	Failed to meet all—half of requirements.

### **ASSIGNMENT VALUES**

Impromptu Defense:	20 points
Forum Debate Brief:	20 points
Forum Debate:	20 points
Participation	20 points
Visual Ethics Argument:	30 points
SPAR Debate:	30 points
Midterm Examination:	30 points
Final Examination:	30 points
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>200 POINTS</b>

## ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMS—OVERVIEW

### IMPROMPTU DEFENSE

You will select a claim at random. Then, you will deliver a brief argument in defense of that claim. This defense aims at controlled response with minimal preparation. Each student has 2 minutes for preparation and 2 minutes for delivery. During preparation you may (and I recommend you do) write down abridged notes on half a sheet of paper.

### VISUAL ETHICS ARGUMENT

With a partner, you will select a print advertisement or news photograph that has been—or you believe could be—considered controversial in the United States. For example, revealing news photographs, or print advertisements with risqué sexual, racial, or gendered undertones. Once the image has been selected, you and your partner will decide who will make the *affirmative argument* (asserting that the picture *is not* ethically sound) and who will make the *negative argument* (*against* assertions that the image is not ethically sound, or in other words, that the image *is* ethically sound despite the affirmative’s contrary assertions). Each person will develop an outline of evidence for their individual position. This evidence will draw from what you perceive to be the relevant social beliefs and values. Together with your partner, you will present the image, along with what you feel are the *most compelling points of evidence* on each side, to the class. Do not present all of your evidence; select only what you feel is unique, interesting, or persuasive. ***This is not a debate***; this is a presentation of the efforts you’ve made to construct a solid argument. Presentations are informal and are not to exceed 10 minutes. You and your partner can structure the presentation however you wish. Encourage the class to respond to your evidence.

### SPAR DEBATE

“SPontaneous Argumentation,” or SPAR debates, are impromptu arguments exchanged between two students according to a previously defined structure. Each SPAR debate will last 9 minutes. Claim selection and preparation will be the same as it was for the impromptu defense. Each student is responsible for turning in three debate claims (one of fact, one of value, and one of policy) for use in the SPAR debates before they begin. The claims should be based on current events/issues that you think most of the class is likely to be familiar with.

### FORUM DEBATE BRIEF

Near the end of the semester you will be assigned a group with whom you will write a brief that will serve as the foundation for your end of semester forum debate. You will submit one brief per group according to the outline structure provided for you ahead of time. ***Do NOT write the brief in essay format.*** All group members will receive the same grade for this assignment.

### FORUM DEBATE

During dead week at the end of the semester, we will have two days of forum debates. The format (consisting of policy presentation, cross-examination, and rebuttal) will be posted on Moodle in advance. Students will be graded as a group and should work together to organize and plan their arguments, and to anticipate and develop the impromptu refutation that will be necessary during the debate. Each person will submit a group and self-evaluation on which you have the opportunity to evaluate and grade the performance of your group members and yourself.

Students who have exhibited a lack of commitment or unwillingness to participate in the group, or who have caused strife within the group, will receive a grade penalty. Such penalties can result from group assessment of your performance, or my own assessment of your group participation. Make arrangements for group work well in advance to avoid unnecessary trouble. Also, please know that I am not looking for places to penalize you; I only want you to be responsible to your group so everyone can focus on the assignment at hand.

### **MIDTERM EXAM**

The midterm will be 30 multiple-choice and true/false questions (1 point a piece). All materials from the lectures and the readings leading up to the midterm are possible material for exam questions, some of this will include material that is only covered in lectures.

### **FINAL EXAM**

The final exam will be will be 30 multiple-choice and true/false questions (1 point a piece). The final exam will focus on material from the second half of the semester, including readings and lecture notes.